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## 'We are the Big Six:' Maasai Perceptions and Organization of Cultural Tourism in Kenya

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Graduate Program in Anthropology  
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts  
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## Abstract

Kenya's wildlife has long been considered an international treasure. Travelling to the renowned Masai Mara National Reserve (MMNR) to capture the 'big five,' those five large wild animals considered to be Africa's greatest, with their camera lenses, visitors will also see or even meet local Maasai living and/or working in the area. Employing ethnographic methods this research examines three sites: the Enkang Oloirien Village Homestay, Olapa village and the main entrance to the MMNR where Maasai women sell souvenirs to explore Maasai perceptions and organization of cultural tourism. Responding to literature which considers benefits from tourism to accrue when hosts control cultural representation, this thesis reveals the incorporation of cultural tourism into daily life and how images and narratives with both Maasai and foreign origins are mixed, employed, manipulated and resisted at tourism sites, to achieve the central benefits of meeting basic needs, educating children, and supplementing and bolstering pastoral activities.

## Keywords

Cultural tourism, Maasai, Cultural Representation, Kenya, Identity, Agency

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## Preface

*William- We believe ourselves, we are the Big Six*

*Kara- You're the Big Six?*

*William- Yes.*

*Kara- So you're the sixth of the fifth.*

*William- We have the Big Five...*

*Kara- Ya.*

*William- The animals...*

*Kara- Yep.*

*William- But you add the Maasai, there will be the Big Six. [The tourists] come and they see how these people they live with the wild animals.*

## Chapter 1

### 1 Back to the Mara

Awkward. Thinking back, I feel this seven-letter word encapsulates my experience during my first visit to a Maasai village near the Masai Mara National Reserve (MMNR)<sup>1</sup> more than five years ago. Browsing through my “tagged photos” on Facebook, you will catch me laughing while donned in a red-gridded *shuka*, with a group of fellow university students whose neutral-toned clothing and white skin further enhances the vibrancy of the warm coloured *shukas* and black bodies in the frame. I laugh as one of my friends attempts to hurl herself vertically into the air trying to match the Maasai men who have effortlessly performed a demonstration during which we were told that whoever succeeds in jumping the highest will be rewarded with the most girlfriends.

My memory of events and information gained during our brief stop in this village, as part of our four-day safari to the MMNR and Amboseli National Park, is quite foggy and disconnected. I remember jumping and dancing; sticks, friction, breath on dry grass and flames; dark, smoke filled homes; cow dung; flies attempting to land on liquid collecting pools on a baby’s face to the wrath of a mother’s protective and swatting hands; bleating goats and white women and Maasai women hand in hand, swaying their arms to a song tuned only to voices in a language I could not understand. I recall trying to negotiate a price down for an ebony-coloured set of salad tongs with carved elephants mounting the tops of their handles for my mother-in-law. I can see a man, whose face and name I cannot remember, leading us around the village and into a house, but I stumble in recalling the breadth of information shared. One thing that does stand out for me, perhaps enabled by a picture I took, is a stick and a rock. A stick and a rock in the middle of the circular enclosure whose purpose we were informed is to mark the location of

---

<sup>1</sup> While the generally agreed upon correct way of spelling is Maasai, and therefore the incorrect: Masai, given that the MMNR signs and advertisements still use the obsolete spelling with just one ‘a,’ I will use it when referring to the reserve.

circumcision of boys in the village. In my mind, these events took place in a nameless and locationless *boma*<sup>2</sup>. Perhaps neither of these matter to the international visitor; however, as the only coordinates and identifiers of significance are its perceived Maasainess and emplacement on the African continent.

While in the village watching and listening to some of the Maasai women perform the ‘ladies dance,’ I was overcome by the shadows of myself and others in my group snapping pictures of the ordeal (see Plate 1). This picture has always resonated with me on how I felt about the activities and events in the village I visited. To me, this photo blatantly illustrates a visual ordering of othering and a spatial and social separation between Western tourist and Maasai host; a space where Maasai voices were largely unheard but instead filled with the digital clicks and beeps of laborious cameras.

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<sup>2</sup> *Boma* (which can also be seen in a pluralized, anglicized form as *bomas*) is the Kiswahili term used to refer to village settlements. One will also see the Maa term *enkang* used for the same purpose (Wijngaarden 2016). In the literature, those villages which host visitors, have dance performances and sell souvenirs are referred to as cultural bomas, cultural manyattas and cultural villages.





**Plate 1: 'Us' versus 'Them' (Photo by author)**

Since this visit, I have long planned to return to the Mara, not as a tourist per se but as a nascent anthropologist hoping to study cultural tourism. This uncomfortable experience developed my interest in learning more about Maasai men and women's views of the swarms of khaki clad, camera carrying tourists coming to their villages and homes. Given the citation of benefits to accrue from initiatives which are managed and directed by locals themselves (see for example Bunten 2010a, 2015, 2010b), I have decided to focus on cultural tourism initiatives which are specifically owned and operated by Maasai people living and working outside the MMNR. This focus led me to carry out my fieldwork with participants working at a Village Homestay<sup>3</sup> owned by a local Maasai man; those working in a village hosting tourists, strikingly similar to the one I described

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<sup>3</sup> Apart from the two guides working at the Village Homestay, all names of persons, villages and businesses in this thesis are pseudonyms.

on my previous visit and women selling beadwork and other souvenirs to visitors at the Sekenani gate of the MMNR.

## 1.1 Themes in tourism research

Valene Smith (2012) writes that the ‘scientification process’ for anthropological work on tourism started in 1974 when she surveyed her colleague’s interest in the subject and in its later incorporation into the American Anthropological Association (AAA) meeting agenda in Mexico City. Later, the founders, if you will, decided that the next logical academic step would be the creation of a book on tourism, resulting with the 1977 publication of *Hosts and Guests-The Anthropology of Tourism*, edited by Smith. A year after Smith’s original musings, discussions were initiated by Jafar Jafari on the suitability of a journal, eventually leading to the birth of the popular *Annals of Tourism Research*. After commenting on this journal’s focus, updated editions to her edited book and on teaching Anthropology and Tourism, Smith writes that, “the scientification of tourism is not yet complete,” given changes such as growth of tourists coming from emerging nations in Africa and Asia. She argues that this in turn will require hosts to reorganize their services to meet these new and unique guest needs, perhaps even changing what is considered a valuable tourism product (2012:x).

Assessing the anthropological study of tourism, Stronza (2001) posits that the literature predominantly falls within two domains. The first focuses on the origins of tourism and defining the different types of tourism and tourists (e.g. Cohen, 1972; Cole, 2008; Smith, 1977; Urry, 2002). This section of the literature also outlines motivations for travel, whether it be for a ‘secular ritual’ (Graburn 2001), to experience the strange, novel and the different within an arena still containing the comforts of home (Cohen 1972); as a nostalgic journey in reaction to a perceived loss of authenticity in ‘modern’ lives (MacCannell 1976, 1973) or perhaps as an attempt to ‘transform’ oneself (Bruner 1991). The second trend, by contrast, focuses on the impacts of tourism on host destinations and populations (see also Gmelch 2018; Graburn 1983; Chambers 2010). Stronza further contends that this has caused a divergence of research which presents theoretical frameworks to hypothesize tourists’ motivations on the one hand and empirical studies to

assess impacts on hosts/destinations on the other. To Stronza this is detrimental as an absence of theoretical frameworks in the second domain of literature impedes planning for the attainment of benefits and the reduction of costs. According to Stronza, these two pieces do not fit neatly together to make up the whole picture of tourism around the world (2001:262).

Impacts of tourism are often presented and organized within economic, environmental and cultural categories (see for example Stronza 2001; Chambers 2010). With regards to (political)economic impacts, sources will often suggest that tourism can contribute greatly to a country's GDP and foreign exchange but that ownerships of tourism enterprises may lay outside the destination, thereby leading to 'leakage' of profits. It is estimated that as much as 70% of tourism profits in Africa are designated for foreign pockets (van Beek and Schmidt 2012). It is for reasons such as this that tourism, especially in the 'third world,' has been considered a rejuvenated form of colonialism/imperialism (Nash 1977; Palmer, 1994; Swan 2012; van Beek and Schmidt 2012). In essence, wealthy westerners come simply to take (pictures of) the land, people and wildlife; dictate hospitality standards and leave little economic benefit for the locals themselves. Destination countries are also caught within a post-colonial link of dependency on colonizer and other western sender countries, whose impacts are seen in quite severe economic hits when travel bans are issued for 'security reasons' (Hitchcock and Putra 2009; van Beek and Schmidt 2012). Those critical of tourism's potential and its presentation as a 'panacea' for economic development for countries as a whole or as a strategy for marginalized Indigenous and ethnic minority groups within countries (Bunten 2010b; Courtney 2009; Kalavar, Buzinde, Melubo and Simon 2014), may also cite the diversion of government spending from important national social and health projects to infrastructure updates specifically to benefit the tourism industry, such as airports and roadwork in tourism centric locales (Sinclair 1998 in Wijngaarden 2008).

Often linked to exceeded carrying capacity, environmental impacts noted can include: air and water pollution, unsustainable water usage, soil erosion, noise pollution, and/or habitat destruction for local fauna and flora (Hunter and Green 1995 in Chambers 2010). With the Mara for example, the growing number of tourists visiting the park has caused

multiple vehicular tracks and off-roading to get closer to the animals, thereby diminishing vegetation for the herbivores and harming hunting patterns for the carnivores (Honey 2008; Mundia and Murayama 2009). Reporting in the early 2000s, Lamprey and Reid attribute the “combination of habitat loss, poaching and other disturbances” to have led to a decline in “resident wildlife populations [...] by over 70% over the last 20 years (2004:999). By contrast however, sources examining the efficacy of conservation efforts in tourism note the capacity of community-engaged ecotourism to lead to equitable resource use and preservation. Success of such projects is believed to be dependent on the distribution of economic benefits to local communities, education and interpretation programs and restrictions on the number of visitors (Chambers 2010).

Focusing on those impacts considered cultural, Liljeblad (2015), in his review of literature on cultural/Indigenous/ethnic tourism, finds a ‘normative tone’ “in terms of identifying when a tourist-Indigenous encounter is ‘appropriate’ or ‘inappropriate’ and a prescriptive’ objective in terms of what can be done to encourage tourist-Indigenous encounters to be the former rather than latter” (66). While he states that a notion of what is appropriate is a concern for all forms of tourism, it is particularly relevant for Indigenous tourism because of the potential reification of “imperialist colonial legacies” (2015:66). Additional concerns cited include: exploitation of hosts by external stakeholders (Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994; Cohen 1988; Stronza 2008; Wilson and Ypeij 2012), cultural homogenization occurring through the ‘demonstration effect’ (discussed and critiqued in Cole 2008), cultural appropriation and intellectual property rights (Stronza 2008) and intrusiveness of tourists (Bunten 2015; Hitchcock 1996). Furthermore, while tourists may proclaim that visiting and connecting with locals in ‘exotic Third World countries’ may result in ‘a total transformation of the self,’ as promised in traditional tourism advertising, the hosts themselves are more likely to be the ones transforming their identities and livelihoods so as to accommodate and attract visitors (Bruner 1991; see also Swan 2012). This has created a concern of a ‘McDisneyization’ of cultural tourism, wherein in the process of commodification of culture all aspects become packaged to be marketed and sold, thereby limiting the ‘integrity’ of the culture (Maoz 2006; MacCannell 1973; Ypeij 2012b; Ritzer and Liska

1997). Bodley (2008) is also quite critical about the capacity of tourism for intercultural education and writes that while it may occur in some contexts, tourism “more often [...] creates and maintains illusions about exotic cultures” (2008:163).

Cohen (1988) challenges the tourism literature’s ‘common assumptions’ such as commoditization and an impossibility of ‘authentic tourist experiences,’ contending that authenticity is not a ‘primitive concept’ but is rather ‘negotiable’ and is dependent on the type and corresponding ‘aspirations’ of tourists (371). Advocating for what he terms as emergent authenticity, he criticizes the overgeneralization that commoditization of cultural products for tourism leads to a loss of meaning, arguing that “commoditization does not necessarily destroy the meaning of cultural products, although it may change it or add new meanings to old ones” (1988:371; see also Bunten, 2010b; Schnell 2003).

In a similar vein, and sometimes with the problematic experiences, are the cited benefits of tourism for Indigenous and minority populations. In addition to economic earnings, these include: (renewed) pride in culture, importantly in contexts where Indigenous or minority people have been marginalized (Bunten 2010a, 2010b, 2015; Cole 2008; Stronza 2008); improved rights and political recognition (Cole 2008; Deutshlander and Miller 2003; Whitford and Ruhanen 2016); an opportunity to dismantle harmful stereotypes (Bunten 2010a; Tuulentie 2006; Pereiro 2016) and cultural preservation and perpetuation (Bunten 2010b, 2010a). As mentioned above, there is a general consensus in the research that these benefits are increased and harmful aspects minimized when tourism operations are owned and managed by local peoples themselves. This includes greater authority in determining how their culture will be presented to tourists and even what constitutes an ‘authentic’ culture (Bruner 2001; Bunten 2010a, 2010b; Chambers 2010; Hitchcock 1996; Liljeblad 2015; Macleod and Carrier 2010).

Decision making processes on promotion and presentation of tourism destinations and cultural representation brings us to a prominent theorist in the tourism literature, John Urry and his widely cited, Foucauldian inspired *tourist gaze*. Urry investigates the development and concretization of tourist gazes, who or what is involved in this development process and its implications on the objects, persons or places that are gazed

upon. Tourists are ‘semioticians’, that is they are not seeing ‘things’ but are rather looking for ‘signs’ and successful tourism projects are those that reinforce the gaze (Urry 2002). This line of thinking presents questions such as: whether locals and hosts, such as the Maasai, feel constrained to package their culture in a particular manner to capture a tourist gaze that is looking for a sign of an exotic Other (Babb 2012; Hitchcock 1996; Liljeblad 2015; MacCannell 1973; Urry 2002; Urry and Larsen 2011). Or, perhaps the power to control and determine the proper cultural product, landscape or host body for a tourist to gaze upon is in the hands of tourism mediators and brokers (policy planners, guidebooks governments, marketers and researchers) (Cole 2008; Hollinshead 1999). Maybe then, the relevance of the gaze and its managerial powers is more so in its direction upon tourists themselves (Cheong and Miller 2000). Additional paths in the literature introduce the multi-directionality and co-construction of the gaze by tourists and locals as seen in Maoz's (2006) ‘mutual gaze;’ and even discussion of the tourist gaze as a ‘paradox of resistance’ as argued by Bunten (2010a). That is, resistance to the tourist gaze’s stereotypes through covert practices such as jokes and humour or by accentuating positions in ‘modernity.’ To Bunten, strategies such as these ‘balance’ portrayal of one’s culture according to local values, with presenting an Indigenous product that will appeal to tourists. Positions such as this challenge the presentation of locals in destination countries as passive and imposed upon by the all-powerful tourism industry (Bunten 2010b; Pereiro 2016; Stronza 2001, 2008).

### 1.1.1 Classification as cultural tourism

Like most things in social life, attempting to assign forms of tourism into a simple, bounded classification system proves challenging and contestable. Liljeblad lists the common categories found in relevant literature to include: “‘aboriginal cultural tourism,’ ‘anthropological tourism,’ ‘First Nations tourism,’ ‘ethnic tourism,’ ‘Indian tourism,’ ‘indigenous tourism,’ ‘heritage tourism,’ ‘native tourism,’ or ‘tribal tourism,’” before deciding that ‘indigenous cultural tourism’ will be sufficient to capture all of these forms (2015:66). Indeed, Butler and Hinch’s definition of Indigenous tourism as any “tourism activity where Indigenous people are directly involved either through control or by having their culture serve as the essence of the attraction” (2007:85), does seem to

describe the operations and focus of initiatives like Olmoleliani's Engan Oloirien Homestay or even the village tours discussed above. van Beek and Schmidt however, problematize the idea of applying 'indigenous tourism' to such operations in an African country, "where most cultures are 'indigenous' in the sense of 'having lived there always.'" (2012:5). Moreover, applying the term Indigenous may not capture the experiences of Maasai in tourism when considering that they self-identify as originally migrating from Sudan (Fieldwork, Interview with Joseph, June 8, 2017; Wijngaarden 2008, 2010, 2016). That being said, a more 'constructivist,' 'structural' or 'relational' definition of Indigeneity may be applicable where Maasai and other Africans have struggled to assert themselves as

Indigenous, when the qualifier is considered to be first peoples, but argue that they share similar structural positions with Native Americans, Maoris and other Indigenous Peoples in terms of their long-standing historical marginalization and oppression by colonial and postcolonial state actors based, in part, on their efforts to maintain their cultural and linguistic differences (Hodgson 2014:62).

Smith (1977) is perhaps the first anthropologist to classify tourism types and in doing so offers the five categories of historical, environmental, recreational, ethnic and cultural. Of relevance to this work are the definitions, and distinctions between the latter two. She defines the former as that which is "marketed to the public in terms of the 'quaint' customs of indigenous and often exotic peoples." She continues that ethnic tourism activities include "visits of native homes and villages, observations of dances and ceremonies and shopping for primitive wares or curios" (1977:2). When detailing cultural tourism, Smith writes that it "includes the 'picturesque' or 'local color,' a vestige of a vanishing life-style that lies within human memory with its 'old style' houses, homespun fabrics, horse or ox-drawn carts and plows, and hand[-made] crafts." Among the attractions of this type she lists, "meals in rustic inns, folklore performances, costumed wine festivals, or rodeos reminiscent of the Wild West" (1977:2).

Wood (1984) questions Smith's distinction between cultural and ethnic tourism namely whether one culture can be considered more 'peasant' than another or how she identifies those as 'vanishing.' He does believe; however, that ethnic and cultural tourism should be differentiated and instead calls for this to be based on a continuum of particularity and

emphasis, such that “[e]thnic tourism should be defined by its direct focus on people living out a cultural identity whose uniqueness is being marketed for tourists.” Similar to Smith, in his view this will take the form of visitors taking “‘tours of living culture,’ or [being] presented with staged performances” (1984:361). To Wood, cultural tourism is then “defined in terms of situations where the role of culture is contextual, where its role is to shape the tourist’s experience of a situation in general, without a particular focus on the uniqueness of a specific cultural identity.” He continues, that “[t]he focus here is much more on artifacts, particularly buildings, vehicles, food stalls, clothing etc., rather than on the concrete cultural activities of people” (1984:361). He writes that it is those elements that give, for example, an Asian ‘flavour’ in Asian cities. From here he further categorizes activities into either primary ethnic or cultural tourism, and secondary ethnic or cultural tourism. Based on his definition of ethnic tourism of secondary importance as those “[d]esignated villages or special performances supplementing other forms of tourism (recreational, historical, environmental)” (1984:361), we may be able to consider this a viable classification for tourists who stop at a Maasai village as a supplement to their primary motivation, the iconic safari in the Masai Mara. Here it seems that ethnic tourism occurs when the culture of a group is the focus or motivation of travel for the tourist, but cultural tourism involves buildings, bodies, products, sounds and smells that are relegated to background status. Maybe we could also consider the array of red on Maasai bodies or the lines of zebu cattle seen through the windows of a four-wheel drive vehicle on the bumpy road to the park, as characteristic of the later.

In the case of tourism involving the Ngadha people in Indonesia, Stroma Cole does not accept the applicability of the Indigenous tourism label and problematizes the notion of ethnic versus cultural tourism. She notes that cases where ‘ethnic’ is used are based on the degree of difference between the tourists’ home culture and the visited culture and that that which is ‘cultural’ is used where the difference is considered less pronounced (MacIntosh and Goeldner 1990 in Cole 2008; see also Chambers 2010). Cole warns that the inclusion of ‘ethnic’ leads to a “process of ‘othering’” (2008:62). Furthermore, in Africa specifically, “[e]thnicity’ is everywhere” and it would be inappropriate to limit it to those who are simply more attractive to the tourist gaze (van Beek and Schmidt 2012:5).



Cole offers a definition of cultural tourism to be “travel motivated by the desire to experience a destination’s culture” (Cole 2008:61). With those visiting the Mara this may be questioned, as some tourists may argue that seeing the wildlife is the motivation for their travel. Can we classify safaris as part of Maasai culture or even Kenyan culture? van Beek and Schmidt note that while tourists’ primary motivation would be to see the wildlife, when offered they will likely choose a palate of “‘wildness’-*cum*-culture” (2012:3, emphasis original). For the sake of simplicity and to prevent dedicating an entire chapter or thesis to continuing to mull over these distinctions, I will follow suit with van Beek and Schmidt by using cultural tourism throughout my written work, allowing it to encapsulate the tourism endeavors I looked at, as well as leave room for the incorporation of others. I also think that by including the prefix of cultural to tourism, it differentiates these endeavors from itineraries which focus solely on visits to the park, although it is likely that tourists will still catch a glimpse of Maasai material culture in seeing the Maasai women selling beadwork at the gate. Also, diving into the semantics, it seems appropriate to use the term cultural tourism, as many of my respondents indicated that tourists come to the village or come to stay at the camp to learn about the *culture* (*orkuuk*).

## 1.2 Research questions and thesis organization

Having introduced myself, a bit of context and leaving some ahead to discover, I would like to now welcome you, my reader, on a *safari* to explore the following research questions in this thesis:

1. How are Maasai owned and operated tourism endeavors organized, and what factors are influencing decisions on organization?
2. How are tourism activities conceptualized and assessed?
3. How is cultural tourism tied into other aspects of Maasai life and identity?

In focusing on these questions, I will first open with contextual material to situate Maasai owned and operated cultural tourism projects, by looking at information such as Kenya’s national approach to tourism, the history of the MMNR and Maasai involvement with the

tourism industry. Chapter Three will begin with a more thorough description on the 'itineraries' at the study sites, followed by engagement with relevant literature on factors influencing and ordering the organization of activities. In Chapter Four, readers will learn the views of Maasai men and women provided during interviews within the fieldwork period on topics such as the benefits and value of cultural tourism in the area, as well as perspectives on tourists themselves. In this chapter we will also explore how tourism influences and is incorporated into wider aspects of Maasai life and identity, including pastoralism and dress. Chapter Five will provide further comment on this last point, by marrying themes evident in the organization and perspectives of Maasai owned and operated tourism initiatives in the Mara (Chapters Three and Four) through notions of hybridity and conceptualizing Maasai cultural tourism as a 'serious game' (Ortner 2006, 1999, 1996). In answering these questions this research is guided by an overall objective to contribute to more recent literature which offers a venue for host perspectives, whilst still maintaining connections to theoretical trends and explanations in tourism research, whether they be in the form of overlap or at times, disruption.

## Chapter 2

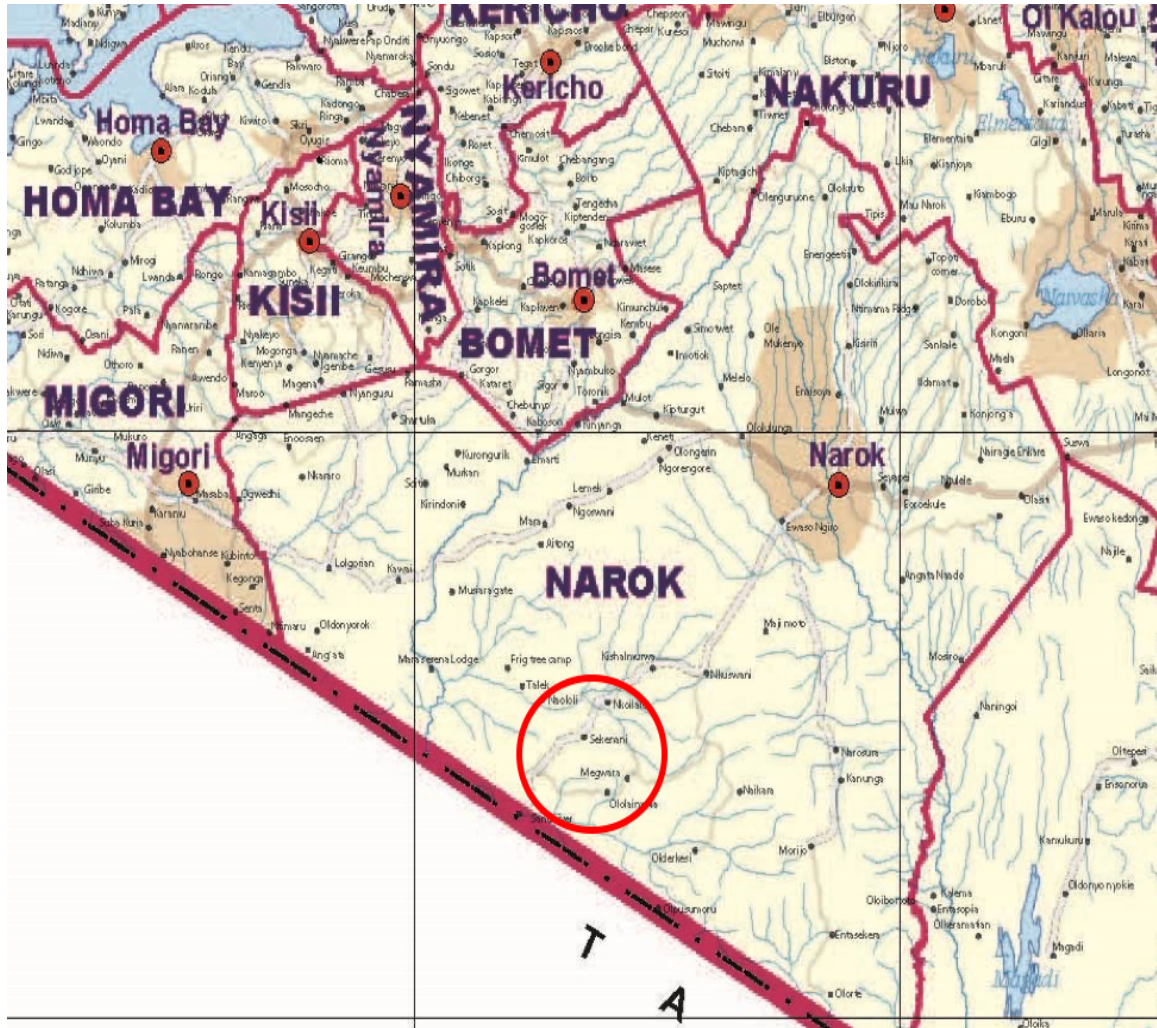
### 2 Research setting and methods

Situating the research, this chapter will present the location and timeline of fieldwork, the objectives and trends of Kenya's tourism sector, literature on Maasai life and involvement in the tourism project and the data collection methods used.

Fieldwork for this study took place from June to July 2017, in the area bordering the Sekenani gate, the main entrance of the famous Masai Mara National Reserve (MMNR). The Masai Mara, and the neighbouring Sekenani town (see Figure 2) fall within Narok County (see Figure 1), which covering an area of 17,944 square kilometres, has a population of 850,920 (Narok County Government n.d.). This equates to roughly two percent of Kenya's entire population (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2015). The Masai Mara and Narok Town (the administrative centre of the county) are approximately 230 and 140 kilometres, respectively, from Kenya's capital: Nairobi. As featured on the county website, the Narok government reports that, tourism is the "largest contributor to the county's economy" given the emplacement of the MMNR within its jurisdiction (n.d.).



Figure 1 Map with Narok County circled in red [Adapted from d-maps.com (n.d.)]



**Figure 2 Map with Sekenani circled in red [Adapted from Ministry of Devolution and Planning (n.d.)]**

## 2.1 Tourism in Kenya

Kenya's tourism sector predominantly focuses on appealing to European and North American tourists by highlighting its wildlife (Mayaka and Prasad 2012). Wildlife parks and reserves are reminiscent of the colonial era<sup>4</sup>, when hunting by white officers and

<sup>4</sup> Britain's involvement in Kenya started with the royally chartered Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) in 1885, a strategic play for the 'Scramble for Africa' Later with its bankruptcy and deemed inefficiency to control the area, the British established the East African Protectorate in 1895 and in 1898

other notable visitors, such as the 1909 expedition by former American President, Theodore Roosevelt, was in its heyday (Sobania 2003; Honey 2008). Sindiga (1999) writes that wildlife-based tourism in Kenya took off at the end of the nineteenth century and with its ‘consumptive’ beginnings, later resulted in a ban on African subsistence hunting to ensure that there were more animals available for the colonial or foreign kill. The establishment of conservation parks and reserves also became popular after WWII, and in the late 1970s, with diminishing wildlife stocks, a ban on all hunting forms was issued. Relics of the colonial era and organized big game hunts can be seen today in resorts and accommodations such as the ‘The Cottar’s 1920s Safari Camp’ and its advertised offering of:

the romance of safari under cream canvas tents, the style of the bygone era of the twenties, while at the same time supplying the amenities required by today’s modern world travellers and professional guides whose qualifications are the highest in Africa (n.d).

Today, the tourism sector is under the mandate of the state Ministry of Tourism and the wildlife resources in the country under the jurisdiction of the Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS), a state corporation. Wildlife conservation areas are organized by government, community and private sectors, with state and county run parks and reserves, community conservancies and private ranches or conservancies (Asaka 2018). Tourism features prominently in the country’s development strategy, as evidenced in its inclusion within *Kenya Vision 2030*, the blueprint launched in 2008 to position Kenya as a ““middle-income country providing a high quality of life to all its citizens by the year 2030””(Government of the Republic of Kenya 2007:1). Tourism is considered to be the “leading sector” in achieving aims in the economic pillar of *Vision 2030*, organized around an overarching goal of raising annual GDP growth rates to an average of 10% over the 2008-2030 period. Within the strategies to augment the country’s tourism

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the East African Protectorate was divided into Kenya and Tanzania. After a number of years of struggle, Kenya officially gained independence in 1963 and in 1964 Kenyans voted in their first leader, President Jomo Kenyatta (Sobania 2003). Of course, the extent to which the country has really been ‘decolonized’ politically, culturally, and economically (and whether ‘independence’ is even plausible as an ideal) is questioned (Maloba 1995).

industry is the stated objective to expand on “niche” tourism which includes “cultural” tourism (Government of the Republic of Kenya 2007:10).

In the Economic Survey 2017, the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics stated that the “tourism sector had a remarkable recovery because of improved security and successful conference tourism” (2017:6). The sector earned 99.7 billion KSH<sup>5</sup> in 2016, representing a 17.8% increase from 2015 earnings. According to the report, this marks the first year of growth since 2012. The importance of the tourism industry and its growth in earnings is reflected in a document released by the Ministry of State for Planning National Development in 2010, which states that tourism accounts for 9.5% of formal employment (2010). The economic impact of the industry is also evident in numbers circulating which attribute tourism to have made up 10-13% of Gross Domestic Product earnings in recent decades (Mayaka and Prasad 2012) and in its position as the second largest sector of the country’s economy, making up 21% of Kenya’s total foreign exchange (Kenya Wildlife Service n.d.).

As stated in the Economic Survey, nearly 72% of international visitors arriving in Kenya in 2016, indicated that the purpose of their visit was for holidays. Arrivals to Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, the largest international airport in the country and the closest to the Masai Mara, were highest in July and August. It is perhaps unsurprising that this corresponds with the beginning of the popular wildebeest migration into the Mara from Tanzania’s Serengeti National Park. Furthermore, looking at departing visitors by country of residence in continental terms, Europeans appear to be the largest number visiting (and leaving) Kenya, with the United Kingdom providing the highest number of total departing visitors, as well as the highest number of total departing visitors with holidays as their stated purpose of travel. Following the United Kingdom is the United States in the category of departing visitors for the purpose of holidays. Comparing this data to the number and nationalities of the visitors staying at the Village Homestay during

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<sup>5</sup> Kenya Shillings.

my fieldwork period, visitors from the United States made up the largest proportion at eleven visitors<sup>6</sup> (within five groups). In addition to an increase in international visitors, number of local and international conferences held and visitors to museums, snake parks and historical sites; visitors to national parks and game reserves are reported to have increased by 17% to 2,284,700. The Masai Mara, in combination with the Nairobi Mini Orphanage, Impala Sanctuary, Lake Nakuru, Nairobi Park, and the Nairobi Safari Walk make up 57.4% of this total. On its own however, despite being the seventh most visited park/game reserve, the number of visitors to Masai Mara declined slightly from 2015 (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2017).

Located in the Great Rift Valley, covering an area of more than 1,500 square kilometres, the Kenya Tourism Board calls the MMNR “the jewel of Kenya’s wildlife viewing areas” as it is home to 95 species of mammals, amphibians and reptiles and over 400 species of birds (2014). The Masai Mara falls within the 30,000-square kilometre Mara-Serengeti Ecosystem. In 1961 the Narok County Council became managing authority of the reserve and later it became jointly managed by both the Narok and Transmara County Councils. With its operation at a county level, the degree of decentralization makes reserves like the Mara quite unique from other African wildlife protection and conservation areas (Honey 2008). Settlement and grazing have been forbidden within its boundaries since 1976, and hunting since the 1977 hunting ban. Now only vehicles are permitted in the iconic savannah (Wijngaarden 2012). The Mara has been regarded as the birthplace of ecotourism in Africa (Wijngaarden 2012; Honey 2008) and the promotion of tourist camps bordering the reserve using a ‘green’ image or to benefit the community are steadily increasing (Wijngaarden 2012). The concern of ‘eco-light’ in nature-based tourism initiatives is eminent however, with the use of green advertising but with little done in the way of reduction of environmental impacts and improvements to community development (Gmelch 2018; Sindiga 1999). Mayaka and Prasad (2012), consider the country’s tourism industry to be operating at ‘suboptimal performance’

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<sup>6</sup> Two guests were dual citizens, and an additional visitor had come to Kenya after completing an extended period of volunteer work in Uganda.



citing internal and external issues such as weak policy framework, lack of community engagement, poor resource stewardship, environmental degradation and low human resources and education development. Similarly, calling for ‘alternative tourism,’ rather than the mass tourism dominating the market in Kenya, Sindiga (1999:108-110) highlights the concerns and challenges to consist of the

breakdown of the physical infrastructure; environmental degradation of natural resources especially in the national parks and reserves; a narrow tourism product and source market for tourists; uneven distribution of tourism benefits to local communities; low foreign exchange earnings per capita and a low retention rate of foreign earnings within the country.

## 2.2 A (very) brief overview on Maasai life

As a prospective tourist, in developing or furthering your knowledge of Maasai people, you are likely to come across versions of information similar to that found in the latest edition of the *Lonely Planet* Guide Book for Kenya. Here you learn that,

Despite representing only a small proportion of the total population (2%), the Maasai are, for many, the definitive symbol of Kenya. With a reputation as fierce warriors, the tribe has managed to stay outside the mainstream of development in Kenya and still maintains large cattle herds along the Tanzanian border. The British gazetted the Masai Mara National Reserve in the early 1960s, displacing the Maasai, and they slowly continued to annexe more and more Maasai land. Resettlement programs have met [*sic*] with limited success as the Maasai traditionally scorn agriculture and land ownership. The Maasai still have a distinctive style and traditional age-grade social structure, and circumcision is still widely practiced for both men and women. Women typically wear large plate-like bead necklaces, while the men typically wear a red-checked *shuka* (blanket) and carry a distinctive ball-ended club. Blood and meat are the mainstays of the Maasai diet, supplemented by a drink called *mursik*, made from milk fermented with charcoal, which has been shown to lower cholesterol” (Ham et al. 2018:312).

While this description does briefly tie in issues stemming from colonialism such as gazetting of the reserve and resettlement, I would argue that it still introduces the Maasai from a position of the ethnographic present, as is done in some tourism sites as well (Bruner 2001). It presents a static version of Maasai people and does not account for, for example, the increase in children attending schools, the influence of conservation activities and changing land tenure systems on semi-nomadic pastoralism or how with increasing rates of land subdivision and privatization, individuals and families have to

“re-create” the commons, via perhaps paying for access to grassland or relying on kin and friend networks, which Archambault (2016) explains are often specifically connected to women’s social networks.

By essentially opening the description of an entire group of people, using “with a reputation as fierce warriors,” descriptions like the one above are also ignoring the experiences of women and children and even men who are beyond the age of warriors and who may be junior or senior elders. In doing so, it does not account for complexities such as women’s increased role and decision-making in the management of herds in response to the impacts associated with ‘development’ such as schooling and wage labour<sup>7</sup> (Archambault 2016). Moreover, stating that Maasai essentially resist development does not account for their engaged involvement in local and national politics or acknowledge the use of cellphones and smartphones in many aspects of their lives (Fieldwork 2017). Discussed further in Chapter Three, passages such as this are largely de-historizing Maasai from their complicated and complex past and de-placing them from a nuanced and highly connected present.

When I asked a Maasai elder what it means to be Maasai, he spoke of how the Maasai migrated from South Sudan and that they are known to be brave because they were able to travel (and likely fight along the way) to Kenya. Joseph continues that the Maasai came to a place called Laikipia until the “white people” came, during which the Maasai were pushed southward, including to the Masai Mara (see also Wijngaarden 2012). Responding to a question on Maasai rituals, he describes that young boys will form an age group and that they will eventually be circumcised at the same time, after which they are to become warriors. As warriors, one of four age grades for Maasai men (Wijngaarden 2010), they are considered ‘soldiers’ or the ‘army’ of the Maasai. He continues that once the younger generation becomes of age, there will be a passage ritual called “drinking of milk.” From there, they are able to marry and when they have children, all the warriors will have graduated and they will slaughter a bull, which is

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<sup>7</sup> Men and boys are usually responsible for herding livestock.

referred to as the cleansing bull (Fieldwork, Interview, June 8, 2017). This will establish that those in a particular age-set, with its unique name, are now men (for more detailed information on the graduation ceremonies in a Maasai man's life see ole Saibull and Carr 1981; Ole Sankan 1973).

On warriors, or *murrani/murran* (sing/pl), Ole Sankan (1973:27) writes that the “institution of warriorship” was needed as a “defensive force against any invading enemy, including people who had originally been Maasai but who had broken away and estranged themselves.” Shinka, now a guide at Enkang Olorien in his mid-twenties, recounts his time as a warrior for two years in his early teens, when he was able to “learn a lot, [...] go to the bush, and [...] learn about [his] Maasai culture, about the herbs and [...] to get to know many place[s].” He continues that he and the fifteen other warriors in his group learned skills and rules from elders, stating that they “show us the way, what to do.” He explains that they would move around from bush to bush and sometimes to villages. Another young man in the village, who spent time as a warrior remarks that if a group of warriors comes to a village, one will have no choice but to provide them whatever they need, including items such as meat or milk (Fieldwork, Interview with Parkire, July 19, 2017). Shinka concludes that one of his favourite things about being a warrior was singing with his age-mates. Interestingly enough, he did not enjoy this as much once employed in a village where he sang for tourists (Fieldwork, Interview, July 21, 2017). The warriors in Olapa spoke of their plans after graduating from being warriors to include finding a wife and then looking for a job as a shepherd or perhaps in the tourism industry, such as continuing to sing in a village or working at a camp (Fieldwork, Interview July 3, 2017).

Red ochre braided warriors, as ‘defenders’ of the Maasai, are well-known for their cattle-raiding (ole Saibull and Carr 1981:66). In these events, warriors were to first consult their *Loibon*<sup>8</sup> for advice and blessing. Roles were delegated such as those who were scouts and

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<sup>8</sup> Considered a ‘spiritual leader’ (ole Saibull and Carr 1981). Spelling has also included *Laibon* (Ole Sankan 1973).

therefore responsible for consolidating strategic information in advance of the raid, whereas others were ‘cattle trekkers’ and therefore apt with efficiently and effectively herding the raided cattle to their new homes (ole Saibull and Carr 1981). After a devastating bout of rinderpest in the early 1890s, the British benefited from the Maasai’s cattle raiding skills when they recruited their assistance in land acquisition, with the agreement that they would obtain any cattle acquired in the process. After they were considered no longer needed in these expansion efforts however, the British worked to dismantle warriorhood with an aim to usurp the Maasai social formation altogether, motivated by a social evolutionist trajectory (Rigby 1992; Wijngaarden 2010). According to ole Saibull and Carr (1981), cattle theft became so widespread that Maasai people began to steal from other Maasai. This eventually sparked a treaty among Maasai to end raiding in the 1950s.

Another responsibility for warriors likely appealing to, or perhaps abhorred by tourists, is the lion hunt. *Olamayio* refers to an organized hunt undertaken by Maasai warriors and occasionally elders. Hunts may occur for “overlapping reasons” including connections with the ritual hunt to demonstrate bravery and achieve prestige as *murran*, as a means to protect stocks and villages from menacing predators and/or as a political protest against restrictive conservation efforts. (Goldman, Roque de Pinho and Perry 2013:494). On this last point, Goldman et al. (2013) cite an event in 2003 when a group of Maasai individuals “killed lions allegedly in an effort to get the attention of Kenya Wildlife Services to address increasing predation on their livestock by lions after a severe drought” (492).

With the current illegality of hunting wildlife, outlawing of cattle raiding and increasing trend of boys opting for school-based education over warriorship, some have questioned the role and sustainability of warriors/warriorhood in ‘modern times’ (Coast 2002; ole Saibull and Carr 1981; Spencer and Waller 2017). With that being said, there have also been instances of efforts to redefine the role of *murran* in Kenya and Tanzania, for example with programs which hire young men to help in conservation and wildlife

tracking efforts (Dolrenry, Hazzah and Frank 2016; Goldman et al. 2013<sup>9</sup>). Later, we will see how tourism is also informing and reconfiguring the role of Maasai warriors in the present.

Due to the overrepresentation of Maasai culture via the male warrior image one will often see little or no mention of Maasai women in descriptions of Maasai life or culture (Bruner 2001). When I asked Jennipher what life is like as a Maasai woman, she detailed that you *become* a Maasai woman once you are circumcised and following this you will get married, to which your family will receive 10 cows. After marriage you will give birth (Fieldwork, Interview, June 12, 2017). Here we can see that womanhood is described and conceptualized within the institutions of marriage and childbirth. When I asked a group of women how life is different for a Maasai man versus a Maasai woman, they noted that you can differentiate the two because of their attire as a man will wear a knife and have a spear and wear a different belt. A woman, by contrast, I was told, will mostly wear yellow. In terms of responsibilities they detail that the men are to look after the animals and “find food” for the family and the women are responsible for building and maintaining the house (by smearing with a water and mud/dung mixture once the walls dry out, or repairing the roof when it leaks), fetching firewood and water and cooking for the family (Fieldwork, Interview, June 19, 2017). Maasai women are also responsible for milking and sometimes selling surplus (Coast 2002).

According to ole Saibull and Carr (1981:19) Maasai believe that all cattle are “rightfully theirs.” To demonstrate the significance of cattle in Maasai life and culture, they cite a man who proclaims “[a] Maasai without cattle or children is better off dead” (1981:40). With cattle, individuals and families can provide for subsistence needs in either using the animal and animal by-products themselves or selling them to earn money to purchase items such as food, veterinary medicine and/or school fees/supplies. Moreover, cattle command community respect, are necessary for customary practices such as dowry

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<sup>9</sup> Goldman et al. (2013) critique these programs as having an air of paternalism in ordering Maasai on how to ‘properly’ conserve wildlife.

payments and animal products such as fat, urine and dung have also been used as cures for illnesses. Maasai also include goats and sheep in their herds as they are less likely to succumb to disease and drought and are more efficient breeders (Homewood, Kristjanson, and Trench 2009)

It is perhaps unsurprising that Maasai are represented (e.g. Coast 2002; Ole Kantai 1973), and self-describe themselves as ‘pure-pastoralists’ despite diversification in income generating activities and livelihood (Rigby 1992; Wijngaarden 2008, 2012). The primacy of livestock herding is demonstrated in Coast’s research in the late 1990s<sup>10</sup> which found that over 98% of all households studied kept livestock. Additional occupations and livelihoods cited included cultivators, employment as warriors and in tourism related jobs such as selling beadwork to tourists, working in cultural *bomas*, game rangers, cleaning rooms and selling produce and honey to the lodges (2002). Moreover, Archambault (2016) in her long-term ethnographic research in Elangata Wuas, a small town in Kenya’s Kajaiido district, found that 20% of families rely solely on pastoralism and 16% carry out agricultural activities, with women largely responsible for cultivation duties and selling surplus. She also found that nearly 70% of families made income from an activity that was neither pastoralism nor agriculture in the past month. Furthermore, the most commonly cited non-pastoral or non-agricultural income sources were selling charcoal, cutting and selling grass, owning or working in a shop, teaching or working in a quarry.

In addition to an ideal of pure pastoralism, Archambault notes that,

While residential life is traditionally (and ideally) arranged along patrilocal residence patterns, with a father and his wives sharing a homestead with their sons and their son’s wives and children, many homesteads bring together other relatives and friends. Co-residence is often based on accessing nearby pasture and natural resources, social services, as well as pooling herds and sharing labour (2016:730).

Writing in the latter part of the 20th century, ole Saibull and Carr (1981:38) describe “hierarchical order” in the “compound” or the *enkang*. They note that “the first wife of

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<sup>10</sup> Coast surveyed 1545 households in areas around the Masai Mara, and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area in Tanzania.

the head of the *boma* has the honored place” (emphasis original). She therefore builds her house on the right side of the northern entrance and lives there with her children. The second wife then builds her house on the left side of this entrance. The houses in an *enkang* are arranged in a circular form, enclosed by a fence and contain a large open area in the middle where livestock stay through the night. Frames of these houses are constructed by tying long wooden sticks together. Walking into one of the homes in Olapa village, visitors can relate to the following description of a Maasai house, provided by ole Saibull and Carr:

The tunneled entrance is constructed in a way to prevent rain from coming into the dark interior. It was smoky and the vents were plugged to shut out the flies. A small hearth was smoldering and it gave the only light. The furnishings were sparse, a long bench and two beds filled the tiny hut. The beds were skillfully constructed from gnarled tree stumps, with wooden planks tied to poles for the surface. Tightly woven twigs formed a mattress covered with a smooth hide, and a blanket of sheepskin. A partition of vertical reeds separated the hut from the calfpen (1981:38).

The only difference perhaps being that the framing of the house is tied together via ripped mosquito nets, which I learned during my fieldwork are used because they are provided for free and deemed unnecessary for their intended purpose given the smoke filled and poorly ventilated homes. Writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, Coast (2002) notes alterations to ‘traditional’ houses such as the inclusion of corrugated iron rooves. Modification such as this have shifted women’s role with housing construction and maintenance, as these new trends often require money to purchase materials (which is often obtained through a man’s earnings) and perhaps require a hired builder. In addition to this, she concludes that permanent buildings may be evidence of “both a cause an effect of increasing levels of sedentarization.” From the causal standpoint a permanent home, means continued occupation and as an effect permanent homes may be a response to factors leading to the rise in formal employment and/or agriculture (2002:89)

Seno and Shaw (2002) also attribute the increase in homes equipped with grass-thatched and tin rooves as indicative of the move from nomadic to more sedentary lifestyles and in their research found that that there are more traditional style houses in the Siana Group Ranch (the location of this research) as compared to the Koiyaki and Olkinyei Group Ranches. Within walking distance of the Enkang Oloirien Village Homestay one will also

see single household *enkangs* (another increasing trend found in Coast's research), with some even built of more permanent building materials such as brick and stone. It is worth noting that the multi-household *bomas* within walking distance appear to all be visited by tourists.

### 2.2.1 Impacts and experience of tourism

The Maasai experience with tourism is often framed as poor and leading to little socioeconomic benefits. It is noted that Maasai are: excluded from significant decision making circles; provided with little employment opportunities, with positions that are available as often low-skilled, low paying and subject to seasonal fluctuations and that tourism is managed by and benefiting the elite (Akama 1999; Christian 2016; Honey 2008; Wijngaarden 2016; Wishitemi, Momanyi, Ombati and Okello 2015<sup>11</sup>). Moreover, there are those who argue that positions available in the tourism industry such as those who dance in the *cultural manyattas*, work as security guards and sell beads and handicrafts “reinforce stereotypes” desired by “Western tourists keen for exoticism and adventure” (Akama 1999:717; see also Honey 2008). Christian (2016) attributes the lack of opportunities for social and economic advancement<sup>12</sup> to the intersection of gender and race in global production networks in the Kenyan tourism industry which hierarchize positions for whites, Kenyan-Asians and expatriates, versus indigenous Africans, Maasai and female workers. Maasai living adjacent to conservancies, parks and reserves are also said to bear the brunt of wildlife tourism in terms of competition for grazing resources, spread of disease from wildlife to livestock and loss of livestock and human life from

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<sup>11</sup> Wishitemi et al.'s research found that although Maasai participants linked poverty to the effects of ecotourism such as displacement of ancestral lands for the formation of parks, inequitable distribution of benefits and invasion by wildlife, participants also cited benefits of improved access to education and health and small business and income earning potentials.

<sup>12</sup> Like findings raised by Christian, Olmoleliani noted in a conversation with me that no large lodges in the Mara are owned by Maasai (Fieldwork 2017).



wildlife attacks.<sup>13</sup> This is again all with little financial benefit from the industry (Honey 2008; Thompson, Serneels, Dickson and Trench 2009; Wijngaarden 2008, 2012; Wishitemi et al. 2015).

Delving further into the Maasai experience with tourism necessitates a discussion of land ownership. Historically, as pastoralists Maasai have approached land use communally, with rules on its development and usage decided by a council of elders. This would often entail that a group would have their own area of land, which others could not use; however, outsiders were given access with the intention that the granter could use their land if needed in the future. Both the British colonial administration and the independent Kenyan government have viewed the Maasai's nomadic and communal land use patterns as threatening. (Seno and Shaw 2002; Munei and Galaty 1999). The government established the Group Representative Act in an attempt to purge communal land use. It was hoped that group ranches would help to encourage a sedentary lifestyle among the Maasai through promotion of commercial livestock income strategies within the group boundaries (Seno and Shaw 2002). However, even with this move Maasai "continued treating their land as pastoral commons with generally open access for all Maasai" (Seno and Shaw 2002:80).

Seno and Shaw's (2002) research cites four group ranches in the dispersal areas of the Masai Mara National Reserve including the Siana Group Ranch. In this project the authors were interested in learning about land use and Maasai people's perspectives on the government's aim to subdivide all group ranches into individually titled land. Findings from this research indicated that most (male) participants viewed subdivision of the groups ranches quite positively, with the often-cited reason that it would offer "security of land ownership" (82). This is likely in response to the unfortunate experiences of non-Maasai acquiring land which had been promised to Maasai people (Munei and Galaty 1999; Seno and Shaw 2002). The authors found that there was

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<sup>13</sup> The government is to compensate for loss of livestock and human life stemming from wildlife attacks, however there are concerns that the process to seek such compensation is challenging and inefficient (Asaka 2018; Wijngaarden 2008; Fieldwork 2017).

concern about individually privatized land tracts leading to decreased areas available for grazing; however, when asked what they intended to use their individual land for, respondents indicated that it would be used for livestock production (82%), leading researchers to conclude that despite this land settlement shift “livestock will retain its importance for the Maasai” (2002:82). Furthermore, some also indicated that they planned to use this area for cultivation (53%) and 27% intended to undertake some sort of tourism activity. Aims to take advantage of wildlife tourism with land subdivision may prove challenging though with its associated detrimental environmental consequences (Groom and Western, 2013; Salzman 1980; Seno and Shaw 2002; Stanley, 2005; Thompson, Serneels, Dickson and Trench, 2009; Western, Groom and Worden 2009).

A study conducted by Western et al. (2009) of group ranches found decreased wildlife densities in subdivided areas versus non-subdivided areas. In a later study Western and Groom, confirmed that population or settlement density did not necessarily explain lower wildlife population, but again that the nature of private land ownership was a greater contributor to wildlife decline, as it leads to year-round grazing on the same areas of land and declining grass and biomass cover in a larger area overall. Relatedly, private land ownership equates with shorter distances between settlements and wildlife than unsubdivided ranches where homes are generally clumped together, thereby augmenting possibilities for human wildlife conflict (Groom and Western 2013).

Given its name, although still featuring the colonially incorrect spelling, one will not be surprised to learn of the relatively long connection the Maasai have had with the Mara (meaning spotted in Maa). Maasai were relegated to this area from Laikipia by the British colonial administration and became quite reliant on the land for livestock grazing. In the 1904 and 1911 treaties between the British and Maasai leaders, the Maasai living near the Mara as well as the Amboseli reserve were assured that they would be left unbothered “for as long as the Maasai shall exist as a race” (Western 1994:15 quoted in Honey, 2008:314). This promise waned when in 1945 the National Parks Ordinance, and the later declaration of both areas as national reserves within the Royal National Parks of Kenya, worked to exclude Maasai from both the Masai Mara and Amboseli (Western 1994 cited in Honey 2008). In the late 1950s, the Maasai, the Game Department and the wildlife

advisor to the Kenya government objected to having the reserves established as parks, with the argument that if the country was to benefit from these areas so too should the communities near them. This in turn led to its management by the county council (Honey 2008). As the managing authority, the Narok County Council assumed responsibility for “developing tourism facilities, establishing and maintaining roads, appointing the warden, rangers, and other staff, and collecting entrance and other fees” (Honey 2008:315).

While the first years of its existence proved successful, as poaching was not of concern, and the county council was able to use revenues for development projects on the reserve periphery, later the Maasai started to see the benefits fade. This included dispersal of park revenues throughout the large county and not just in the predominantly Maasai dominated areas outside the Mara (Honey 2008; Homewood, Kristjanson, and Trench 2009). A study conducted in 2002 found that only approximately 20% of the \$3.5 million in revenue was destined for the Maasai group ranches around the reserve (cited in Honey 2008; see also Wijngaarden 2012). According to some of my participants however, the government has not fulfilled a promised 19% redistribution of reserve benefits to the Maasai (Fieldwork 2017). Wijngaarden’s (2012) findings also confirm this gap in commitment, noting that only about 10% is redistributed and that even this goes mostly to elites rather than public projects.

Another challenge for distribution of wildlife tourism benefits, and echoed by some of my participants, is government corruption. As noted by Honey (2008) this includes illegal land transfers to non-Maasai and inequitable income distribution between Maasai elite committee members and the rest of the members in group ranches (van Beek and Schmidt 2012; Ypeij 2012a). Moreover, the tourism industry itself is proving directly environmentally devastating to the area. With the large numbers of visitors it has been considered more of a zoo than the ‘wild’ experience it promotes (Honey 2008). This irony is surprising when we consider that motivations for excluding populations such as the Maasai from parks and reserves are based on notions that nature, to be pristine, must not include people (Honey 2008; Wijngaarden 2012).

In seeking to fill the gap in benefits from tourism activities organized by the government, some group ranches are engaged in private-community partnerships (PCPs) (Lamers et al. 2014). From the perspective of tourists, these are a likely welcomed response with the diminishing condition of the Masai Mara and the associated tourism experience; moreover these areas often offer the ability to take evening and night game drives (Honey 2008). PCP's are often organized such that a private enterprise will establish a tourism business on Maasai owned lands to which they will then receive lease payments and often a portion of the bed-night fees. While these prove more promising in terms of Maasai access to monetary, decision-making and other community development benefits, challenges often still remain and can include "imbalanced relations between individual private investors and heterogenous communities, unfair partnership deals, local political struggles emerging after implementation, and misalignment with the wider institutional environment " (Lamers, Van der Duim, van Wijk, Nthiga and Visseren-Hamakers 2014:251). There is also the concern that men are often the ones benefiting from these enterprises as land is held in their name, and therefore the ones to receive the distribution of revenues (Christian 2016).

## 2.3 Field sites

Like Tonnaer (2008, 2012), my fieldwork can be characterized as multi-sited yet all in the same locale. Most of my interviews were conducted in the three field sites of the Enkang Oloirien Village Homestay, Olapa Village, and at the Masai Mara Sekenani entrance gate. While for simplicity it is helpful to acknowledge these as separate entities, the reality of people's mobility produces a number of interconnections and transversals between them. For example, John, who acted as my interpreter for the majority of my fieldwork, was also a tour guide at the Village Homestay and was formerly a guide at Olapa village. Additionally, Nalotesha, spends some days of the week selling her beadwork and wood carvings at the Sekenani gate, but she lives and also has a table selling items in Olapa village and is related to Olmoleliani Odupa, the owner of the Enkang Oloirien Village Homestay.

In terms of entrance to ‘the field,’ my research questions led me to search for tourism operations which are owned and operated by Maasai people. A Google search with relevant terms such as community-based, sustainable tourism and ecotourism eventually connected me with the Maa Development Project (MDP), a Maasai owned and operated community-based organization focused on economic development and promotion of Maasai culture. I was particularly interested in this organization, because of their advertised camp program, which is stated to exist as an income generating initiative to support the organization’s community development projects. The MDP promotes this program as providing visitors with the opportunity to experience the Maasai Mara with those who have lived alongside the wildlife in the area. Given this focus, I reached out to Olmoleliani Odupa, the managing director, to see if I could stay at the camp, as well as conduct my research there and whether this would be something individuals in the community would be interested in participating in. He was very eager to have me stay and carry out my research, perhaps in part because of the business that I would inevitably bring and he said that the community would also be willing to participate. When I arrived in Sekenani I had not realized that although advertised on the website that visitors could either stay at the camp or in the village, that the village seemed somewhat administratively separate, as it had its own name: Enkang Oloirien Village Homestay. I decided to continue to conduct my research here given my relationship with Olmoleliani Odupa and there also seemed to be more people staying at the Village Homestay as opposed to the other camp.

Before arriving in Kenya, I had planned to work with Maasai people experienced with hosting visitors for day tours in their villages. This is perhaps the most common way of sharing Maasai culture in a locally owned manner and is pervasive in Maasai communities surrounding game parks and reserves. I became acquainted with the people of Olapa Village, as this was where the Enkang Oloirien guides most often chose to take guests to complete the itinerary segment of visiting a Maasai village. Men and women in Olapa were largely willing to participate in my research, with only a couple of people refusing to participate in the form of an interview. This willingness was facilitated in part, I believe, by having John as my primary interpreter. Although working with John, as opposed to hiring a more ‘professional’ translator outside the area, presented some

learning areas that probably would not have been encountered with a more ‘experienced’ assistant, I think it proved more successful in terms of a smoother relationship building process especially in consideration of the relatively limited time I had in Kenya. It was evident that John was well liked by the people in Olapa, his former home, and that by extension I was accepted. I also got the impression that some people were eager to participate and answer interview questions because it allowed them the ability to interact with a visitor (through translation) and ask questions themselves. For example, a particularly interesting one that was raised by two men was how they should go about developing intimate relationships with young white women. As a (relatively) young white woman myself I was somehow believed to have the knowledge for success in this area.

I decided to interview and observe women selling beadwork and other items at the gate, on the advice of Olmoleliani Odupa. This is a different way of sharing culture but nonetheless is important in the tourism program in and around the parks. Although the ladies were very kind and helpful, it was during these activities that I felt I was most disruptive of their time. Somewhat more than the men, the women always appeared to be busy to me, whether it was in actually selling items at the windows of tourist vehicles, taking care of children or beading. When we had our interviews, both my translator and the participant felt that I deserved undivided attention, which often took the form of me taking them away from their activity. Although perhaps a disservice to the validity of my research, I feel that this un-comfortability, in tandem with general challenges associated with translation, may have impacted the degree to which I was able to get into deeper conversations with women versus men. The obvious solution to this challenge would be to learn Maa and thereby be able to engage in more casual conversations rather than in a more formalized interview style.

### 2.3.1 Enkang Oloirien Village Homestay

The Enkang Oloirien Village Homestay is approximately two kilometres from the Sekenani gate and is owned and operated by local Maasai elder Olmoleliani Odupa and his family. Applying his skills as a former employee of a prominent Christian international development organization, Olmoleliani Odupa started the MDP in 1997 to respond to a need, in his words, for “sustainable community development” by ensuring

that “people [had] proper education, proper healthcare and clean water, and [to] address small needs in the community.” Later in 2006, the organization decided to incorporate a tourism program to help fund the community projects and a few years after this the Enkang Oloirien Village Homestay was started for those visitors looking to “to live with the [Maasai] people, test the culture, and interact [...] and learn from them” (Fieldwork, Interview with Olmoleliani Odupa, July 22, 2017).

In our interview, Olmoleliani Odupa explains his inspiration to add a tourism camp to the MDP portfolio after his observations of park traffic and the numerous accounts on local media sources advocating for the protection of the Masai Mara. He reasons that the Maasai should be able to benefit from the revenues from the park because it is their “existence” that has “protected” the wildlife. He notes that although benefiting from wildlife is easy because you do not need to provide direct investment in the animals, there were challenges to getting started in a business arena where it was believed that only white foreigners or descendants of settlers and members of the Kikuyu ethnic group could succeed. Beyond this, he noted infrastructure and marketing challenges and that he had to sell a number of his livestock “because it is the only resource you have.” He recalls how the camp began with some tents but that he later learned from talking with tourists that they preferred to stay “in something like a Maasai house and [...] live among the people as well.” This in turn led to the establishment of the Enkang Oloirien Village Homestay, which now hosts more visitors than the more private cabin-style accommodations at the MDP camp. I was told by Olmoleliani that 25% of earnings from tourists’ stays are funnelled back into the local community projects (Fieldwork, Interview with Olmoleliani Odupa, June 6, 2017).

While at the camp, tourists will meet Olmoleliani and the staff, consisting of two guides, a chef and his assistant, a room steward and a security guard. Visitors will also get to know Olmoleliani’s wife and his children, some of whom also help in the operations of the camp, whether it be cleaning the rooms, cooking or entertaining the guests. In the compound there are a collection of buildings each with a few bedrooms and a sitting area, two of which on the outside are made to look like the traditional mud-dung homes and another which is a stone structure with a steel roof and cement floors (see Plate 2). While

I was there, a third brick structure was in the midst of construction and I was told it was also being built for tourists to stay in (also shown in Plate 2). There is another smaller structure that is somewhat outside of the tourists' vantage point which I was told by the guides is where some of the staff and some of Olmoleliani's children stay. I was also informed by Olmoleliani's wife that she and her family live in the stone house when there are no tourists. This was a point of information I learned on one of my final days in the Mara and which made me slightly uncomfortable given that I had been sleeping there during my time at the camp, and in doing so felt like I had not achieved the anthropological golden rule of seeking not to impose and disrupt the lives of those you study with.

Additional amenities available to the tourists include a building for dining, complete with a modest kitchen where the chef prepares meals and dishes are washed. The compound also features two outdoor flush toilets and an outdoor shower with hot water, heated by burning a barrel that the water feeds through. These facilities are rarely seen to be used by the staff and family members. Staff instead are required to use a separate washing and bathroom structured area.

During my stay, there were a total of 28 visitors, not including myself, who came in 12 groups.<sup>14</sup> Most of the visitors were Americans. Four groups at the homestay were families with children, but the majority of guests were middle aged adults. There were also more women staying at the Village Homestay than men, with three of them travelling by themselves. In terms of visitors on a yearly basis, Olmoleliani Odupa estimates that there were around 100 guests in 2017. Guests are able to choose from a selection of packages in accordance with their desire for a game drive. The standard rate to stay at the camp without a game drive is \$70 USD per night, which includes room and board and a guide.

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<sup>14</sup> I consider a group to be made up of individuals who have planned and are travelling together.





**Plate 2: Sleeping quarters at the Village Homestay for guests and Olmoleliani and his family (Photo by author)**

### 2.3.2 Olapa Village

Olapa Village is the quintessential tourist imagination of a Maasai village with mud-dung houses arranged in a circle enclosed by a thorny acacia branched fence to keep out predators. In my interviews, I learned that this village was built for the purpose of tourism and is on key real estate because of its proximity to the Mara and the road and thereby access to the tourists who are also interested in learning about/seeing the Maasai (Fieldwork, Interviews with Joseph, June 8; John, July 21, 2017). There are people who live in Olapa; however, some come to stay for long periods to earn money and others walk there daily from their houses nearby for the same purpose. Visitors are told on their tours that there are anywhere from 100 to 200 people living in the village and that they are all one family. While I was there I counted 14 houses. At the back of the village, there is also a market, constructed with sticks tied together with mosquito netting, for visitors to browse through at the end of their tour. In the centre of the village there is a large open space for livestock to stay in the evening, evidenced to tourists by the many piles of dung and the exclamation of their good luck by the Maasai if they step in them.

### 2.3.3 Sekenani Gate

At the original entrance to the MMNR, *matatus*<sup>15</sup> and four-wheel drive Land Cruisers are lined up awaiting their administrative turn to pay the entrance fees for their guests. Access to tourism markets, such as at the gate and in the villages, present important income opportunities for women, notably in a society that does not permit women's ownership of land and resources (Christian 2016). On either side of the dirt road, women sit in groups of roughly fifteen, beading and chatting. When a vehicle drives up a few will swarm on either side shouting "*Jambo*<sup>16</sup>," "Hello" or "What is your name?" Holding carvings and *shukas* in one hand, a linked chain of many coloured bracelets in the other and necklaces draped over their arms, they will yell out prices over each other as the 'bling' on their beautiful beadwork lightly chimes. Some visitors will buy from them and perhaps negotiate lower prices, while others may even pretend to ignore them or keep the windows rolled up as they approach. In speaking to some of these women, I was told that there are rules when they are selling, including how many women are to approach the vehicles and who is up next on the rotation of the weekly selling schedule. These will be discussed in Chapter Three.

## 2.4 Field methods

Data collection methods included semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The generosity and helpfulness exhibited made it quite easy to develop rapport with participants, notably among those working at the Village Homestay. During my time in the Mara I was able to carry out 33 interviews with 42 participants, 24 of whom were men, and 18 women.<sup>17</sup> These interviews ranged from around 15 minutes to one hour, and all participants were adults. I spoke with staff members at Enkang Oloirien, ladies selling

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<sup>15</sup> Nine seater minibuses used for a variety of purposes include taxis and game drive vehicles.

<sup>16</sup> Hello in Kiswahili.

<sup>17</sup> The interview schedule included one individual who was interviewed twice, two sets of paired interviews, and two group interviews with six individuals in one, and four in the other.

beadwork in Olapa village and at the Sekenani gate, men and women who sing for tourists visiting Olapa village, and men who guide tourists during their visit to Olapa village. Most interviews were voice recorded. The voice recorder was not used if requested by the participant or if the participant had a limited time to answer my questions and therefore as a measure to prevent unnecessary delay. While the majority of the interviews were translated from Maa to English and vice versa, there were some that were conducted in English, mostly with men who had guiding experience and thus were able to carry out more in-depth conversations in English. This research is predominantly presented from a Maasai perspective on tourism; however, I occasionally include views from tourists retrieved through participant observation, which further enrich my descriptions of the activities at the homestay or in the villages and the interactive context between host and guest (Tonnaer 2008).

Although I hesitate in stating that this study fully employed the method of participant observation given the relatively short fieldwork period, and lack of local language skills, I ‘participated’ in and ‘observed’ activities such as beading with the women; dining, hanging out and tagging along in activities laid out in the itinerary of the Village Homestay and hanging out with the young men in Olapa while waiting for visitors.

I took hand written notes to record my observations and interviews. Upon return from my fieldwork, I transcribed and coded the recorded interviews and compared these with my written notes to identify significant recurrent themes for analysis.

In the context of cultural tourism research, particularly in a destination where I am not of the same ethnic background as the host, I think it is important to reflect on the positionalities and negotiations of one’s identity in participant observation. Tonnaer (2008) discusses this in her research with Australian Aboriginals engaged in the tourism industry and how participant observation, coupled with her non-indigenous identity, often took the form of her exercising a mediator role. Likewise Cole (2008) comments on how she often found herself as a “go-between” for tourists and hosts, whether it be to fill an “awkward vacuum of time” through conversation or to garner additional knowledge of Ngadha culture (11). Tonnaer details that in her research she partook as a ‘typical’

participant in activities where she acted as a tourist, but that when trying to engage in participant observation from a host perspective, because of her non-Indigenous identity she, again, often found herself in a mediator role. In her view, this led to a “renegotiat[ed] identity and allegiance across different sites” (54). She mentions examples where she felt she could relate to a tourist’s point of view on areas such as displeasure with performances and price, but at the same time “from the Aboriginal point of view, [she] learned to contextualize the nature of their performance from their understanding of the interaction, which was frequently not connected to the presence of a tourist audience” (54). In my fieldwork, I shared similar sentiments of being a mediator which at times made me uncomfortable. Relatively unproblematic examples would be questions raised by tourists ranging from what time we eat dinner, the itinerary for the day and even whether rhinoceroses are actually a rarity to see in the park. Inquiries that made me uneasy however, were those about Maasai culture, which I of course, did not feel I had the authority to answer. In such instances I ensured that I would either answer with the information that I had learned from my time in the Mara and note who exactly had told me such, suggest that the guests ask one of the guides or Olmoleliani Odupa or if they were also present during such queries, pose the question to them on behalf of the guest.

In terms of allegiance, like Tonnaer (2012) I noticed that I was particularly sympathetic to Maasai hosts and was eager to defend them in situations such as when a tourist visiting Olapa remarked that I am very “brave” and asked whether I was scared to stay with warriors because “they will kill anything.” In another situation I found myself quite upset and appalled at the actions of a visitor to Olapa village in her interactions with the Maasai people, which I felt to be pushy and generally quite rude. Similarly, I found myself ‘talking-up’ the experience at Olapa village and the beauty of the items for sale. This last point is particularly interesting when I consider my views of the Maasai village I toured during my trip to Kenya five years ago. Reflecting on this in my statement of academic interest for this research, I write: “During this experience, I felt somewhat uncomfortable viewing and taking pictures of this culture almost as an exhibit.” While I am still critical of the tourism industry, this shift in attitude can be linked to Tonnaer’s (2012) discussion of a researcher’s propensity to advocate for the marginalized or the sub-altern, which

within the case of cultural or Indigenous tourism, is oftentimes the hosts. That being said, at the same time there was also a situation when I sympathized with a guest who ended up having to pay more for transportation than originally thought.

Considering my experimentation and employment of positionalities and situations where I found myself often trying to distance myself from being perceived as a tourist, I feel it is also important to reflect on how Maasai people viewed me. In her research on cultural tourism among Maasai participating in an ecotourism project in Northern Tanzania, Wijngaarden (2016, 2017) discovered that “the boundaries between research, tourism and entertainment” can be somewhat unclear and permeable. She evidences this with how, for example, the Maasai do not differentiate between foreign visitors based on their purpose for travelling, whether they be NGO workers, tourists or researchers. I too saw this in my research in how most visitors to Olapa village were referred to as *mzungus* (common reference to white person in Kiswahili), *olashumpai/enkashumpai* (white man/woman in Maa) or clients. I too was referenced in similar manners and felt like I was perceived more as a tourist in my visits to the village when people would ask if I was interested in buying beads/carvings (although this did fade with my continued returns and no sales). Furthermore, in analysis of some of my interviews, I found a conflation of myself with other tourists in questions asked of me. These would take the form of questions such as: why do “you guys” come here? By stating it in the plural, coupled with the likely small number of researchers compared to tourists, I interpreted this as more in the form of why I, as a tourist or ‘client’ decided to come to Kenya. In asking about what the roles for men and women are in tourism, one of the male tour guides at Olapa responded that both genders do their respective songs, and “all we are appreciating. Ladies are appreciating when *you* come and men are appreciating.” (Fieldwork, Interview with Jason, June 8, 2017, emphasis added).

As an anthropologist, perhaps one of the worst characterizations that can be applied to you is that you are a tourist. Winjgaarden (2016:458) notes views which have conceived tourism as a “caricature of ethnography,” (van den Berghe 1994:19) and even as anthropology’s “illegitimate child” (Bruner 1989). We are believed to be of the few equipped to recognize and transcend the ‘tourist bubble’ by often meeting and living with

‘real’ people and not requiring an environment built solely for our accommodations and leisure. We like to think that we do not need this ‘intermediate zone,’ to ‘protect’ (Wijnngaarden 2012) and ‘cushion’ us from immense culture shock (Cohen 1972; van Beek 2016; van Beek and Schmidt 2012; Wijnngaarden 2012). The line between anthropologist and tourist is quite blurred however, especially for an anthropologist studying tourism and employing the method of participant observation (see Plate 3). In seeking to learn how tourism is organized and which aspects of culture are presented, I stayed in the same accommodations, ate the same food and participated in the same activities as fellow foreigners. I took pictures and posted these for my family and friends to see on social media and I bought souvenirs. I paid money to be there and my guide ended up being my translator and informant. Sitting with a fellow guest on the porch of one of the Enkang Oloirien homes, the challenge in making these distinctions was foregrounded as we both wrote of the activities of the day in our notebooks. What made me and my reflections different from her and hers? Was it that I was staying merely a month and a half or so longer? The tidbits of theory and other research scribbled in my notes versus hers? Or, and an area I really struggled with, was it the difference in the degree of taking from people, whether it be their time, their experiences, their knowledge, I did, in comparison to her? A give-take balance which was perhaps more equalized in her interactions with Maasai hosts. While concerns of being able to properly give back to research participants and collaborators may be felt by anthropologists studying a variety of topics, I would argue they are heightened in the context of tourism in low-income regions, in tandem with carrying out Master’s level research and the short time frame and financially strained nature that it entails. At times I shared Wijnngaarden’s (2016) worry of participating in ‘scientific colonialism’ in carrying out research and taking data back to my university with the ultimate benefit to advance my own professional career.



**Plate 3: Posing during the 'men's dance' as one of the Olapa guides offers to take my photograph**

Reflecting on my continuous self-consciousness, insecurities and lessons, I share anthropologist Dr. Jason De León's view of ethnographic practice as a "steady hum of anxiety." (Lecture, March 16, 2017). Furthermore, I feel this leads rather organically to a theoretical discussion of reflexivity, a reality of research whose embrace by anthropology is admirable and I believe can be considered one of its greatest strengths. Since the 1970s, and the corresponding critical turn in anthropology and recognition of its colonial connections, anthropologists have more formerly recognized that one cannot attempt to remove oneself from their research and that such efforts in the name of objectivity are futile (Davies 2012). For my research, I conceptualize reflexivity as "a turning back on oneself, a process of self-reference. [...] [A]t its most immediately obvious level [it] refers to the ways in which the products of research are affected by the personnel and process of doing research" (Davies 2012:4). Reflexivity is present throughout the research process. In my own work, recognizing its effects included acknowledging from the very beginning that my selection of this research project was based on my own travel experiences and personal questioning (and discomfort) of how Maasai felt about swarms of strangers coming into their villages and homes (Davies 2012).

Like Cerwonka (2007) I recognize and embrace that my ‘personhood’ is required for knowledge and that it does not impede my understanding. In doing so I find value in her understanding of Gadamer’s (1999) thoughts on positionality to address concerns of subjectivity and objectivity in research. Here, she summarizes:

The idea of positionality in Gadamer’s work (what he calls one’s “horizon”) and in that of others who advocate an interpretative approach is different from the idea that our insights are simply *reducible* to our subjective bias. Rather, our point of view *fuses* with the horizon and alterity of what we research and is therefore not a mere projection of the researcher’s subjectivity. In other words, an interpretative approach is not a rejection of all notions of objectivity as a theoretical stance. Thus, what Clifford described [...] as anthropology’s “impossible attempt to fuse the objective and subjective” is only impossible if one is trying to adhere to positivism’s very narrow notion of objectivity (2007:31, emphasis original).

Again, one’s positionality within an interpretative approach is needed to construct knowledge, which inevitably involves the necessity of a ‘vantage point’ to produce research. When speaking of a vantage point, Cerwonka writes that it “means having a sociohistorical location, but it might also be understood as the set of priorities, questions, or even hypotheses that one inevitably brings to bear in trying to understand an object or phenomenon” (2007:26). She notes in the context of her own research, “the way in which [her] historical, cultural location as a middle-class, American woman with various political and social commitments shaped the understanding [she] developed about [her] topic” (2007:26) She explains how her interest in spatial questions about Australian nationality stems from her being within a period famous for globalization’s sparring with national sovereignty. For my own research, an interest and understanding of tourism and cultural tourism is undoubtedly shaped by my existence within a time period where international tourism has significantly increased, as has the rise in those projects with labels such as ‘sustainable,’ ‘community-focused,’ and ‘eco.’ I favour Cerwonka’s building on self-reflexive accounts in that not only can one not escape oneself and the varying identities and experiences that one carries, but that these are beneficial and even inform the research process and findings.

In my own research, I found in terms of access to participants, that being a woman actually proved quite favourable. I felt that I was accepted more easily by women than a



researcher who was a man would have been. I asked my interpreter if he thought that this was the case and he disagreed stating rather that whether or not you are accompanied by someone who is known by community members is more important in terms of gaining acceptance. While I believe that this is indeed vital (and understandably so), I still feel that times such as woman reaching out to fix the Maasai beaded bracelets that I wore on my wrists or inquiring about my family and my married status and even teaching me how to bead (an activity which is done solely by women) have shaped my research and would have been difficult for men to experience. This was helpful in that with men I could, for the most part, connect with them through conversation; however, with women due to language limitations, I felt this could be done through activities such as beading and essentially being a woman myself.

## 2.5 A theoretical mosaic

While I am sure nearly every metaphor has been employed by academics with regards to their use of theory, perhaps at the fatigue of readers, I would like to use this space to expand on my personal metaphorical relationship with theory. I find value in (and likely already claimed by some) conceptualizing theory as a mosaic. Throughout my work I will cement bits and pieces of varying coloured, shaped and sized ideas, examples and frameworks from a number of authors. I think a mosaic is better suited for me than conceiving of my engagement with theory as something like a tool kit, as with the latter each theoretical tool is firm in form and purpose and therefore less malleable in usage. Worth mention here however, is one of the largest pieces in my ‘artwork,’ that is the idea piece which consistently captures my interpretation of my findings: an idea of agency.

Cultural tourism where hosts are ‘expected’ to display and enact pieces and versions of their culture, notably in a context where they are in somewhat of a lower position socioeconomically relative to tourists, automatically evokes notions of agency. Liljeblad (2015) in assessing the conditions for beneficial or appropriate Indigenous tourism activities versus negative or culturally inappropriate endeavours, writes that to achieve the former, control of the discourse by the Indigenous people is required. This in turn, he writes, is dependent on an ability to exercise ‘substantive agency.’ Ironically however,

such a necessary condition is not defined. To unpack and reconceptualise this overused concept and ensure that it does not become a shorthand term used by the anthropologist (Ellen 2010), I, like Tonnaer (2008), in her work on Aboriginal tourism in Australia, would like to incorporate Sherry Ortner's thoughts on agency and her idea of serious games (1999, 1996, 2006).

Ortner aims to strengthen practice theory by incorporating her concept of 'serious games' in which at the centre, is a relatively strong definition of agency within a complexity of social and power relations. In this account, Ortner, I believe, rightly denies the Western centric view of agency as that which is enacted by the autonomous and individualistic actor (2006). Her conceptualization of agency includes 'hard' intention, that is agency which "has a strong role of active (though not necessarily fully 'conscious') intentionality." (2006:136). To Ortner, this hard level of intention is differentiated from 'routine practices.' Although not starkly marked from one another but rather tied through a continuum, she notes that routine practices are those acts with "little reflection or planning" versus those stemming from intentional agency which "intervene in the world with something in mind (or in heart)" (2006:136). I think this focus on hard intentionality captures what Liljeblad was thinking in terms of substantive agency. Ortner subsequently asserts that agency is indeed a universal capacity of all individuals; however, the extent and form which it is to be exercised will depend on the cultural and historical context in which one finds oneself. This in turn will "'shape' the goals or desire one has, as well as the 'course of action' that this will involve" (2006:137). Springing from the idea of a 'culturally constructed' notion of agency, Ortner ties in her discussion of the 'linkages' of power relations and inequality with agency. She concludes her definition of agency with the assertion that it involves two "fields of meaning:" 1) agency and "intentionality" or the "pursuit of (culturally defined projects)" and 2) agency and power as "acting within relations of social inequality, asymmetry, and force" (2006:139).

Agency is found in the notion of serious games of which can be defined as a "cultural project involving the intense play of multiply positioned subjects pursuing cultural goals within a matrix of local inequalities and power differentials" (Ortner, 2006:144). Ortner also conceives of serious games as a metaphor to encapsulate "how social life is lived"

(1999:35). She argues that an idea of games is able to depict the rules set forth by “culture, power and history,” but is also able to recognize people as “active players” in shifting, redefining or demolishing such rules and constraints (1999:35). She captures the intensity and complexity of such ‘games’ in the following quote,

...people do not just enact either material necessity or cultural scripts but live life with (often intense) purpose and intention; that people are defined and redefined by their social and cultural contexts, which frame not only the resources they start with but the intentions and purposes they bring to the game of life; that social life is precisely social, a matter of relationships—of cooperation and competition, of solidarity and exploitation, of allying and betraying. By the adjective “serious” I mean further to emphasize the constant play of power in the games of life, and the fact that, for most people most of the time, a great deal is at stake. And by the whole phrase “serious games,” I mean as well to sustain a sense that human experience is never just “discourse,” and never just “acts,” but is some inextricably interwoven fabric of images and practices, conceptions and actions in which history constructs both people and the games that they play, and in which people make history by enacting, reproducing, and transforming those games (1999:23-24)

In the context of Maasai cultural tourism, this allows me to illustrate ‘games’ in which the cultural goals of tourists may include enrichment of the self via interacting with an ‘exotic’ group that lives ‘close to nature’ (Bruner 1991) with Maasai people having a cultural project to increase their economic earnings and in some cases to protect and practice ‘traditional’ culture (Cole 2008). Furthermore, it captures the matrix of local inequalities where tourists and guides hold higher economic security than Maasai people, who may be quite dependent on such endeavours for income earnings. By thinking with Ortner’s conception of a ‘politics of agency,’ my analysis moves beyond looking at whether or not agency is present by exploring how agency is conceptualized by Maasai participants. This works to prevent an ethnocentric/western, highly individualized account of agency that tries to place the individual in a vacuum devoid of social and cultural factors (Ortner 2006). Furthermore, a contextually influenced agency allows for analysis of its working in an arena of tourism, which is still bound by particular demands from tourists, and explore how ideas on the entailment and distribution of agency for Maasai men and women may have changed with involvement in tourism and therefore changes to cultural context.

Like Ortner's (1999) view of mountaineering, tourism itself can be conceived of as a game in its abiding rules and established power relations (which can be reformulated and challenged) and it also fits into additional or larger games. With mountaineering, specifically from the mountaineer (*sahab*) perspective, Ortner notes that these include a game of masculinity and adventure and its connection to 'modernity,' which I would argue is also of relevance to cultural tourism initiatives involving the Maasai and safari tourism more generally, notably from a tourist perspective. I would also argue that this specific type of tourism is positioned within the larger game of development.

## 2.6 2017 General Elections

Before proceeding to the body chapters of my thesis, it is necessary to pause for comment on Kenya's 2017 General Elections, whose effects could be felt during my fieldwork. Elections in Kenya have been quite tumultuous as "ethnic land grievances" stemming from colonialism and favouring of ethnic groups in political circles has fueled political violence. Devastation from these clashes was most prominent after the 2007 election, leading to approximately 1,300 deaths, and 650,000 displaced persons (Spencer 2017). While the 2017 election did not have as devastating of outcomes in terms of violence and death, the results from the August 8 vote were nullified by the Supreme Court for "committ[ing] irregularities and illegalities in the transmission of results" Presidential candidate Raila Odinga, accused his opposition, President Uhuru Kenyatta, of corruption and called for a boycott of the re-election (de Freytas-Tamura 2017). On October 30, President Kenyatta, the son of the first Kenyan president, was again elected to serve a second term as the leader of Kenya.

The elections were quite significant during my fieldwork as they were very frequently the topic of conversation for men awaiting tourists in the village, so much so that I even pondered completely switching my research focus while in the Mara. I attended an event which was apparently intended to celebrate the opening of another section of the local missionary school, but with the presence of the Governor and his entrance by helicopter, later seemed more emblematic of a political rally. Examining this event, including how the warriors who sing in Olapa were paid to attend and lead in the Governor, solidifies the interconnectedness of tourism and politics in Kenya. With the significant economic

importance of the tourism sector, the influence of concerns such as political violence on tourism numbers and the involvement of political leaders in tourism projects, it merits the continuation of a study on the experiences of Maasai with tourism, even during such a (visibly) heightened political point in time. The effects of the election and the pending concerns for violence were quite diverging when I asked some of my participants their thoughts. One man for example, informed others that the Americans had already issued travel warnings, of which I at the time could not find evidence of; whereas another did not expect that there would be violence in the Mara or that it would affect tourism because it is mostly Maasai living there, and therefore not the ethnic divisions believed to be necessary to fuel conflict. When I asked men what they would talk about when all the elections ended, someone responded, football (Fieldwork 2017).

## Chapter 3

### 3 Organization and organizers of tourism activities

John spent a large amount of his youth growing up in the Sekenani area, where tourism has been for many years central in his relationships, experiences and objectives. Like others, his mother decided to move to Olapa to take advantage of the tourism industry by selling her beadwork at the gate. He recalls that she would leave at eight in the morning and come home in the evening with cakes and gifts purchased in the shops for her children if she had a successful day selling. Also bordering the gate to the famous reserve is John's former primary school. Of this, he recounts: "our routine [was] just to go to school and to see many people coming. People are singing and jumping and then we end up falling in that industry" (Fieldwork, Interview July 21, 2017). He was also likely exposed to foreign visitors at his school, perhaps in making a trip to support community development and education as part of their safari itinerary. A notable donor of this establishment is Sir Richard Branson, who decided to support the building of a dormitory to house some of the boarding students.

With his strong English skills and passion to learn the language, as confirmed by one of his childhood friends, in his late teens John became a tour-guide in the village, explaining Maasai life to visitors incorporating a 'cultural element' within their safari trek (van Beek and Schmidt 2012). He enjoyed working in the village because of the tips (which he notes would even include \$100 per day) and because it gave him a chance to talk to people from around the world. An outgoing person, John is quite apt at interacting and joking with guests and his friendly personality provided him with some great opportunities, including the chance to visit the United States after making friends with an American visiting the village. With this, he became involved with a budding international NGO focused on protecting Indigenous culture, which included Maasai culture. While in the States, in addition to trying a number of new things, one of his favourites being riding a roller coaster, he helped spread the word of the organization and secure funding. Later, John was sponsored by two NGOs in Kenya to attend a conference on elephant and rhinoceros conservation in Hong Kong. Here, he also shared Maasai culture with an

international school by carrying out some of the activities one could see in the village tour, such as a jumping competition, of course while clad in colourful *shukas* and beadwork. With all of this, John proclaims, “the village has really changed my life.”

Married and the proud father of two young daughters, John currently works at Enkang Oloirien and obtained the job because of his experience and familial connections with Olmoleliani. He enjoys taking visitors for nature walks and leading game drives in the Mara. John uses his experience travelling in the States to make connections and conversation with visitors; for example joking that the collection of small, crowded, sheet metaled shops outside the gate is Sekenani’s “Wal-Mart” (Fieldwork 2017).

He has secured over seven acres of land within walking distance to Enkang Oloirien and plans to one day open his own camp, similarly modelled on the Village Homestay. At the moment, he is gaining experience advertising Enkang Oloirien on Airbnb, which he believes will be valuable knowledge once he begins his own business venture.

Anticipating a hefty revenue of one million KSH a month, he plans to set-up between five to ten tents and build a brick guesthouse, of which construction has already begun. His future plan also includes acquiring three to five jeeps to be able to take guests to parks/reserves like Lake Nakuru and Navaisha, in addition to the Mara. He notes that this camp will require a staff of chefs, guides, room stewards and drivers, which he will hire from within the community/his network. Expenses for staff, he estimates, will be three thousand Kenya shillings (Fieldwork, Interview July 21, 2017).

In this chapter, focusing on the three research sites, I will explore questions related to how the tourism project is organized by different Maasai groups, how decisions are made to share aspects of culture and what images and narratives are presented and manipulated in Maasai cultural tourism initiatives. This section first introduces the reader to what one might see and experience at each of the three interconnected sites of my research. From there I will comment on how they are placed on a continuum of participation, in the words of one of my participants with ‘deep experiences’ at one end and perhaps shallow at the other. I will conclude by examining factors which influence the organization and

presentation of Maasai culture in tourism projects, including gender, tourism images and imaginaries, the tourist gaze and authenticity.

### 3.1 'Itineraries' at field sites

#### 3.1.1 Enkang Oloirien Village Homestay

As mentioned above, the Enkang Oloirien Village Homestay is owned and operated by local Maasai elder Olmoleliani Odupa and his family and was started to take advantage of the income opportunities associated with tourism, as well as support socioeconomic development in the community through the designation of 25% of camp and homestay profits to local community projects. Of his staff, Olmoleliani notes that when hiring, the most important qualifications he considers are experience working with guests, humility and honesty. He also states his preference to hire those he knows because he is abreast of their character and therefore whether they will be a suitable addition to his team.

With most guests staying around one week, common activities available include: game drives in the Masai Mara; attending a church service with Olmoleliani Odupa, who is also the pastor and/or members of his family; nature walks; accompanying the herding of livestock; visiting the supported community development projects, as well as a local primary school and a rescue centre for girls escaping circumcision and early marriages; fetching water and visiting nearby Maasai villages, like Olapa. While the number and type of activities is dependent on the length of a visitor's stay and their interests, a nature walk was done by every guest that stayed at the village while I was there. During these, accompanied by one or both of the guides, visitors are taken on a roughly one hour walk, during which they learn the names of some of the local trees and plants and their use by Maasai. This includes the "sausage tree" which is used to make "local beer," the "white bush" used as a "deodorant" and for tissue, and the River Meddler, which is used to make a kitchen tool for stirring. At this tree, the guides will often make one for the guests to take home, which on one occasion caused a tourist to joke that they must get bored of constantly making these tools. On this trek, the guides will also identify animals tracks and droppings and some visitors may also be fortunate to see herds of herbivores such as zebras and elands and even dangerous elephants in the distance.



Female tourists are also able to bead with Olmoleliani's wife Margaret and one or two of her friends. With their assistances, guests will make a relatively simple bracelet and are usually quite fascinated to know that its materials include discarded plastic. During this activity, Margaret and her friends will also display beadwork that they have made and other wares such as carvings and *shukas* available for sale. At the Village Homestay, guests are able to participate in other activities which are more or less part of the daily routine. As I mentioned this can include attending a church service, as well as helping to fetch water. During this, in addition to the 20L jerrycan that is used for cooking and washing dishes, a 10L container is brought along for the tourist to carry water on their backs with a *kanga*<sup>18</sup> tied to the container and then supported on the forehead. While walking back, visitors are told that the well provides clean water for the community.

While visiting some of the projects and other community development organizations in the area, one may notice that hosting visitors is quite common for the staff, clients and/or students. A teacher at one of the primary schools told me that they get visitors frequently, and at another school, students whose class we visited were prepared with welcome remarks in unison upon our entrance. The importance and funding of international visitors is likely influencing this overwhelmingly positive embrace and pausing of activities to welcome guests. As noted by a school principal in speaking of building projects, it is people "just like you that donate." Additionally, the manager of the clinic stops what he is doing to provide tours, despite being understaffed with the national nurses' strike during my fieldwork. He said that they usually receive one to two visitors per week, although it was unclear whether these were individuals or groups.

Perhaps the most iconic element of the Enkang Oloirien itinerary, and done by all but one group while I was there, is the game drive. Here, Olmoleliani Odupa will either use his own vehicle or, committed to ensuring that locals benefit from tourism, hire a Maasai within the community to drive. On the day that I joined in a game drive we used a driver

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<sup>18</sup> A brightly coloured, patterned piece of fabric used for a variety of purposes by women, including as a headpiece, to carry children, and in making clothing. Maasai women will often wear their *kangas* over their shoulders and knotted in the front.

from the Mara Guides Association (MGA): a “labour association” comprised of Maasai tour guides, which works to increase economic opportunities available for Maasai in the Mara and “to unite around [their] rights to fair compensation.” The MGA self-proclaims to also be involved in pivotal issues such as land privatization, education, “cultural survival” and wildlife conservation (Mara Guides Association n.d.).

### 3.1.2 Olapa Village

During my stay, the village most often visited by Enkang Oloirien guests to satisfy the itinerary item of a trip to a *real* Maasai village was Olapa Village. While there are a number of villages within walking distance to the homestay, John prefers to take guests to Olapa, as he feels others forcibly pressure them to buy souvenirs. He also enjoys trips here more because he still has friends living in Olapa and it is a bit further than some of the others and therefore occupies time walking there (Fieldwork 2017).

Outside the thorny acacia branched gate, young men sit under a thatched roof hut waiting for tourists (see left in Plate 4). The men will go to the road to try and stop vehicles and sometimes they will be given advanced notice via texts or calls through established connections with driver-guides and lodges. The clients, as they call them, are given a tour ranging from roughly 20 to 60 minutes. After paying the entrance fee, usually 2000 KSH or \$20 USD per person,<sup>19</sup> tourists are welcomed by a personal guide from the village and are thoroughly encouraged to take as many pictures as they like. Next they are told that they will be shown three of the men’s dances, starting with the welcome song, followed by the celebration song traditionally used to congratulate a warrior who has killed a lion and then the competition song, which they are told was used in the past to win girlfriends. In the words of the guides, the visitors are then taken into the village to see how the Maasai ‘stay’ which includes provision of information such as how homes are built, diets, polygamous marriage and gender and specialist roles in the village. Guests are also taken

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<sup>19</sup> I was told by Olmoleliani that his guests do not pay much to visit the village because of the work he does to support the community. A guide from Enkang Oloirien also informed me that men from the village will come to collect money at certain points in time based on the number of visitors.

inside a Maasai home and after are able to see a demonstration of making fire by rubbing together pieces of hard and soft woods. After seeing two of the 'ladies dances,' visitors finish their tour with a trip to a small market where they are able to buy souvenirs such as *shukas*, beadwork and carvings, to commemorate their trip and which they are told will support the community. Questions asked of the village tour guides include: diet; how often families move, and how long a house will last (Fieldwork, Interview with Jeremiah, June 12, 2017); on the livestock and where they stay, what they eat, and their cost; how fences are made and how many wives does one get if he can jump the highest. In a different village, I even heard questions about the subject of polygamous marriage and whether this causes women to fight, to which the tour guide responded that the wives actually come to like and rely on one another and that they will not fight and will only speak quietly and politely if they disagree. Although I am not sure if they were wives, I have definitely witnessed Maasai women speaking quite audibly and seemingly heatedly (Fieldwork 2017).

The market is an important feature of the tour, as this is where most of the money for individuals is made, given that with the entrance fees there is often corruption by driver-guides resulting in forced repayment of a substantial portion of the fees once the visitors are out of sight of the vehicle (Honey 2008; Wijngaarden 2008; Mvula, n.d.; Snyder and Sulle 2011). The market is organized into booths owned by individuals or family, who will therefore receive payment if something is purchased from theirs. Having likely learned that clients do not want to be pressured when making purchasing decisions in information sessions provided by the Maasai Mara Cultural Villages Association (Mvula, n.d.), women sit in the middle of the round market area and men who are involved in the tour stand outside the entrance. The client will be escorted around by either their tour guide or another man, and he will explain the items, help hold purchases and put jewellery on. The guests are not given any indication of whose stall they are looking at.

Arguably making Olapa more competitive, is the presence of ‘actual’ warriors,<sup>20</sup> some of whom are pictured dancing in Plate 4. Men in the village seem to know the allure of the warriors, as they encourage visitors to take a picture with them during their tour. I was told that the warriors were apprehensive at first to come to the village to work, but that with the money earned (they indicated that they earn 6000 KSH per month), they are now quite eager to participate (Fieldwork, Interviews with Warriors, July 3; Parkire, July 18, 2017). Originally from quite far away, living in an area where foreign visitors do not frequent, when I arrived, the warriors were still fairly new and spoke very little English. John referred to them as ‘innocent,’ because of their limited exposure. Before my departure I became quite friendly with a few of them and was surprised to see their increased knowledge of the tourism industry, evidenced for example in identifying to me, in English, some of the companies that the vehicles were from.

While groups coming to the village often arrive in one or two vehicles, guides and men working in Olapa may be given advance notice of larger groups. One such occasion occurred on June 29 when they were told to prepare for a group of 24 vehicles. It appears that extra measures are taken for these larger groups. On this day, all the people (I counted a whopping 40) stood outside of the village, additional guides were brought in and the warriors had painted designs on their bodies with a clay-based mixture. Unfortunately, there appeared to be a mix-up as the large group ended up visiting the adjacent village instead. I could see the sense of disappointment with this move, as some men were yelling at others in the neighbouring village and the level of enthusiasm in dancing seemed to plummet for tours throughout the day. Stephen, a guide in Olapa, said it was a big shock when this group did not arrive. He also said that they had to get 150 kids to have a child for each box, containing money and a lunch, that would be given out. I told one of Olmoleliani’s children about this situation and she remarked that they come all the time and give out sweets and money to children (Fieldwork 2017).

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<sup>20</sup> This is in comparison to men I saw in other villages, and even in Olapa, who wear long plaited yarn wigs to likely appear as warriors. Most Maasai men wear their hair shaved or very short. It is custom after one has completed his time as a warrior to have his head shaved by his mother.



**Plate 4: Warriors dancing during a village tour (Photo by author)**

Considering the future of the village, John predicts that it will likely continue to be successful as it is conveniently placed close to the road entering the park, as well as on the path to a few popular four and five star lodges. The village, however, is sitting on land owned by a man who, if he chooses, could decide that it would prove more valuable as something such as another tourist resort (Fieldwork 2017).

If you have been to a Maasai village experienced with hosting foreign tourists, I imagine that the summary of the itinerary of events and information shared likely sounds quite familiar. I too thought it resembled the program of the village I had visited on my previous trip to Kenya and noticed that there were remarkable similarities between other villages in the Sekenani area (Honey 2008; Wijngaarden 2008; Salazar 2009). I asked Shinka, a guide at Enkang Oloirien, if when he formerly danced for tourists in a Maasai village, the dancing and tours were similar as in Olapa. He responded: “just like the same thing.” In inquiring why this is, he informed me that the business may be different with regards to when they show the tourists items that are for sale or when they try to sell them the two pieces of wood that they use to make the fire, but that the way they receive, welcome and dance for the clients is the same (Fieldwork, Interview, July 21, 2017).

With this we can almost characterize it as what Tonnaer (2008) identifies as the sharing of a pan-Indigenous identity; for example by not noting differences in experiences marked by differentiators such as age-sets, clans, and divisions. One could also argue that this presentation of Maasai culture has been employed as a discursive strategy that will allow an understandable transfer of knowledge and culture to its foreign audience, who may not be familiar with Maasai people, or, I would argue, who have some familiarity and would like this to be comforted (Baron 2010; Wijngaarden 2008; Bruner 2001).

In my research, I aimed to learn the process of decision making for sharing and displaying particular elements of culture. This led me to pose a question to some of the ladies in the village of why they decided on the particular songs that they sing, to which I was told: “[when] we sing those two songs, God will send us [...] the rain, also what we want. Rain and kids” (Fieldwork, Interview with Jennipher, June 12, 2017); because they enjoy singing those songs and because a long time ago it was a song that they would sing for their boyfriends (Fieldwork, Interview with Sarah, July 17, 2017). Additionally, I asked some of the guides how they decide on or learn what to say for their tour. Responses varied. One guide told me that they learn their speech from elders (Fieldwork, Interview with William, June 7, 2017) and another specifically from the chief (Fieldwork, Interview with Jason, June 8, 2017). Similarly, a guide working in an adjacent village remarked, of the dances, “I just learn from the seniors [...] It’s a practice, you know the more you practice, more you know more.” He also continued that he obtained some knowledge to share with clients from school and books on tourism (Fieldwork, Interview with Michael, July 14, 2017). A man in Olapa responded that he learned what to tell visitors through shadowing other guides but noted that to be a guide one must have “experience with culture” (Fieldwork, Interview with Stephen, July 3, 2017). Another who speaks more intently on lived experience, notes that there is not a meeting or anything of the like to dictate what is to be said on tours, but that each guide is different based on their experiences, education and English-speaking abilities. In his view this will lead to slight differences in their tours. (Fieldwork, Interview with Mogia, July 14, 2017). I indeed witnessed this, but similarities between tours including the timing of events remain remarkably stark. This is also further confirmed by the ability of Enkang Oloirien

guides to step in at any time in the village and provide a tour, if understaffed. It appears that information is gained from a variety of sources including lived experiences, as well as from elders and that tours are also largely influenced by what seems to be somewhat of a standard Maasai village itinerary. This speaks to the inability of separating tourism from daily life.

### 3.1.3 Selling at Sekenani Gate

While eagerly awaiting entrance into the park to see the iconic wildlife of Africa, the anticipation mounts, as you are kept waiting in a queue for what seems like an unreasonably long time, while the clerks of the park carry out administrative processes. For approximately an hour and a half one morning in mid-June, I observed fourteen cars entering and fourteen cars leaving the park. Of those entering, twelve appeared to be specifically for carrying tourists (in comparison to others such as lodge supply trucks), and eight out of the fourteen that were leaving. Maasai women sit in groups on either side of the ‘road,’ divided into the Siana side and the Koiyaki side. They efficiently and effortlessly string coloured beads as they chat to each other or perhaps rest with their *kanga* over their faces to avoid flies. Upon the arrival of a vehicle to the gate, pairs or small groups from each side will hastily make their way to the visitors and attempt to sell their handmade beadwork and purchased carvings and *shukas*. Knocking at the windows if they are closed, they will use their limited English to say: “how are you?” “What is your name” “My name is...” With dozens of women at the gate offering virtually the same items, selling is quite competitive and one will hear the women speaking over each other offering lower prices. This process is quite ruthless, as confirmed in the exclamation of “too many mamas!” made by a Maasai woman I spoke with while we sat and watched the selling taking place. This can be quite intimidating for visitors, as I overheard one tourist remark that this in your face sales practice is quite irritating. I was told by an informant that the good tourists are the ones who leave their windows open and the bad ones are those who roll them up in an attempt to ignore the hustling women (Fieldwork 2017).

While in my observations they did not appear always followed, I also learned that there are ‘rules’ or ‘duties’ when selling at the gate. Some women informed me that there are

rotations when you get to sit in the group closest to the entrance (Fieldwork, Interviews with Emily, July 19, 2017; Nalotesha, June 22, 2017), that those from the Siana side are not to approach the right side of the vehicle and those from the Koyaki side are not to approach the left. They are also required to take turns within their respective groups, as I was told that there are to be only two women on each side of the vehicle (Fieldwork, Emily, July 19, 2017). I did observe instances when there were more than this, as well as a woman from the Koyaki side approach the Siana selling side of the vehicle.

According to the women I spoke with tourists most often buy beadwork (Fieldwork, Interviews with Naisarisaru, June 23, 2017; Nalotesha, June 22, 2017) and sometimes even the beadwork that the women are wearing themselves. I inquired why they believed that tourists were interested in these particular items and was told “I don’t know” (Fieldwork, Interview with Emily, July 19, 2017). Although I did not speak to any of these buyers about their interest in the items the Maasai women are wearing versus the ones that they are selling linked over their arms, I would presume that it has to do with something related to a perceived authenticity connected with their adornment on Maasai bodies.

Most women I spoke with indicated that they will come to sell in the morning around eight, perhaps leave to make lunch for their family and return to sell until about four in the afternoon. Some of them supplement their selling at the gate by also selling at the airstrips or larger lodges (Fieldwork, Interviews with Josephine, July 21, 2017; Emily, July 19, 2017; Naisarisaru, June 23, 2017; Martha, June 21, 2017) and one even had her children manage a table at the village (Fieldwork, Interview with Nalotesha, June 22, 2017). These are preferred ventures as there are not as many women and therefore less competition, enabling requests for higher prices (Fieldwork, Interview with Nalotesha, June 22, 2017).

But it is not only items of material culture that these ladies offer in exchange for shillings or dollars. During one period of observation, I was startled when I saw a horde of women running for a tourist who was standing outside her vehicle. It became clear that the tourist was taking a picture of the Maasai ladies and that others were attempting to include



themselves in the frame. After this I also observed that money was exchanged for the photograph and one of my informants indicated that the Maasai women were not very pleased with the amount offered.

### 3.2 'Deep' versus fleeting cultural experiences

To help introduce and further illustrate what I find to be a major differentiator between these three sites, I would like to detail a unique experience I feel I was fortunate to be part of, both in terms of my research and experientially as a visitor in the Mara. This was my participation in a 'Maasai wedding' organized by the owner of Enkang Oloirien at the request of an American couple in their mid-twenties. This event was part of their attempt to challenge western ideals for a wedding (white dress, many guests, feast, dance) by instead travelling to different parts of the world and having a wedding of some sort according to the local traditions of that area.

The bride and groom had spoken with Olmoleliani about their interest in a 'traditional ceremony' before their arrival, but the negotiations for prices and what was to be included in this celebration occurred once they arrived at the camp, during which Olmoleliani and the guides consolidated a list of elements of weddings and their corresponding prices. It was decided that portions such as the donation of *shukas* to elders participating in the celebration, a meal for locals and local beer would be included, but items such as the slaughtering of a cow would not.

On the day of the wedding there was some confusion as to when the activities would start. I sensed that the groom was quite nervous or anxious during this time, as he kept making comments that maybe we should leave to go to the other house, as we were told earlier that part of the day would include getting ready and travelling from the bride's 'dad's house.' Some hours after we were told that the celebration would begin, we walked a few hundred metres to another mud-dung home where we were greeted by some women, elder men, a few *murran* and many curious children. Both the bride and groom were accompanied by a guide from the camp to help translate and tell them what they are supposed to do at each point of the day. I sensed that the couple found this quite helpful,

particularly the groom who seemed to express concern about doing things correctly and not being inappropriate.

The bride, and I as the bridesmaid, were dressed by some of the women with two long pieces of brightly coloured fabric cloth criss-crossed and tied over our chests and leather beaded belts cinched at our waists. We wore patterned *kangas* over our shoulders and were adorned with necklaces and a headpiece. Our jaw lines were painted with red ochre. The bride also wore a long-beaded wedding necklace (with beaded strands considerably longer than those sold in the *boma* markets) and a beaded hide draped across her shoulders, which I was later told by Olmoleliani was borrowed from another woman who wore it on her wedding (Fieldwork, Interview July 21, 2017). The groom was present at the beginning of our dressing but later left to go back to the camp to get dressed himself.

When the groom and his party returned, we went into the house and the ‘father’ of the bride gave blessings and advice to the bride and the groom. This included telling the groom that he must only beat his wife with a small stick, not with a club or an open hand. I was later asked by the groom how I felt about this. I sensed his intrigue because of anthropology’s advocacy for cultural relativism coupled with western ideals of gender equality and the discrediting of violence against women. After the lecture, we left the home and walked with a group of women and men who were also dressed in ‘traditional’ Maasai clothing. This was to mimic the daughter leaving for her husband’s village. It seemed that as we walked to the ‘new’ village, we collected more guests with each step. During this time, the bride was instructed to put her hands over her face and pretend that she was sad because she would be leaving her parent’s house. Somewhat conveniently, the bride was suffering from a head cold, with side effects of a runny nose and wet eyes; this appeared to be a commitment to the roleplay and seemed to impress some of the attendees.

I was asked by the couple to take photos of the event and in my field notes I wrote about my unease in stepping out of line (physically) to do so. I found it interesting that other locals were videotaping and taking pictures of us and I wondered if this was a standard practice at a regular wedding. I was given some confirmation that it was when one of my

participants showed me pictures of his friends' wedding. Furthermore, Olmoleliani Odupa and the chef's assistant were also photographing and videoing the celebration. I later saw that some of these pictures were posted on Olmoleliani's Facebook and one was featured on the Village Homestay's Airbnb page.

Upon arriving at the gates of the Village Homestay, the bride was offered cows by her suitor. To indicate how many cows she was to receive she would tie knots in the long-beaded strands of the wedding necklace. From there we went into the house where Olmoleliani Odupa was staying, which was to represent the couple's new home. Margaret was preparing tea for us, and the bride and groom, as well as a child, were to drink milk from a calabash. Here, the bride and groom were also instructed on how they would receive their Maasai names. Men would say their names three times and then on the third time the bride would accept by saying "ay oh," and the groom by saying "ohh." Shinka counted how many times they said the name to ensure that the bride and groom would say their response on the correct count. In the house there was a woman with a baby whom I did not recognize. She gave the baby to the bride to hold to symbolize a blessing that she herself would have many healthy children. Following the naming ceremony, we went outside into the compound and took some pictures with the group and then participated in more singing and dancing. This included the warriors singing and jumping and the groom trying the art of the Maasai leap. Guests were later served a plate of food while the couple and I sat together and commented on the event.

At a later time, I asked Olmoleliani questions regarding the wedding as I was intrigued by what local people thought of the event, his perspective on an American couple's interest in a 'traditional Maasai wedding' and how this wedding would compare to a wedding for a Maasai bride and groom. It is interesting to reflect on Olmoleliani Odupa's response to my questions about how they decided on the "kinds of things they would be doing that day," that they had to first determine "what is done on a normal wedding." Semantically speaking this would separate the American's Maasai wedding as *abnormal*. He noted that before the wedding he consulted with other men (likely elders) as sometimes they forget the processes. When I asked Olmoleliani how people came to learn about the wedding

and how he recruited people to participate, for example the elders and the stand-in parents, he said,

when people hear about the wedding [...] Okay, there will be kind of imitation of a wedding, a Maasai wedding, or that [there] will be a *mzungu* wedding, they wanted to see how it looks like. And, uh, and, occasionally in the Maasai tradition when people hear there is a wedding they will flock.

For those particular people who served in roles such as those mentioned above, he noted that they had to be given some incentive to participate. For example, the mother of the bride received some money and the men who blessed the couple received blankets.

Given the sheer attendance and abundance of clicking camera phones, I asked Olmoleliani Odupa what people in the community thought about a *mzungu* wedding:

Um, actually, they don't have a problem, because they have seen before.<sup>21</sup> Maybe two years ago, or five years ago people come and say they wanted, but not well organized like that we did the other one. They might come and say [...] can you make us have a wedding for 30 minutes. So it is not strange because they have seen it before.

Relatedly, one of the Enkang Oloirien guides also said in a conversation with me that the local people liked the wedding because they “knew what was going on” (Fieldwork 2017).

In terms of why he thought the American couple would be interested in having a Maasai wedding he responded that it would be “a great experience for them to get into the deep part of the culture.” This idea of getting into the depth of the culture, I would argue places each of three sites, and their corresponding exposures to Maasai culture for tourists, on a continuum. Upon pressing into what he meant by deep culture, he replied “I mean, the deep part of the culture is that having a wedding traditionally, being blessed by the men, the elders, then being escorted by the women and the [warriors]” (Fieldwork, Interview, July 22, 2017). Additionally, in the village, I heard that to be a guide you must

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<sup>21</sup> This was, however, the first time a wedding was organized for tourists at Enkang Oloirien, but Olmoleliani said he would do again and that he might even consider advertising it.

be able to speak English well, so that you can explain the culture “deeply.” (Fieldwork, Interviews with William, June 7; Jackson, June 12, 2017). This deep exposure is significantly lessened in situations where tourists interact with Maasai ladies at the gate selling their wares and present to the greatest extent at the Village Homestay in participating in activities such as the wedding. It thus appears that factors needed for a deep experience are explanation and bodily engaged participation, whether it be feeling the fabrics and beads against one’s skin, as in the wedding; when the men put beads and *shukas* on clients coming to the village or in tourists attempting to catapult into the air in a vertical leap. Here tourists “[i]nstead of remaining as static viewers and outsiders, [...] actively participate and achieve a deeper level of embodiment of the experience” (Desmond 1999 in Wijngaarden 2008:65). There seems to be a spatial distance between Maasai and tourists, due to the nature of the tourism sites organized somewhat as performances; however, Maasai in Olapa for example, seem to try to break down this distance through practices such as holding hands during the songs, inviting tourists to participate, giving them beads and/or *shukas* and high-fiving and shaking hands after they are done dancing.

Within the context of folklore community festivals, performances and cultural tourism, Baron (2010:71) mentions the significance of the elevated stage and how “[i]t is characterized by psychic distance and spatial separation between the audience and the performer.” The stage separates audience from artist and increases passivity among audience the higher its elevation (Cantwell 1994 in Baron 2010). Its value is in its ability to ‘frame’ performances as ‘art,’ and therefore attribute claim to its performers (Goffman 1990). Baron cites moves to “diminish the distance between artist and audience” through measures which have included lowering the stage at prominent events such as the Smithsonian Folklife festival (2010:72). Presentations and activities occurring in spaces other than a stage or on one with only slight elevation permit greater interaction and engagement between artist and audience. Speaking on demonstrations in particular, he warns that cases of “limited or no interaction with audience members” may position the “demonstrator [...] as a human being on display whose agency is constrained and who may seem objectified to the audience” (2010:75). He recommends using bilingual

speakers when individuals are displaying aspects of a culture and cannot speak the language of the audience, so as to “explain the traditions being demonstrated and draw visitors into close proximity with participants” (2010:78). He alludes to the prime importance of acknowledgement between the person demonstrating tradition and the audience, whether through eye contact, showing interest, asking questions and/or a locational nearness between demonstrator and spectator/participant.

As mentioned, this decrease in spatial distance and the corresponding social distance is evident in the village tours and more so at Enkang Oloirien. Visitors are brought on stage in requests for their participation in Maasai dances and to hold hands with Maasai hosts (for additional examples which confirm this see Bruner 2001; Wijngaarden 2008). At Enkang Oloirien, visitors eat and chat with the Maasai guides, the owner and his family. Bruner (2001:892) on a similarly organized tourism initiative argues that rather than two distinct spaces: an “African space” and a tourist space, “the two spaces have merged—there is no separation between the Maasai and tourists, but only one performance space where the two intermingle. By breaking the binary, ethnic tourism in Kenya is structurally changed.”

Where this is considerably less apparent; however, is in the interaction between visitors to the Mara and the Maasai women selling beadwork and carvings. Here we could argue that the interaction is more mediated by the tourist bubble, that is the intermediate zone between tourists and the host society (Cohen 1972; van Beek 2016; van Beek and Schmidt 2012; Wijngaarden 2012). The permeability of this bubble is further hardened by the solid metal and plastic walls and glass windows of the safari vehicle. We can compare the implications of the bubble at work in interactions between host/local and tourists, by drawing on Olmoleliani Odupa’s response regarding the differences in experiences for those staying at one of the large lodges versus staying at his camp. According to Olmoleliani, visitors at the Village Homestay, “[want] to live with the people, test the culture, and interact with them and learn from them.” He continues that this compares with experiences in the lodges where he states,

guests don’t have the time to interact with people, just stay in the lodge and go for a game drive and come back and stay, and uh, so I think they become more

excited if they interact with people and uh, exchange ideas, and learn from people, and the people can learn from them. And uh, able to know more about the Maa culture as well, walk with the sheeps and cows (Fieldwork, Interview July 22, 2017).

Tourists' experiences with Maasai culture are arranged on a continuum from fleeting, with the interactions with women selling at the gate, to a deep and close engagement with those staying at the homestay. Elements such as participation, sharing in activities, conversations and decreased spatial distance are integral as we move up such a scale.

### 3.3 Gender

In terms of the roles for men and women in the tourism sites, there seems to be quite a stark gendering of employment opportunities, which are considered linked to 'traditional' Maasai gender roles (Christian 2016). In the village men do what are considered the men's dances and women, the ladies' dances. Furthermore, men occasionally make *rungus* (clubs) to sell, but only women bead and sell at the gate. Both women and men can sell in the village, men would just need access to beadwork produced by women for their tables. Additionally, men are responsible for the fire demonstration, preparing the pieces of wood beforehand and earn money if they are successful in selling the wood to visitors. In the village's market, when items are purchased visitors will either give money to their tour guide or to another man who may be accompanying them around the stalls. Men are thus responsible for dividing up the money, although if a guest makes a purchase from one of the woman's booths, she will be present during the payment division to ensure she obtains her share.

I was told that men are the only ones to give tours in the village, largely because of education and English-speaking abilities, but also because women are considered shy (Fieldwork, Interviews with Jason, June 8, 2017; Jacob & Leshan, July 20, 2017). That being said, when I asked if the increased education of girls would mean they would be allowed to provide tours once they know sufficient English, one of the guides responded that yes this opportunity could be available to them (Fieldwork, Interview with Jason, June 8, 2017). Christian would likely argue against this future projection however, as she states that "earning potential still complies with appropriate Maasai gender norms" with

income acquired through selling beadwork as one of the few opportunities for Maasai women (2016:38).

At the Village Homestay, although some work is done by Olmoleliani's wife and children, the hired staff consists entirely of men; this includes the positions of guides, room stewards and cooks. These tasks could arguably be considered Maasai 'women's work' and therefore shows a divergence from the literature which argues that women's reproductive roles are translated into public sector employment in the tourism industry (Kinnaird, Kothari and Hall 1994; Pritchard, Morgan, Ateljevic and Harris 2007; Swain, 1995).

van Beek and Schmidt (2012) write that in the African tourism bubble, tourists predominantly interact with men due to language constraints as mentioned above, but also because the images of 'wildness' and thereby 'Africaness' is "easier embodied in an African male than in a woman with children" (23; see also Christian 2016). Moreover, Maasai culture is explained by men and thus invariably by a man's point of view (Ardener 2006).

It is also interesting to examine how the gender of the foreign tourist mediates interactions between guests and hosts. With the men's song female clients are encouraged to participate, but with the ladies' song male clients are not encouraged to participate by holding hands with the Maasai women. Furthermore, I did not see any of the male tourists bead a bracelet with Margaret at the camp. Racial, ethnic and even class politics intertwine with gender as foreign women are able to circumvent gender roles in their interactions with Maasai people and in participating in tourism activities, more so than men (Ebron 2006).

### 3.4 Exchanging images in the Mara

van Beek and Schmidt describe tourism as an "encounter" involving "an exchange of images, for the tourist is armed with notions how 'the other' should look" (2012:20).



‘Tourism imaginaries’<sup>22</sup> are based not only on material centred specifically on tourism such as guidebooks and advertisements, but also on ‘cultural media forms’ such as documentaries, products of international photographers, coffee table books, art, history, and magazines (Salazar 2009; van Beek and Schmidt 2012). Circulating images and narratives travel through ‘mediascapes’<sup>23</sup> to create ‘imagined worlds’ (Appadurai 1990:299) and are used by tourism marketers before departure and at tourism sites themselves. These are not neutral in terms of value, politics and ideology, and the industry is predominantly based on a male, white script, catering to a male white tourist, produced by a male white mediator (Morgan and Pritchard 1998; Pritchard and Morgan 2000). The tourism industry employs images and representations which draw from and bolster essentialized cultural stereotypes, which may in turn limit hosts’ self-representation as cultural content is left to the whims of a Western representation. Images and representations thereby influence external perceptions of culture, but can also influence hosts’ self-perceptions. (Morgan and Pritchard 1998; see also Salazar 2009). By some, the tourism site has been considered simply a confirmation of pre-formed notions (Bruner 2001; Taylor 2001).

Cultural tourism in places such as Kenya, presents a dichotomy where hosts are seen to embody ‘extreme archaicness’ and tourists, global modernity (Stasch 2014). Like their precursor World Fairs, tourism sites may be based on binaries between a civilized ‘us’ and savage/primitive ‘them’ (Morgan and Pritchard 1998). These tourism programs can also employ similar place-myths as the symbolic countryside: those ‘unexplored’ and ‘unique’ places where life is simpler, slower and static, in opposition to the commotion

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<sup>22</sup> Drawing, on Gaonkar and Lee (2002), Salazar (2009) describes imaginaries as “representational systems that mediate reality and form identities. As institutionally grounded representations implying power, hierarchy, and hegemony, they represent possible worlds that are different from the actual world, and are tied in to projects to change it in particular directions.” He considers tourism imaginaries in particular, to be based primarily on a western ‘mythological’ ‘other’ (50-51)

<sup>23</sup> Appadurai defines mediascapes as “image-centered, narrative-based accounts of strips of reality, [which] offer to those experience and transform them [a] series of elements (such as characters, plots and textual forms) out of which scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own as well as those of others living in other places.” (299)

and complexities of cityscapes or the modern world, the home of the tourist (Hopkins 1998; Stasch 2014). Moreover, portrayals of those Indigenous peoples or minority groups involved in tourism activities are romanticized and essentialized ( Bruner 2001; Bruner 1991; Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994; Taylor 2001; Yang 2013), with tourism engagement framed as a first-contact myth (Bruner 2001; Wijngaarden 2008, 2012, 2016). But if these are the myths and ideologies communicated about destinations and local peoples, then what are the objects that are signifying them? Stasch (2014) notes, in his discussion of tourism among the Korowai people, that the naked bodies of locals is the ultimate sign of the Manichaeic duality informed primitive and pure (in contrast to polluted ‘civilization’) for tourists. Drawing on Norton (1996), Van der Duim, Peters, and Akama (2005), on tourism among the Maasai in Kenya and Tanzania, state that

Europeans long for pristine African landscapes with picturesque huts that are made of grass-thatched roofs that dot and blend into the natural African landscape. They also expect to hear the sound of drums the minute they arrive in Africa, with African natives, rhythmically, dancing to the ongoing cadence representing real and quintessential Africa (105-106).

In their edited volume on cultural tourism in African destinations, van Beek and Schmidt (2012) attest that images and representations of authentic Africa are woven together with threads of romanticism and colonialism. The imagery of African ‘otherness’ is conceptualized against the standard and ‘familiar’ European and North American society (Wijngaarden 2010). Western tourists looking to ‘do Africa,’ of which may include a visit to only one country, are likely equipped with conceptions of the continent as a place of poverty and suffering in need of western assistance and/or unspoiled nature where herds of large ‘charismatic mega-fauna’ roam the savannahs (van Beek and Schmidt 2012; Wijngaarden 2008). Loaded in their safari SUV’s tourists have their cameras ready to capture the images of “wild, non-human, pristine” (van Beek and Schmidt 2012:17) to (re)capture a ‘realness’ absent in their modern lives (Wijngaarden 2010).

In addition to the majestic wildlife though, Africa is considered home to “colourful, strange cultures, picturesque people, thatched huts in savannah surroundings, where one can encounter a truly ‘other’ culture” (van Beek and Schmidt 2012:3). Motivated by a sense of ‘fragility,’ tourists feel they must see such people before their uniqueness is

swallowed by globalizing modernity flows (van Beek and Schmidt 2012). Here we may even see application of Rosaldo's (1989) 'imperialist nostalgia' (in Bruner 2001). Distinctions between nature and culture become blurred however in portrayals of African people as natural (Morgan and Pritchard 1998; van Beek and Schmidt 2012; Wijngaarden 2012).

Maasai, and particularly Maasai male bodies adorned in 'traditional dress,' are often used to symbolize Africa and its people as a whole<sup>24</sup> (Askew 2004; Bruner 2001; Salazar 2009; Van der Duim et al. 2005; Wijngaarden 2008, 2012). As noted by Salazar (2009) representations of Maasai depict a "fantasy of authentic indigenous Africa" by "living in mud huts, herding cattle, seemingly untouched and unaware of the globalized world" (59). The plethora of their appearances leads to an attitude where tourists seem to already know the Maasai before their travels (Bruner 2001; Salazar 2009). Moreover, Maasai bodies, histories and cultural material have been used for nationalistic purposes<sup>25</sup> and for tourism advertising at a national level (Bruner 2001; in Tanzania Salazar 2009; Wijngaarden 2008). We can see this for example with the cover photo of the ninth edition<sup>26</sup> of the *Lonely Planet Kenya* guidebook featuring a man adorned in 'traditional' Maasai dress, suspended in mid-air while jumping.

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<sup>24</sup> John notes that tourists think that Kenya is made up of only Maasai people. I asked him what he thought of the government using images of Maasai for advertisements and he replied that it is good, because of the promotion that it brings (Fieldwork, Interview July 21, 2017).

<sup>25</sup> While in the Mara, I saw a commercial for the Jubilee political party, which in addition to clips of natural landscapes and industrial development, featured Maasai men jumping, similar to what one would see in the village tours. A man in the village also remarked that evidence of their culture being the strongest is apparent with the current President wearing a *shuka* and holding a club at political engagements. Wijngaarden (2010) details how the Maasai culture is "associated with resistance to the colonial forces" and is thus used as a "symbol of African tradition and an identity independent from the West." This led to the inclusion of a Maasai shield and spears on the Kenyan flag (107). The Kenyan government and non-Maasai Kenyan's treatment towards Maasai is ambivalent in the post-colonial state however, as Maasai are considered opposite of development and modernization and therefore imbued with characteristics of 'dirty,' 'dishonest,' while at the same time still praised for maintaining aspects of their distinct culture.

<sup>26</sup> The most recent edition, released in June 2018, now features a queue of zebras travelling through honey coloured savannah grasses. This reiterates the interchangeability of both wildlife and Maasai bodies.

As mentioned above, images and representations in tourism advertisements and sites are not politically neutral. This leads us to question what underlying messages and narratives are these representations communicating about Kenya and about Maasai people? Bruner (1991) writes that the “culture” presented for international tourists is based on the “primitive culture of the Western imaginary,” and that

the primitive tribal life that the Europeans come to see has already been destroyed by past generations of Europeans. The African culture that no longer exists is invented anew for tourist consumption. The term invented is used rather than reinvented or reconstructed to emphasize that culture displayed for tourists in modern Africa is not a recovery from the past (because it never existed in the past) but is rather a construction of the present-day contemporary era, presented to an audience willing and able to purchase it (241; see also Wijngaarden 2010).

Place-myths such as first-contact and primitivism are evident in wording in advertisements such as:

Here are living remnants of prehistoric human cultures, people who still live by hunting and gathering; nomadic peoples living in small family groups. East Africa is perhaps the last place on earth where we can see the dramatic epic of life unfolding much as it has since the dawn of time. Here we can view the daily struggle for survival on the vast African plain, and see people and wildlife living, for the most part, unaffected by our rapidly changing society (cited in Bruner 1991:239).

A central icon of the primitive portrayal is the male warrior, of which Bruner (2001) argues is used to frame the entire Maasai culture (see also Salazar 2009). Elsewhere, he and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett write that the warrior dominates Maasai tourist production, with women relegated to the sidelines for inactive photographs or as means to bolster the warrior image (1994).

Another prominent trope employed is that of the ‘noble savage’ (Salazar 2009). The nobility (and savageness) of the Maasai is represented in terms of their closeness to nature and in living a harmonious life with wildlife as pastoralists (Wijngaarden 2012). In comparing a touristic site featuring a performance of Maasainess enacted by speechless Maasai men and women, orchestrated by colonial expatriates (Mayers Ranch), versus a site organized in a post-modern frame (the Sundowner party at the Kichwa Tembo tented safari camp), Bruner argues that the former draws on a colonial narrative which presents

Maasai life as timeless, whereas for the latter, “[g]lobalizing influences are apparent, as Hollywood pop culture images of Africa and blackness are enacted for [...] foreign tourists” (1991:833). In Bruner’s view, this is deceiving as the transnational flows are hidden in the fetishization of the local (body) (Appadurai 1990). The image of the Maasai warrior or man has shifted to a ‘pleasant primitive’ who “play[s] the primitive, for profit” akin to MacCannell’s conception of the ‘ex-primitive’ (Bruner 2001:895).

When looking at where these pleasant primitives live, colonial imagery positing Kenya as a Garden of Eden persists (Wijngaarden 2008:56). It is a distant and remote place where wildlife roam and so too does the culture of the Maasai, unspoilt and untouched by development, modernity and technology (Salazar 2009; Wijngaarden 2012). According to Salazar these representations are appealing for Euro-American and even Asian tourists, “who are keen on exoticism and adventure in the manner of the early European explorers” (2009:59). Even Bruner attests that while there has been a lessening of colonially based civilized versus savage tourism representations, even tourists partaking in programs such as the Sundowner still “occupy a colonial position and do want to view “primitive” Maasai” (2009:902).

Wijngaarden (2008, 2010, 2012, 2016) presents realities for Maasai and Maasai involved with tourism endeavours which refute images of idyllic, simplistic and remote life. For example, she highlights sustained interconnections with European countries and therefore the implausibility of remoteness as seen with the example of the *shuka*, a now iconic symbolizer of Maasainess, which was actually adopted from Scottish tartans and the beadwork for the ‘exotic’ necklaces, made from beads imported from the now Czech Republic and recently to a greater extent from Asian countries (see also Salazar 2009). Furthermore, the impact of European relations is demonstrated in beadwork becoming popular after “colonial pacification” and prohibition against warriors carrying weapons in public. This led to a shift from painted shields used to represent age-sets, to beadwork patterns (Wijngaarden 2010:104). Citing Vierke (2009) Winjgaarden documents that the objects and identifiers such as *shukas* and beadwork, so often considered timeless and reminiscence of true Maasainess, were actually “developed within a period of twenty years at the end of the 19th century” (2010:104).

Additionally, Winjgaarden notes that while narratives present Maasai pastoralists as living harmoniously with and protecting wildlife and therefore with ‘noble savage’ imagery, realities again prove more nuanced and complex. While Maasai claim that they are purely pastoralists and therefore do not hunt the majestic creatures which bring flocks of foreigners, there are past and present instances of hunting. This is downplayed so as not to risk vilification and blame for diminishing wildlife stocks, imprisonment and the economic implications associated with failing to adhere to the simplistic Maasai image expected by tourists. Winjgaarden also considers the representation as ‘uncivilized’ or ‘undeveloped’ as especially problematic, as she argues it is responsible for the government prohibiting Maasai from building more permanent stone homes, instead mandating the mud-dung houses, which are dark, have poor air quality and are subject to continuous repair. She attests that this is because the “Western style houses [...] clash with the ‘genuine’ experiences of the Maasai-world tourists pay for and expect to see out of the window of their four-wheel drive” (2008:62).

Despite fissures between image and reality, while in the Mara I observed tourists following the exoticized, colonial, romanticized scripts of Maasai culture. One instance occurred in a village which hosts visitors. While there I shared a quick blurb about my research project and the discipline within which I was studying with a group of Indian Americans who inquired where I was from and why I was by myself. One man then suggested that India would also be a good place to study because there are people that “live in the jungle” and “wear leaves instead of pants.” He continued that they are “real wild people.” On another occasion, while in Olapa, a man commented that I must be “brave” to be staying by myself (with a staff of five people at the camp, I would hardly consider that I really did anything on my own) and inquired whether I was afraid of the warriors because “they will kill anything” (Fieldwork, 2017)<sup>27</sup> These examples suggest

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<sup>27</sup> Winjgaarden (2010) also discusses, in addition to the view of Maasai as ‘noble savages,’ that perspectives circulated which positioned them as dangerous and blood-thirsty, to help aid in the development and pacification efforts. Furthermore, she highlights instances where non-Maasai Kenyans display similar sentiments with regards to both the noble and ignoble savage.

the success of marketing which depict Maasai as primitive, uncivilized and dangerous (male) warriors.

Perhaps unsurprising, I also witnessed Maasai ‘performing’ images and discourses (Butler 1993) from the tourism scripts in accordance with tourist stereotypes and expectations (Bruner 2001; Salazar 2009). Similarly, Wijngaarden writes that in “conversations with tourists [Maasai] largely go along with the ideas that visitors have from them, emphasizing the savage, alien and wild nature of their people and their customs, downsizing modern influences that contradict tradition” (2008:63). Again, this results in a highly essentialized and often de-contextualized presentation of Maasai culture (Desmond 1999 in Wijngaarden 2008; Salazar 2009). Bruner (2001) adds that while it may seem that Maasai are involved in the decision-making capacities of how to represent their own culture, they are rather relegated to enact the scripts in which they have a minor part in writing. This adoption and adherence is often done in the name of economic need. Furthermore, by enforcing the image of the “peaceful herder” Maasai are able to embark a rung above consideration as “primitive peoples” (Deutshlander and Miller 2003; Ortner 1999; Wijngaarden 2008:197-198)

During my fieldwork I saw enactment of the primitive narrative in William’s (who seemed to me to possess some of the most advanced English in the village) negotiation with a tour group leader on entrance fees. During this encounter he pretended that he was unable to speak English. At the request of the tour leader to go consult with the ‘chief,’ he went into the village out of view of the guests, and then came out with a price, which he alluded to was reached at in his discussion. This information was relayed to the visitors via translation by one of his friends. I told John about the incident and he laughed saying that William probably just went into the village and waited in there for a bit before coming out to tell an elaborate tale of negotiations with the chief. This represents an instance where Maasai are astutely aware of and employ the circulating images of them to their advantage. William appears to be playing the role of the ‘pleasant primitive’ who is bound solely by ‘tribal’ politics and who is disconnected from aspects of modernity such as the ability to speak English. Of concern however, is the possibility for internalization of racist images and narratives, as I found in the village when one of the

men remarked that tourists come to see the Maasai because they believe the Maasai live like animals (Fieldwork 2017).

Like culture itself, representations and images are dynamic, fluid and contradictory. In addition to exercising agency to choose to draw on foreign tourism imaginaries, there were occurrences where Maasai tourism workers chose to disrupt them. Bunten (2010a) discusses, within the context of Indigenous tourism endeavours among the Tlingit people of Alaska, how hosts are not passive actors in a tourism context and that Indigenous hosts may resist the tourist gaze's misinformed stereotypes through the following covert practices: jokes and humour, that is poking fun at common pop culture advertised misconceptions; accentuating their position in modernity, for example by highlighting aspects of their lives outside of tourism, such as other sources of employment and by challenging hegemonic historical accounts of the relations between Indigenous peoples and colonizers. Tourism in and of itself is a disrupter to the place-myth of Kenya and the spaces inhabited by Maasai as remote and disconnected from the 'outside world.' This is foregrounded in Olapa however, when introducing themselves and asking where clients are visiting from, guides can often reply with a greeting from the language of that specific country. Moreover, with guests visiting from India, I often saw two of the men joke that their Indian name is 'Patel,' to which visitors would often laugh. Relatedly, with American guests, John disrupts such depictions in sharing his experiences when travelling in the United States. Additionally, John challenged narratives of timelessness and tradition when a guest asked if he thought it was unfortunate that more young men are going to school and are opting out of spending time as warriors in the bush. He replied, rather bluntly, "it is the 21st century" (Fieldwork 2017).

### 3.5 Capturing the gaze

After discussing the images and narratives present in advertisements, accompanying tourists and enacted or resisted by hosts, it is worth considering their governing authority in more detail. John Urry first introduced his now oft cited idea of the tourist gaze in the 1990 edition of his book *The Tourist Gaze*, later republished in 2002 and eventually inspiring a third rendition *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, co-authored with Jonas Larson in 2011.



Opening each edition with an analogy between the tourist gaze and Foucault's clinician's gaze, he aims to analyze "how in different societies and especially within different social groups in diverse historical periods the tourist gaze changes and develops" as well as explore how "the gaze is constructed, reinforced, and [...] who or what authorises it, what its consequences are for the 'places' which are its object and how it interrelates with other social practices" (Urry and Larsen 2011:2).

Urry draws from Foucault to argue that the tourist gaze is not just a neutral act of seeing, it is a "socially constructed seeing," therefore there exists more than one single tourist gaze as gazes will differ according to 'social group' and 'historical period' (Urry and Larsen 2011:2). Therefore, the tourist gaze must not be analyzed in accordance with individual psychology, but rather as something that is socially patterned (Urry and Larsen 2011). A potential concern however, is that an enterprise's success is dependent on measures and services which are 'conducive' to the particular gaze, not those which challenge but instead augment it (2002). This may explain how Maasai hosts have internalized an expectation for a particular presentation of their culture that may be one-sided or wholly inaccurate, but which attempts to meet a tourist demand for the exotic (Babb 2012; Bruner 1991; Liljeblad 2015).

Responding to one of Urry's critics: Leiper (1991), Hollinshead (1999) self-proclaims "to take over where Leiper left off" by delving further into 'surveillance' in tourism, as it "yields a dialectical inspection of Foucauldian thought concerning the eye-of-power [acting] through the institutions/organizations/agencies of tourism and travel" (7). To Hollinshead, the power of surveillance or the gaze instills 'judgement' and 'governance' so as to 'privilege' dominant narratives and accounts of history at the expense of those lesser known. Narratives, through a socio-cultural process, are 'cleansed' to highlight particular chapters and pieces while downplaying or omitting others. He alludes that this process is undertaken by bureaucrats, business-development managers, brochure-writers, backroom researchers and administrators exercising a relatively high level of power. To Hollinshead, the concern is to what extent hosts are "captive" in this "panoptic surveillance" and transitioned into a "self-regulating agency-of-normalcy" based on the tourism gaze (8).

As will be discussed further in Chapter Four, there are certainly situations in which behaviour and appearance are modified with the presence of tourists. For example, Tinges, one of the men who guides in the village, was listening to music on a portable radio in the waiting hut and as tour groups drove by he turned the volume down. In addition, one of the warriors attempted to hide his phone when I came up to chat with them. John also made a few comments which alluded that tourists do not expect to see ‘Western clothes’ on Maasai bodies (Fieldwork 2017). From here one could argue that the tourist gaze is ‘disciplining’ Maasai by, for example, detailing which clothes and levels of technology properly adhere to beliefs of an authentic Maasai.

Those working with the tourist gaze have also built on Urry’s ideas by looking more at the interactional nature of tourism and the agency of hosts and other actors through a “local gaze” (Cheong and Miller 2000) or a “mutual gaze” (Maoz 2006). Cheong and Miller’s (2000) local gaze positions tourists as Foucauldian targets rather than agents. They also press for moving beyond the host/guest dichotomy by acknowledging the importance of other notable actors such as tourist guides and brokers. In doing so they disrupt the established belief of a unidirectional flow of power in tourism (Foucault 1995). They continue that while the conventional view of tourism, and of tourism research, sees the tourists as those who are ‘rational’ and ‘independent’ (akin to Foucault’s clinician or prison supervisor), they are rather “operat[ing] from an insecure position,” as they find themselves within unfamiliar territory (74). Tourists’ independence is limited due to a reliance on advice and direction when travelling, whether from a guidebook, tourism agency and/or friends and family. Cheong and Miller note that even those who resist such advice, by this very “resistant act [it] presupposes the position of the tourist as target” (381). They argue that all tourists are ‘captives,’ as illustrated most vividly with the packaged bus tour. On power and knowledge, they contend that while tourists do gaze, the “agent-target power relations guarantee that it is the ‘touristic gaze’ of agents that manufactures the sociological gaze of tourists” (383).

Maoz (2006), in her discussion of Israeli backpackers in India, brings yet another rejuvenated view of the tourist gaze. Like Cheong and Miller, she notes that attention must be given to the local gaze on tourists but she moves one step further in presenting

the mutual gaze, arguing that both gazes are multidirectional and reinforcing. She states that “[the host] acts according to the tourist gaze, while the [tourist] acts according to the local gaze and to what is expected of them by the host, who manipulates them” (225). She provides evidence for her argument with the situation of Israelis travelling to India accompanied with stereotypes informed by Israeli and Western media and guidebooks, which portray an image of serenity and happiness. Maoz argues that the Israeli tourist gaze is masculine and seeks to feminize locals by deeming them inferior. Furthermore, Israelis view Indians as “primitive, exotic, marginal, and even dirty” (227), but believe that the most prized commodity is their spirituality, resulting with tourists actively seeking Masters in Yoga and other spiritual teachers and mentors.

In addition to the tourist gaze, Maoz discusses the local gaze which she believes provides those in developing countries specifically with agency and power in the tourism arena. The local gaze has a similar degree of penetration but rather than probing the lives of locals it is looking into the everyday lives of tourists. The local gaze differs from the tourist gaze, as locals are likely keenly aware of tourists gazing upon them, whereas tourists are often unaware of the local gaze. To Maoz, this ignorance of being watched helps explain why tourists “act in what they perceive as a totally free and permissive environment” (229), as well as why they do not evade areas where they are not subject to the gaze, as is done by locals (MacCannell 1973). Maoz continues that through their language and acts, the tourists are conforming to the stereotypes that locals have of them and, citing Cheong and Miller and Foucault, that they “internalize the local gaze to the point where it is their own” (226). Yet another difference that she discusses is that in contrast to the tourist gaze which is created in advance of the encounter via the media, the local gaze is rather informed by experiences in the actual encounter itself. She goes so far to argue that it leads to the formation of views of tourists and tourist behavior which “may be close to reality” (229). Based on the literature and her own research, Maoz summarizes three general host behaviours towards tourists: cooperation (adhering to

tourists' desires and demands), open resistance and veiled resistance ('passive' resistance through acts such as 'gossip' or 'insults')<sup>28</sup> (224).

At the Maasai tourism sites that I looked at, while I agree that there is a degree of disciplining of Maasai bodies according to tourists' stereotypes and expectations, as evidenced for example with the requirement of the *shuka* as part of the work uniform (Fieldwork, Interviews with George, June 12, 2017; Oloshiro, July 21, 2017<sup>29</sup>), like Cheong and Miller and Maoz, I would argue that dedicated attention must also be given to the Maasai gaze on tourists. Furthermore, I would like to add to their thoughts by discussing the local gaze on other locals.

To adequately assess these however, we must bring in one of the most important objects in tourism: the camera (or the camera equipped cellphone). For locals, (and likely other tourists) incorporating Urry's semiotic framework, we can argue that the camera itself works as a 'sign' of a tourist (Gillespie 2018; Morgan and Pritchard 1998). On a tour of the village provided by Saitoti, he asks someone to demonstrate blowing the horn of the kudu<sup>30</sup> and tells the group that the horn is the Maasai telephone; when the people in the village hear it they know there are visitors and that they may take as many pictures as they like. During my time in the Mara participating in activities at the camp and in the village, I observed visitors capturing photos of people, items and situations such as their own children playing with local children, women carrying water on their heads, Maasai men and women dancing and even of a Maasai man using his cellphone, which seemed to be oxymoronic to the photographer. While I was told by a couple of people that there are

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<sup>28</sup> See also discussion in van Beek and Schmidt (2012) on "hidden transcripts" hosts use to respond to "power imbalances" (9).

<sup>29</sup> Oloshiro spoke positively of the requirement of Maasai employees, working in positions such as guards, to wear 'traditional' dress and a *shuka*, while he himself was wearing shorts and t-shirt.

<sup>30</sup> The horn of the kudu animals is often blown to herald dances and ceremonial occasions (ole Saibull and Carr 1981)

Maasai who do not like having their pictures taken,<sup>31</sup> most seem un-deterred by the abundant clicks and flashes, with some even posing using the ‘dab’ dance move to the amusement of visitors (Fieldwork 2017).

But what about the gaze on the camera-carrying person? In their tours, Maasai guides will also offer to take pictures of the visitor with his or her camera to capture their participation (see Plate 5). Here we can truly see a turning of the gaze from the tourist gaze to Cheong and Miller’s local gaze on tourists. The key architectural feature facilitating the gaze, however is not the prison Panopticon or the clinic as discussed by Foucault (1973, 1995), but rather the camera or the camera equipped smartphone (Turton 2004).



**Plate 5: Maasai guide photographing tourists with their camera (Photo by author)**

While Turton (2004) has looked at the connection between the gaze and its architectural enabler: the camera, in the context of tourists taking pictures of the Mursi, an Indigenous

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<sup>31</sup> One such reason provided in a conversation with one of the guides at Enkang Oloirien, was that some people believe that when you take their picture you are ‘sucking their blood.’

group living in Ethiopia whose “chief visible distinguishing characteristic” is the lip-plate worn by Mursi women (3), Gillespie (2018) moves a step further by marrying photography and the gaze with the notion of a ‘reverse gaze.’ This is the gaze of the photographee on the tourist photographer. He introduces the concept with an interaction he observed at a cultural festival displaying Ladakhi culture to western tourists. During this, a Ladakhi woman “from the remote village of Drass [...] [wore] a homespun woolen dress, with traditional jewelry and traditional shoes” (80). After being included in the frame of several tourist cameras, this woman was then handed one of the visitor’s cameras and proceeded to take a picture of an eager French tourist photographer who was previously photographing her. The reverse gaze on him led to his embarrassment and avoidance of it causing him to eventually “break off the discomfoting interaction” (82).

Furthermore, in another situation involving a tourist visiting a Buddhist monastery, the foreigner explained to the researcher that he hid his camera because,

‘It’s the Ladakhis’ perception of me taking a photo—if I have a camera, I am a tourist, whereas if I don’t, that thought is not so prominent in their minds. Like say they look at me taking a photo and say ‘there is another tourist taking a photo.’ (quoted on 83).

Here Gillespie uses Goffman to argue that this is an act of self-presentation on the part of the tourists when encountering the reverse gaze. He theorizes why tourists feel a level of discomfort in its presence, to which he concludes that it is not a situation where the visitors ‘take the perspective’ of hosts –that is that they harness the Ladakhi’s negative views towards their behaviour, but rather a degree of self-consciousness develops through the reverse gaze solidifying the “tourist’s object state as a tourist photographer, it positions him or her as a typical tourist and thus challenges (from the tourist’s own standpoint) any claim to be a traveler or post-tourist” (89).

Although I do not feel equipped to argue in support of Gillipse’s thesis as I did not spend an adequate amount of time speaking with tourists about their feelings towards their photography, I *can* argue that the local gaze with (and even without) the camera is disciplining tourist bodies to perhaps smile or look joyful for photos and to emulate Maasai bodies, for example during the competition jumping song. In doing so the visitors

attempt to leap vertically into the air at the same height as the Maasai, during which their tour guide uses their phone or camera to capture photos or videos of their often limited success.

Another interesting piece not found in my review of the literature is the local gaze on tourists institutionalized through cameras (or more so cellphones with cameras) owned by locals. I witnessed this to the greatest extent during the Maasai wedding organized for the American couple. Again, this ceremony was quite the spectacle with many locals taking pictures and videos with their cellphones. I saw the disciplinary power of the local gaze in effect as the couple obediently obeyed instructions of the proper wedding etiquette given by their interpreters and in their uneasiness and concern over missteps.

This relates to another finding in the realm of photography and the tourist gaze. While in the village, I would sometimes see Maasai guides from other companies or camps ask village tour guides in Olapa to video/photograph them while they participated in the men's song (see Plate 6). Employing the terms we have used so far, this would equate with a local gaze on locals in an arena of the mutual gaze. When I asked one guide what he would do with these photos, he joyfully proclaimed that he would post them on his Facebook and that in doing so it would encourage more Canadians to want to come to see the Maasai (Fieldwork 2017). Although there was some humour in this statement, there does appear to be degree of self-advertising motivating decisions to share such photos within one's virtual social network. This is supported by a conversation with John in which he attributes, in addition to his English and "God's plan," that social media played a role in maintaining relations with tourists, which inevitably provided him the opportunity to travel to the U.S. To keep in contact with visitors he notes: "You like their pictures, also you say 'how are you [...]' then when you post like pictures about wildlife, people really like, posting your culture you get a lot of followers, comments." (Fieldwork, Interview July 21, 2017). Here, one could conclude that a photo such as the one captured by the Maasai village tour guide would appeal to past visitors' interest in "posting [of] your culture." This exhibits an expanded spatial distancing of the mutual gaze. The tourist gaze continues from home.



**Plate 6: Maasai village tour guide photographing at the request of Maasai camp guide  
(Photo by author)**

Turton's earlier work on photography and the gaze does not account for the abundance of cellphones, including those with cameras, and also the medium to share these photographs. For example, while a tourist may have formerly taken pictures of their vacation and returned home to bind them in a photo album for personal memory retention and/or sharing experiences with others, someone such as John would likely not be interested in purchasing a camera for the same purpose. However, with a cellphone John can send and receive money through M-Pesa, check the news and information on political rallies, participate in betting on football games via mobile sites, all in addition to taking pictures. Moreover, the medium for keeping and recording pictures has changed. John can post these pictures to his Facebook account and view pictures past clients have taken of him, all of which are important in maintaining relationships and opening opportunities.

### 3.6 Authenticities, *plural*

Authenticity is one of the central myths in cultural tourism. van beek and Schmidt (2012) discuss its connection with a notion of 'tradition' and anthropology's historical predilection with the now "erroneous and mythical" concept (23). There is no doubt that



discussions of authenticity are presented as somewhat of a staple in the context of tourism research; however, with this there also appears to be a degree of academic fatigue in addressing the topic. For example, van Beek and Schmidt, introducing its theoretical genealogy in the tourism literature, write that “[t]he notion of authenticity long has *haunted* the study of tourism” (21, emphasis added). I understand concerns on the redundancy of its academic appearances, but I would argue that the multiple interpretations and contestations of this concept in tourist, host and even mediator discourses ensures the continued relevance of such discussions (Schnell 2003).

Dean MacCannell (1973, 1976) is heralded as the pioneer of theoretical dabbles with authenticity and tourism. In his view, tourists embark on a ‘quest’ for the authentic due to a perceived loss of authenticity in their modern and industrial lives. Moreover, the socioeconomic forces of commodification and globalization are considered the culprits in the ruin of local authenticity. Finding inspiration in Goffman’s theory of ‘social performances’ and the social and structural distinction between the ‘front’ and ‘back,’ stage, MacCannell discusses how the front is the social space for interactions between hosts and guests and the back is that space which is not visible to guests and customers and therefore “the place where members of the home team retire between performances and to relax and prepare” (1973:590). He continues that to exhibit a realness to the performance, it is necessary to have this back stage to hide the props, thereby requiring a degree of ‘mystification.’ The back region can therefore be linked to ideas of realness, and intimacy with the front region that which is ‘staged’ for a show. MacCannell argues that this distinction defines the touristic setting and tourists’ pursuit of the authentic product and that tourism experiences are strategically organized to seem like back stages, resulting in a ‘staged authenticity.’

While MacCannell’s theory has been thoroughly debated and challenged (see for example Bruner 2001; Cohen 1988; Stronza 2008; van Beek and Schmidt 2012) it seemed applicable in a conversation I had with one of the village tour guides, Mogia, when inquiring why tourists come to visit Olapa village. In his response, Mogia noted,

I think that we are just funny [to] them because we are different [than] them, because sometimes, if you take the clients through the village, [you] show them your bed,

where you sleep, you show them your kitchen where you cook, I see sometimes usually some clients who they are just looking at me like I am just kidding [...] and they don't think you are serious.

I further inquired why he thought the tourists believed the guides were untruthful about their living conditions and he responded,

I think they don't believe me, because when they see the village here, and they see the government houses like there, I usually, sometimes I [...] think that maybe the clients, they are just thinking to me that I am just kidding to them. I am just lying to them, because when they see the village here and see the government there, maybe they can say that these people they are just for business (Fieldwork, Interview, July 14, 2017).

The houses Mogia refers to are a collection of buildings, bordering the MMNR gate, which are inhabited by game rangers. They are relatively small in comparison to an average family home in North America and are made of materials which cannot be collected from the local natural environment, such as is this case with the mud-dung houses in Olapa.

This discussion rings tones of MacCannell's staged authenticity, as according to Mogia's assessment of tourists' perceptions, the Maasai men and women were in the village simply for 'business.' Incorporating MacCannell's language with Mogia's perception, the village can be interpreted as the stage upon which the Maasai enact domestic scenes for a tourism performance until the end of the workday when they are then believed to return to their 'actual,' more westernized houses nearby. We could argue that with the tourism industry's opportunity for staged authenticity and perhaps a circulating 'questioning gaze' from the tourists (Bruner 2001), it has led to a mischaracterization of what in fact is the 'back-stage,' that is, that area of 'real' homes, and where 'real' life is carried out.

While MacCannell was quite pessimistic about tourists' abilities to see the backstage, because of their very presence as tourists and therefore the spaces they occupy incorporated as tourism places, he did not consider how such cynicism may lead to misjudgements on front versus back stages. This revelation is particularly interesting when we consider the home as perhaps an epitome of a private sphere (at least in a western notion) and therefore the place where the hosts/actors go to retire. We can

question here whether these tourists could not accept these home as ‘authentic’ because of their disbelief in the mixture of tourism and private places.

While this particular example reveals some of the arguments mentioned by MacCannell with regards to a staged authenticity, the views of Ning Wang, John Taylor and Mark Galliford seem more relevant in another encounter I had with the concept. Wang (1999) embarks on a project to define authenticity and in doing so returns with three conceptions: objective authenticity, constructive or symbolic authenticity, and existential authenticity. Assessing the tourism and authenticity literature, he argues that there is a difference between authenticity as experience and authenticity in relation to the ‘toured object.’ He continues that in the literature, object-related authenticity is split into either objective authenticity or constructive/symbolic authenticity. Influenced by the museum, the former involves the “authenticity of originals” (352; see also Taylor 2001), with the latter, an authenticity entangled with semiotics and symbolism through its ‘projection’ on toured objects. As a social construction, this form of authenticity is created by tourism stakeholders through means such as stereotypes, expectations, interpretations, beliefs and imagery. In doing so, there is a capacity for multiple conceptions of authenticity for a single object. Using some of the common imagery highlighted above, we might see the *constructive authentic* Maasai as those who are male warriors, pure pastoralists, living amongst wildlife and disconnected from the modern world. Lastly, expanding on a postmodern perspective which seeks to deconstruct traditional notions of authenticity in tourism, Wang advocates an existential authenticity, writing that

In search of tourist experience which is existentially authentic, tourists are preoccupied with an *existential state of Being* activated by certain tourist activities. To put it another way, existential experience is the authenticity of *Being* which, as a potential, is to be subjectively or intersubjectively sampled by tourists as the process unfolds (359, emphasis original).

Like Wang, both Taylor (2001) and Galliford (2010) focus on the inter-personal relations evident in authentic experiences; however, unlike Wang they do not centre on tourists’ relations with their families or other tourists, but rather on tourist-host relations. Using Maori cultural tourism initiatives as case studies, Taylor begins by questioning the value of a temporally charged authenticity and contends that cultural tourism endeavours will

be more successful if they incorporate a notion of authenticity based on sincerity. Moreover, like van Beek and Schmidt, he argues that tourism's use of authenticity as synonymous with tradition (read pre-contact) has "tended toward the reification of modernist essentialization concerning Otherness" (7). Authenticity of the object, in this way, is thus informed by a temporal and spatial difference between the 'traditional' tourism-object and the 'modern' tourist-subject.

By contrast, authenticity, in tandem with its 'philosophical cousin:' sincerity, to Taylor, presents the opportunity for 'personal contact' between host and guest. The distinguishing factor between the two is the recognition that sincerity must include a "zone of contact" between persons, rather than something that is inherent of a "thing, self, or Other" (23). According to Taylor, when sincerity surpasses temporal conceptions of authenticity, values and knowledge can be communicated and experienced in a culturally appropriate manner, because "they become tied to selves in the present, both local and tourist" (23).

Akin to Taylor's argument, Galliford, in his review of Aboriginal cultural tourism in Australia, discusses the importance of 'intimacy' in the 'relational context' of tourism. In doing so, he argues that it was valued more by some tourists than material culture displays. In addition to his belief in the reconciliatory benefits of tourism in Australia, Galliford argues that a focus on intimate interpersonal interactions between strangers will dissolve concerns for authenticity based on primitivism and romanticism. According to Galliford, these situations present themselves at the Australian Aboriginal tourism cultural camps, when hosts and tourists "discuss meaningful aspects of their lives" (231). He further contends that such engagement is not inevitable and must not be forced, but on the contrary, is rather organic.

I saw quite a stark portrayal of Taylor's discussion of authenticity and sincerity and Galliford's thoughts on intimacy in a conversation between one of the guests of the camp and a guide. This guest did not seem fond of the visit to Olapa, holding a degree of distaste of the itinerated nature of the visit. He mockingly commented "we do the fire, we do the dance and then time for the next group." During this conversation he also

mentioned how the Maasai probably see foreigners and think they are dupes and that they will probably buy a lot (see also Gillespie 2018). In response to this, one of the guides explained no, they think tourists are “generous.” He continued that this is a “business” with a goal to make money, and that it is like a “museum” where you would be expected to pay money, specifically a museum to “preserve culture.” The visitor’s preference for authenticity in the form of sincerity or development of relationships was revealed in his response to this, “yes, but don’t tell me then that we are going to visit your friends” (Fieldwork, 2017).

Furthermore, this conversation was particularly interesting because the tourist had visited the village twice and the first time seemed to enjoy it immensely. Upon his return with another guest from the camp, I would argue, was when the disruption in his perception of sincerity occurred. When he had seen the schedule of the visit played out again, it rang tones of organization and constancy rather than friendship and novelty. I would even go so far to say that a sense of serendipity, of seeing something by ‘happenstance,’ was also lost in this second encounter<sup>32</sup> (Grabum 1983; Miller 2013). Like Galliford found in his research, this tourist noted that the highlights of his trip were those items that were not part of the traditional tourism program at the camp and mentioned that he would rather spend time hanging out with the guides (Fieldwork, 2017). Again, this reveals that to him, authenticity is not prevalent in an itinerary, but rather in unexpected events and more sincere and intimate relationships.

But what did this discussion mean to the hosts? How did the guides perceive this adjudication and what are their thoughts on authenticity? In a later interview with John, I asked him why he thought that this particular tourist was not fond of the village. He answered that,

Ya he was saying it was very touristic. [...] I told him it is like a museum, whereby we are teaching people about our history, on how our forefathers have been doing in our culture. So you don’t have to judge about saying touristic, because the tourists

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<sup>32</sup> During my fieldwork I came across another instance where guests seemed surprised that dancing in the village occurred regularly for tourists.

come to the village there, they pay the entrance fee, they buy beads [...] and carving things in the village, which promote people in the village to have, to have [a] plate [on] the table in the evening, in the morning.

In trying to see if there was any connection here to authenticity, I asked if he thought that the guest had perceived it as less authentic, he replied yes and said that he explained to him that you cannot put a village farther away from a road. Here he seems to believe that tourists connect remoteness with authenticity. When I inquired further what he thought tourists believe is authentic, he replied:

I think they need uh, I don't understand by the authentic, because everything is authentic here in the Mara. Like [...] the experience that tourist get[s] is authentic because in the village, there's cows. The cows live in the middle of the village. There's Maasai hut houses. People are dressing as usual, as 30 years ago. So, I think it is authentic.

John claims that he does not understand tourists' concerns with authenticity but he does seem to know that it is an important element of the tourism discourse, as evidenced in the description he includes of the Village Homestay for the Airbnb page he manages. Here he details that guests have "an authentic look at Maasai life" most of which has been maintained for "hundreds of years" (Fieldwork 2017). This indicates that John, as a host, sees authenticity as temporally charged and more as an objective form of authenticity, in comparison to the guest who views it more as connected with the development of relationships, constituted through time. All of this is even more interesting when we consider that the nature of the stay, I would argue, is built on notions of sincerity and close relationships by the very essence of staying with a family. We can hypothesize that John may see value in using the myth of authentic for economic reasons, in complying with (some) touristic imaginaries, but also as a way to distance himself from interactions which may require less privacy when authenticity is based on sincerity (Chambers 2010; Wijngaarden 2008).

### 3.7 Summary and conclusions

In opening this chapter on the organization of Maasai owned and operated tourism projects with John's experiences, we can see how he is tied to all three of the research sites, having formerly worked as a guide in Olapa, with his mother selling at the Sekenani

gate and with his current employment as a guide in Enkang Oloirien. Moreover, I would like to conclude by illustrating how the themes examined in this chapter, of tourism images and imaginaries, adhering and challenging the tourist gaze, and authenticity are revealed and intertwined in John's conception of a 'modern warrior.'

John proclaims that he is a modern warrior, and that this entails

being [...] a warrior with a cellphone where you can communicate whenever. You can go on Facebook, emailing so that's [what] it means being a modern warrior. You are a warrior putting your *shukas* [on] but before a real warrior, you will have big hairs, you will have naked no shorts, no shorts you just have one *shuka* with you. And you don't stay in one place, you keep moving from one place to another.

To John, in working in the tourism industry, he will forever be a modern warrior and not subject to the graduation of a 'traditional' warrior. On whether his idea of a modern warrior is different from those warriors in Olapa who may be considered 'actual' warriors he notes,

I think we are trying to bring them to become modern warriors, to educate them and appreciate [...] the tourist industry. To entertain [the tourists] to jump for them and to sing the songs, and we are trying to encourage people to preserve the culture, and also to benefit from the tourists.

He later suggests, that with more boys going to school instead of becoming warriors, the modern warrior may serve as a replacement and in doing so "preserve the culture and [offer] benefit[s] directly from tourism" (Fieldwork, Interview, July 21, 2017). With this, we can argue that John's conceptualization of a modern warrior demonstrates embodiment of the marrying of seemingly conflicting images of timelessness and modernity or even that it can be considered as a strategy to deal with "conflicts of acculturation" (Cole 2008). In the next chapter, we will see additional Maasai perspectives on tourism and how it ties into aspects of identity *as* Maasai.

## Chapter 4

### 4 Perspectives on Cultural Tourism

Browsing through the online reviews of Enkang Oloirien and through the papered notebook tourists are asked to sign before their departure, one will see words and phrases such as “the most wonderful experience of my life,” “caring [people],” “fantastic stay,” “a dream,” “friendship” and “in my heart.” These reflections are overwhelmingly positive and often mention the staff’s skills and hospitality, as well as personal highlights of the itinerary. This leads us to look at the other side of the coin however, and ask *how do hosts view tourists?* In this chapter we will explore questions such as, what are hosts’ perspectives on the steady flow of incoming tourists not only coming to stay at the homestay in the high tourism season, but also coming into their homes in the villages? How, and how much does tourism contribute to one’s life or the community? How are men and women able to balance catering to tourists with other demands on their time such as caring for children, managing livestock and domestic tasks such as cooking, smearing houses and fetching water and firewood? Does tourism influence Maasai culture? As mentioned previously, my motivation for this research was partly because I had felt these questions were unanswered during my first experience visiting a Maasai village. Here I hope to provide a comment card type venue for the men and women who host, cater to, deal with and/or embrace the thousands of visitors travelling to see the wonders of the Masai Mara.

#### 4.1 Views of the Tourist

##### 4.1.1 The *Olashumpai/ Enkashumpai* Clients

When describing tourists, Wijngaarden (2016) argues that for her participants,<sup>33</sup> whiteness is a major definitional indicator and is considered “opposite to being African” (144). I too noticed the association and conflation between tourist and white person. This

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<sup>33</sup> Wijngaarden’s research focused on Maasai involved in tourism in Encoro, Tanzania.



occurred, for example, when I or other guests would be called *olashumpai/enkashumbai*<sup>34</sup> (white man/white woman in Maa) or *mzungu* (used to refer to white people in Kiswahili). Additionally, during my interviews, when I asked questions about visitors' motivations and interests, I would use the words tourist, visitor and guest and would often hear my interpreter translate these to *olashumpai*. This umbrella term is interesting when we consider the sometimes quite large groups of tourists travelling from those countries which, by a narrow racial classification system, would not normally be considered white. (Wijngaarden 2016). For example, during my time in the Mara, these included visitors from India, China, Malaysia and Singapore. It appears that there is a connection with development and income and skin colour, such that the term white does not always refer to skin pigment, but more so to an association with a particular socio-economic and socio-political status and power<sup>35</sup> (Wijngaarden 2016; Swan 2012).

As mentioned before, Wijngaarden also notes that distinguishing guests based on the purpose of their stay is of relatively little importance; for example, whether a visitor would consider the foremost rationale of their stay to work with a non-profit organization in comparison to a leisure getaway. She continues that despite these differences, the 'whiteness' of the individual is still foregrounded in terms of significance arguing that

This does not mean that the Maasai in Encoro are not aware of or do not remember what specific activities a particular white came to do, and what that implies for where and how long the person stays. It is only that these activities do not add or detract anything from the whiteness of this person, and his or her whiteness says much more about this person than whether he is a tourist who visits for a day or an NGO worker (148).

This seemed applicable in my research, although there were some individuals who noted difference in engagements between Maasai and foreigners based on whether they were a missionary (Fieldwork, Interview with William, June 7, 2017), or someone working on a

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<sup>34</sup> In Wijngaarden's work, visitors were called *oloibor/iloibor*, an additional way to refer to a white man/woman in Maa.

<sup>35</sup> This was also demonstrated in the classification of a group of black individuals driving by in a four-wheel-drive tourist vehicle as "African mzungus" (Fieldwork 2017).

project (Fieldwork, Interview with George, June 12, 2017). For the most part; however, I would agree that these distinguishers were of little notice or value, as can be evidenced by myself often lumped into the category of tourists. Furthermore, with the uptake in the phenomenon of voluntourism and even ‘responsible’ tourism more generally, the lines between categories such as volunteer and tourist become vague (Swan 2012). For example, guests at Enkang Oloirien who could be classified as tourists sometimes make donations of money and materials to the local schools, as well as offer their time volunteer teaching. From a Maasai host perspective, we could argue that this again further limits the need for differentiating who is a tourist versus who is a volunteer or NGO worker.

Not raised by Wijngaarden, and mostly appearing in interviews I conducted in English or in informal conversations with Maasai (again in English), is reference to the tourist(s) as client(s). For example, when I asked Olmoleliani, the owner of Enkang Oloirien: What do you think is the most appealing thing about the Maasai culture to visitors? Instead of using *visitor* he states,

...so I think what is appealing to the *client* is that, I think the Maasai are the only people in Kenya that have remained with their own traditions and culture. It is, uh, and the Maasai are always very difficult to change, to change in their culture. (Fieldwork, Interview, July 22, 2017, emphasis added).

It is worth noting that classification as client was also used by guides in Olapa, in addition to those working at the Village Homestay. This perhaps speaks to more of a business-oriented view of the tourism project, than one positioning visitors as guests and perhaps the more intimate and closer connections that this would entail. That being said, this view does not seem to prevent the ‘clients’ from perceiving themselves as friends with their hosts, as evidenced in some of the reviews I perused and farewells I witnessed.

When specifically asked if there are any differences between tourists, there were a few respondents who noted the nationalities of visitors (Fieldwork, Interviews with Jason, June 8; Noonkishu, July 12; Sarah, July 17; Parkire, July 19; Jacob & Leshan, July 20, 2017). Furthermore, sometimes participants differentiated between those countries which were considered to be more generous, oftentimes North American and European

countries (examples provided included Canada, the United States, England, and Poland) versus those considered ‘Asian’ countries (examples provided included India, China and Korea). Some participants note that visitors from Asian countries buy little from the market and do not give donations<sup>36</sup> (Fieldwork discussions; Interviews with William, June 7; Parkire, July 19; Jacob & Leshan, July 20, 2017). I observed this prejudice lead to discrimination or differential treatment, for instance with some groups visiting from an Asian country not being accompanied by a guide in the market to explain the different items for sale and with tour guides spending less time explaining different aspects of daily life and culture than they would for a European or North American group, resulting with a considerably shorter tour. Additionally, during a tour with a group from Singapore and Malaysia, while two women were taking pictures in the market, one of the more outspoken guides announced: “you have taken a lot of pictures, now you have to buy” (Fieldwork, 2017), a bold demand that I doubt would be voiced if the women were European or North American.

Taking a different approach to learning how the Maasai viewed tourists (as well as how they define themselves), I decided to ask some participants whether there are differences between Maasai and tourists. People I spoke with often reported differences, with only a few individuals noting that both groups are relatively similar. Here too I found similarities with Wijngaarden’s research findings, as I was also told that tourists and Maasai differ because the Maasai depend on cows, whereas the tourists are engaged in business activities (Fieldwork, Interviews with Tumate & Ntalamia, July 12; Mogia, July 14; Parkire, July 19, 2017). One individual asked me how the tourists are able to make so much money if they do not have any livestock (Fieldwork Interview with Parkire, July 19, 2017). Additionally, a few participants also noted that the living arrangements are different for Maasai and clients, whereas the former live communally in the mud-dung houses in a circular village, the latter are believed to be able to “build big houses” (Fieldwork, Interviews with Jason, June 8; Group of Women, June 19, 2017). In a

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<sup>36</sup> Evans- Pritchard (1989) also discusses stereotypes hosts develop of visitors within the context of Native Americans involved in tourism in the Southwest.

different interview, houses that were not built with cow-dung were referred to as “white houses” (Fieldwork, Interview with Mogia, July 14, 2017). Tourists are viewed as having hefty monetary incomes making them “proud” compared to the “humble” Maasai (Fieldwork, Interview with Parkire; July 19, 2017). Relatedly, a guide in the village explained that the difference in levels of education is the major factor contributing to this income differential:

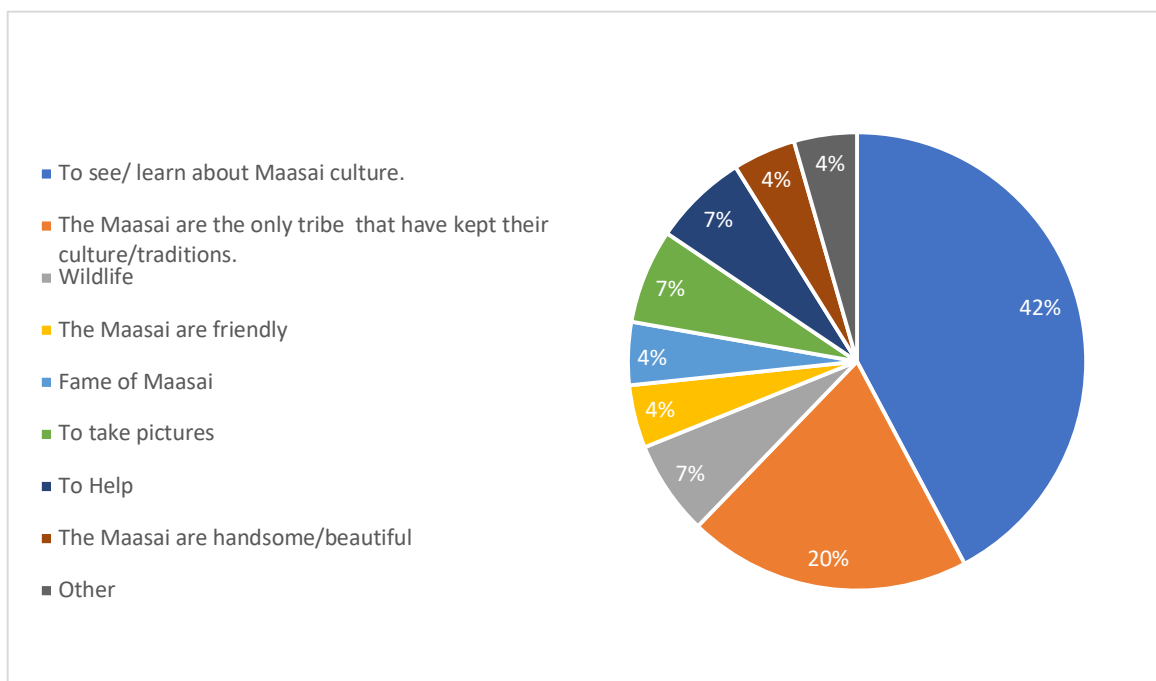
“[u]s, we are different from tourists because, the [tourists] [they] are people that get more knowledge, they get knowledge long time ago, they go to school, they know everything about his life, or about everything. But the Maasai people they all know maybe to look after animals, to do defense, and also maybe to stay here in the villages, they make dance or they do selling some things for the tourism.” (Fieldwork, Interview with Mogia, July 14, 2017).

A man who sings in the village also centres on this difference and states that the tourists are “well educated, because us we are still developing, we are not all educate[d]” (Fieldwork, Interview with Jacob & Leshan, July 20, 2017). This is linked to Wijngaarden’s theme of ‘capability,’ that is (white) tourists’ knowledge enables capacities for the technology required for development (and also encourages them to want to learn about the Maasai) and monetary wealth. She also notes that in discussions with Maasai hosts on whites being knowledgeable and educated, Maasai are presented in a lesser position because of their reliance solely on cows. That being said, her participants said that once educated Maasai will also have access to opportunities. Likewise, Mogia tells me that for those Maasai, their “life will be changed” perhaps enabling them to be employed by the government or the camps, thereby providing them with income to secure electricity and running water in their houses (Fieldwork, Interview, July 14, 2017).

#### 4.1.2 Why do they come?

I posed the question of why tourists come to see the Maasai to a number of my participants, ranging from those who have a rather brief engagement with visitors in selling (or attempting to sell) beadwork at the gate, to staff at the Village Homestay, who have more sustained interactions which include the ability to converse. Figure 1 represents the range of answers that I received when I asked this question in one form or

another in 23 interviews<sup>37</sup> with 28 people. As can be seen here, over 40% of the reasons<sup>38</sup> offered fell into the category of to see the Maasai, to learn about Maasai culture and ‘to see how we live’ (similar findings Wijngaarden 2016; Gillespie 2018). Upon pressing further into what respondents felt tourists were specifically interested in about Maasai culture, they provided answers such as they want to see “our villages” including how houses are built (Fieldwork, Interview with Margaret, July 23, 2017); because of “our different appearance” which often referred to the clothing, including the *shuka*, and even things such as the cut ear lobes, as well as that they want to know about “the food we eat and how we eat the food.” (Fieldwork, Interview with Oloshiro, July 21, 2017).



**Figure 3 Reasons believed visitors come to see the Maasai (Graph by author)**

Interestingly, these responses align with those provided when asked “what does culture mean to you?” I was told that the Maasai culture is given from God (Fieldwork,

<sup>37</sup> One participant was interviewed twice and his answers were consolidated to represent one interview.

<sup>38</sup> Some participants offered multiple answers to the question.

Interviews with Nashipai, June 8; Josie, June 19; Groups of Women, June 19, 2017), and that it means living communally in the circular villages in mud-dung houses, living with livestock, as well as the dress (including the fabrics and bangles) and body modifications. (Fieldwork, Interviews with Nashipai, June 8; Jennipher, June 12; Mogia, July 14; Oloshiro, July 21, 2017). Two respondents also answered that Maasai culture and preservation of culture involves continuing rituals such as circumcision of the boys and Maasai weddings (Fieldwork, Interviews with Michael, July 14; John, July 21, 2017).

The second most frequently answered response to why the Maasai are visited by tourists, is believed to be because Maasai are the only tribe to “still have culture,” often in comparison to other Kenyans in the country. Participants note for example, “we are local people, we are different than other tribal people, or we are different than the other people, because us, we still keeping our culture” (Fieldwork, Interview with Mogia, July 14, 2017). These responses relate to another question I asked to delve further into what it means to be Maasai and how the Maasai characterize their identity. The question: “How are Maasai different from other Kenyans?” resulted in similar answers as represented by one guide who comments that “many of the other tribes resemble [each other,] but the Maasai look a little different” because of things such as the beadwork, *shukas*, the cut ear lobes and the missing teeth (Fieldwork, Interview with Michael, July 14, 2017). Jennifer notes that unlike the Maasai, other Kenyans “have run to the Western people to get the Western culture” (Fieldwork, Interview, June 12, 2017). Most of my participants who answered this question felt that other Kenyans have abandoned their culture, as evidenced by their living in the cities and wearing Western clothes. By contrast, the Maasai culture remains strong as indicated through their dress, their keeping of livestock, the homes that they live in and that they live communally. Connecting this to tourism again, Stephen adds that the Maasai are the only ones to maintain culture and that its importance is present in its ability to attract many guests (Fieldwork, Interview July 3, 2017).

Another interesting response offered on why tourists are eager to see the Maasai was because of the fame they attribute to themselves. A few respondents noted that people have heard about the Maasai on television, in books or from their safari guides, and in turn that this exposure drives their interest in seeing (and meeting) these colourful cloth

adorned people (Fieldwork, William, June 7; Jeremiah, June 12, Parkire, July 19; Oloshiro, July 21, 2017). This is reflected in the perspective of one of the men who sings and dances in the village in his statement that "...the Maasai are very famous, because most tourists watch them on t.v. [...] Some tourists just come to see [what] they see on the t.v." (Fieldwork, Parkire, July 19, 2017). Also falling within this category, was a response by one of the guides which was very saddening to hear. When I posed the question of why tourists are interested in the Maasai, he answered,

they [do not] believe how the Maasai they live, because maybe they have read just in the books the stories of the Maasai, but they want to see them because these people they live like animals [...] because the life is very easy (Fieldwork, Interview with William, June 7, 2017).

Responses falling in the category: "To Help" may also require further explanation. Some felt that one of the reasons that tourists came to visit the village was to support the Maasai monetarily, perhaps through buying items such as shukas, carvings or beadwork, or by helping to send children to school (Fieldwork, Interviews with William, June 7; Saleta, June 19; Warriors; July 3; Tumate & Ntalamia, July 12, 2017). The same guide previously cited added that "tourists, come because they have a good heart, and they want to support the community, [...] because [it is] not supported by the government" (Fieldwork, Interview William, June 7, 2017). Before he made this comment however, he noted that visitors come to the Mara to "improve" the Maasai, in terms of how they live and how they work. Here he referenced that this is because the Maasai are nomadic. That being said, at a later part in our discussion he indicated that it is more often those who stay for longer periods such as a year, who offer advice on areas in need of 'improvements.' He provides examples such as sending girls to school and ending child labour and female circumcision. Here too he referenced that advice such as this will come from missionaries and then pointed to the American family living nearby that established a missionary school.

Wijngaarden also discovered a theme of Maasai believing that visitors are coming to help, noting that participants often connect white people as being from God due to the infiltration of missionaries who were also white and the consideration of Jesus as white. This in turn leads to the belief that they have a "white heart" which Wijngaarden

identifies as “the image of the noble white” (2016:178). On this same note, Shinka, a guide at Ewangan, framing it as naivety, remarked that people in the village believe that white people come from heaven, reasoned with the similarity between their white skin and the white seen in the sky (Fieldwork 2017). As noted by Wijngaarden, respondents thereby believe that God inspires white people to assist others. She further connects this with the presence of three very similar stories: the biblical account of brothers Jacob and Esau; a Maasai narrative she was told in Enkoro which speaks of Maasai and white people as half-brothers to explain the current relationship between Maasai and whites and the story of Olenana and Senteu, told to her by an Il-Purko Maasai in her previous research on tourism in Kenya. The common thread between the three narratives is that one of two brothers ends up in a lesser position in terms of wealth, blessings and/or knowledge. Wijngaarden did find discrepancy in attributions of why this occurred however, notably in the white and black half-brother narrative. One individual discussed that this was due to trickery from the devious and disliked white mother and another retold the narrative in which the Maasai son was not able to attain his rightful blessings because he was too proud and therefore came too late when he was to receive them from his father. Wijngaarden concludes that,

This narrative explains the contemporary relationship between whites and Maasai people, making it into a coherent entity with a specific past (the family tie and the betrayal), which explains the present (the situation of a positive relationship as well as huge inequality), and a possible future that this present could lead to (the white brother helping the Maasai) (2016:193).

In closing this section, by looking at the views such as tourists just wanting to come to take pictures, we can see a voyeuristic sentiment and perhaps question the positive claim of tourism to provide intercultural education (Bodley 2008). This seems challenging when hearing views such as Sarah’s, who sells beadwork and carvings in Olapa, that tourists “just look at us, look at the houses, [and] then buy stuff” (Fieldwork, Interview, July 17, 2017). Or in notation by one of the elders who makes carvings to sell and helps make the fire for the demonstration, that tourists just want to come to take pictures (Fieldwork, Interview, Tumate & Ntalamia, July 12, 2017). Cross-cultural learning seems rather difficult especially when tourist and host are not able to speak to one another due



to language barriers, as was the case with both of these participants and again likely less of an obstacle in interactions at Enkang Oloirien characterized by deep experiences.

## 4.2 Tourism's influence and impact

### 4.2.1 Opportunities available through tourism

For the most part, the Maasai men and women with whom I spoke view tourism quite positively and in terms of the economic incentives it provides. Variations of questions such as how has tourism impacted the community, your life or what are the benefits of tourism, resulted in more than 85% of the interviews citing the ability to send children to school. These took the form of: money earned enabling parents' payment of school fees and uniforms (Fieldwork, Interviews with Naramat, July 12; Nashipai, June 8; Margaret, July 23; Michael, July 14; Parkire, July 19; Jacob & Leshan, June 12; William, June 7; Stephen, July 3, 2017); allowing the village to send children to school through a portion of the money made in entrance fees (Fieldwork, Interviews with Jeremiah, June 12 Jason, June 8; Mogia, July 14; Joseph, June 8, 2017); tourists deciding to sponsor Maasai children's school fees (Fieldwork, Interviews with George, June 12; Michael, July 14; Jennipher, June 12; Parkire, July 19; Jacob & Leshan, July 20; Stephen, July 3, 2017), and/or tourists deciding to build schools in the area (in addition to other social institutions/development projects such as health clinics, and water projects) (Fieldwork, Interviews with Olmoleliani, June 7; Oloshiro, July 21, 2017). During my time in the Mara, with the amount it was raised in interviews and a request by my friend to support the education for one of her daughters, I sensed that tourists having a "kind heart" and deciding to sponsor children's school fees was quite common. Some Maasai have even been fortunate enough to have post-secondary education funded by international visitors (similar findings in Kalavar et al. 2014; Snyder and Sulle 2011).

While education was not considered a priority in former times,<sup>39</sup> as explained to me by a participant (Fieldwork, Interview with William, June 7, 2017), some individuals I spoke with now see education's importance in terms of the ability it provides for attaining careers, often outside working in tourism in the village. These included working for the government or managing a camp (Fieldwork, Interview with Mogia, July 14, 2017). However, receiving some primary level education is also beneficial in tourism jobs in Olapa. With a bit of English learned in school, some men are able to work as guides and therefore have potential access to tips that their colleagues and friends who dance and sing would likely not (Hitchcock 1996).

Hearing that the benefit of tourism, in one way or another, was the support of children's education a number of times, caused me to question whether it was an advertising tactic as the Maasai seem to be quite attuned to tourists' interest in children, evidenced for example by including a visit to the local primary school on the homestay itinerary. The effect of education and tourism is quite interesting when considering that a few individuals felt that with education, tourism to the Maasai villages would no longer occur.<sup>40</sup> Mogia, a guide in Olapa, explained to me that men and women in the village are only working there because they are not educated and therefore have limited opportunities for employment<sup>41</sup> (Fieldwork Interview, July 14, 2017). His thoughts on the importance of education were also reflected in a conversation I overheard, where he was defending President Kenyatta (as one of his few fans it seemed among the younger men in Olapa) for the work he has done in raising school enrollment. Additionally, an interesting link with tourism and education was raised by Stephen, who as I mentioned earlier expressed the importance of Maasai culture because of its ability to attract

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<sup>39</sup> Winjgaarden (2010) also notes that Maasai resisted colonial efforts to enroll children in faraway schools, as they considered this a declaration of lack of love for a child.

<sup>40</sup> Although one participant did mention that with some education, individuals may decide to drop out of school to make money as a guide in the village instead (Fieldwork 2017).

<sup>41</sup> At a later point in the interview, when I followed up on this though he predicted that village tourism will continue as there will always be those who will not be able to find employment elsewhere.

tourists. Later he noted that when children go to school they no longer want to wear clothes such as the *shukas* or eat food that that they would usually eat at home (Fieldwork, Interview, July 3, 2017).

In addition to income earned allowing for payment of school fees, participants reported that tourism provides employment in a job scarce area and that men and women are able to use these earnings for other needs such as clothing, food and to purchase livestock. Furthermore, some noted that with money from tourism people would not be forced to sell prized livestock to pay for these basic needs, but instead can work to accumulate larger herds (Fieldwork, Interviews with Michael, July 14; Group of Women, June 19; Parkire, July 19; Naserian, July 14; Warriors, July 3; Jacob & Leshan, July 20; Mogia, July 14; Tumate & Ntalama, July 12, 2017). An ability to earn monetary income and not rely solely on livestock<sup>42</sup> (and sometimes agriculture) was also the major difference cited by those who compared life in a village without tourists versus one which is traversed by camera carrying foreigners daily (Fieldwork, Interviews with Margaret, July 23; Shinka, July 21; Group of Women, June 19; Sarah, July 17; Naserian, July 19; Tumate & Ntalamia, July 12; Joseph, June 8, 2017). Places like Olapa are viewed as “better” because it is “easier” to earn money to purchase necessities (Fieldwork, Interviews with Naserian, July 14; Tumate & Ntalamia, July 12, 2017). Here too I was told one is able to earn money every day (Fieldwork, Interview with Noonkishu, July 12, 2017), although the seasonal fluctuations<sup>43</sup> may make this challenging. Kalavar et al. (2014), in their research in Tanzanian cultural villages, found that older men are concerned that with these opportunities for income, the younger generation is not as respectful as status

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<sup>42</sup> It is interesting to note that when I spoke with two elders, they indicated that they would rather be herding than in the village waiting to help with the fire demonstration (Fieldwork, Interview with Tumate & Ntalamia, July 12, 2017); however, in speaking with a young man who left his home to work in the village, he noted that he preferred singing/dancing in Olapa, because he was able to live close to town, earn money, and was no longer required to be out herding the cattle (Fieldwork, Interview with Jacob & Leshan, July 20, 2017).

<sup>43</sup> Some men working in the village and at the camp supplement their income in the off season with other jobs, such as John who works as a motorcycle taxi driver, Parkire who is hired by politicians to sing and Shinka who works with his brother to sell livestock to Nairobi buyers.

becomes based more on wealth than age. The few older men who participated in my research did not seem to express this sentiment.

With having to wait in the village all day for tourists, as is done by the men in Olapa, or having to ensure the proper management of an entire camp, as is done by Olmoleliani, and his staff, I questioned how the Maasai that I spoke with are able to balance taking care of their livestock and hosting visitors. In the views of my participants, tourism is actually quite compatible with livestock management. Olmoleliani explained that wherever you have your camp, the cattle can also stay there and that you can simply take them out for grazing in the morning before camp duties (Fieldwork, Interview June 7, 2017). With regards to managing livestock in the villages providing tours, I was told by one man that there is a rotation between who cares for the cattle and who welcomes tourists (Fieldwork, Interviews with Jeremiah, June 12, 2017). Others suggested that one can hire a shepherd (Fieldwork, Interviews with Jeremiah, June 12; Tumate & Ntalamia, July 12, 2017) or rely on your children to carry out this work (Fieldwork, Interview with Tumate & Ntalamia, July 12, 2017). To the Maasai I spoke with, this combination of both livestock and tourism is vital. With tourism, Maasai are not constantly forced to sell their livestock to pay for basic needs, thereby allowing a suitable number of available sheep, goats and cows to sell during the low tourist season. While Winjgaarden (2012), in her research with Maasai involved in tourism, found participants saying that “the lion has become the cow,” in reference to the benefits derived from tourists whose primary motivation to the visit the area is for the wildlife, for those with whom I spoke, this metaphor seems to perhaps rather read that the lion has become part of the herd.

Examining the tourism employment opportunities available to Maasai men and women in Maasailand, Christian (2016) argues that the Global Production Networks in tourism draw on and enhance existing racial and gender hierarchical relations and representations in the Masai Mara area and thereby limit access to benefits from social and economic upgrading, enabled through the process of ‘disarticulation.’ Rather, she argues, that social upgrading, of which she defines as “the rights and entitlements to which workers should have access when participating in global economic activity” (26), and economic upgrading are available more so to whites, Asian- Kenyans and expatriates. Economic

success for these racially perceived groups stems from international market access and a ‘societal embeddedness’ which conveys that these are the competent authorities in the Kenyan tourism market. She notes that this is in comparison to Maasai whose,

identity in opposition to white international tourism capabilities and standards, [is] in congruence with tourist products but only in the correct tourism roles as guides, artisans and low-level staff. Even though the Maasai upgraded socially they only did so by fitting into a foreign image of African authenticity (2016:27).

As noted in my previous chapter, Christian argues that gender and racial intersections narrow the opportunities for social upgrading for Maasai women by limiting the types of tourism jobs they are able to access, which involves primarily producing beadwork and items to sell; and because of their “gendered exclusion from commercial tourism revenue” (2016:27), that is an inability to secure land in conservancies because it can only be placed in a man’s name. While I understand the concerns presented by Christian, it is important to be weary of victimizing or disempowering women’s engagement in the tourism industry through their work largely centered on producing beadwork. Ortner’s (2006, 1999) ideas on agency may better explain how these women are able to engage in an industry which allows benefits for them and their families [of which may include the oft cited prized benefit of development or empowerment in one form or another as found by Kalavar et al. (2014)], while still navigating complex, hierarchical racial and gender relations.

#### 4.2.2 Challenges and concerns

When asked outright if there were negatives or challenges to tourism, most participants would respond with “no” or some version of “not really.” For those who did detail challenges or negative aspects these include operational challenges such as getting the camp ready in time for tourists as noted by Margaret, Olmoleliani’s wife (Fieldwork, Interview, July 23, 2017) or not knowing at first how to operate smart phones when guests asked for pictures (Fieldwork, Interview with Mogia, July 14, 2017). In terms of more negative impacts of tourism, answers included: when tourists give out sweets to children which is believed to lead to dental problems and bad manners (Fieldwork, Interviews with Jennipher, June 12; Josie, June 19; Stephen, July 3, 2017), and when

young Maasai men marry “old white ladies” (Fieldwork, Interview with Olmoleliani, June 7, 2017). This is considered problematic because of the monetary dependency the husband has on his older wife, as well as the inability of the relationship to bear children. I elicited this second reason by drawing on a point raised in another interview which also focused on relationships and marriage. In it, the man, a guide in a different village, listed what he considered the problematic occurrences linked to tourism: prostitution, tourists looking for same-sex companions in the village and tourists who may “break your heart” by engaging in romantic relations and then leaving. In his view, a relationship between tourist and host was suitable, so long as it was heterosexual and bore children (Fieldwork, Interview with Jeremiah, June 12, 2017).

There was also a theme of employment and income present in the responses provided. This included resentment expressed on the limited employment of Maasai in the lodges and in the park (Fieldwork 2017) and that Maasai are not receiving the 19% of park entrance fees promised by the county government (Fieldwork 2017; Bruner 2001; Christian 2016; Wijngaarden 2008, 2012). A young man who guides in the larger adjacent village to Olapa also discussed how he decided to switch his studies from tourism to business, because with a business-related career he will not be affected by seasonal employment and will be able to earn income on a daily basis (Fieldwork, Interview with Michael, July 14, 2017).

Additionally, although most in Olapa did not want to share this with me, exploitation by driver-guides also occurs (Honey 2008; Wijngaarden 2008; Mvula n.d.; Snyder and Sulle 2011). I was told that most people feared that if I knew that this was happening I would reprimand the drivers, causing them to lose visitors to Olapa. From the few who did want to speak about the issue with me, I learned that while the Maasai hosts request the \$20 USD per person entrance fee, in reality they receive only about \$5 for the whole carload and are forced to repay the remainder of the entrance fee to the driver-guides. This has been a concern for Maasai for quite some time and has led, with support from a British foreign tourism consultant, to the creation of the Maasai Mara Cultural Villages Tourism Association. Operating for more than ten years, this organization is working on the concern of driver corruption by engaging with relevant stakeholders to institute a

ticketing system to help ensure villages (including Olapa) retain their profits. By doing so, there is no cash given to drivers and visitors are provided with a ticket by the company (lodge or tour group) they have booked with. After collecting these tickets, villagers invoice the respective company and then have the money deposited into the village account. A key feature of this work is to get buy-in from a number of villages to thwart efforts by the drivers to create competition between villages and drive down prices for entrance fees. Additional projects implemented through this organization include: capacity building initiatives, marketing and disseminating knowledge on the tourism supply chain (Mvula, n.d.).

I had the opportunity to learn about this organization by talking with Oloshiro, a volunteer on his village's committee. As a committee member, he lists his responsibilities to include: calculating the money that is collected, managing the bank account and deciding how the money will be used in terms of community development projects. According to Oloshiro, when visitors purchase a ticket a portion of the sale is invested back into the association and used to fund projects such as water holding tanks to collect rainwater so that women do not have to travel as far to fetch water, children's school fees and construction of a building to sell beadwork and other souvenirs. In updating me on the progress he indicated that there are currently 12 villages participating, but there is only one tour operator using the ticketing system for their clients. He noted that while they have undertaken efforts to get other companies to join and have received success at the management level, it is difficult to ensure that these promises trickle down to the drivers (Fieldwork, Interview July 21, 2017). Unfortunately, while in the Mara I noticed that the company who is apparently on board with the ticketing system did not pay via tickets when coming to one of the villages.

There also seemed to be a level of distaste with the idleness of the men working in the village waiting for tourists (Fieldwork, Interviews with Shinka, July 21; Olmoleliani, July 22; Mogia, July 14, 2017) Olmoleliani, notes that,

...if you go to some of the villages, people are, they don't know exactly where the visitors are going, because it is not organized, but you can [find] many people every day sitting in the shade waiting for the tourists to come, and I think that

might create a kind of idleness because you be waiting people, people who has got their own program...

He continues, “But instead of going to hustle elsewhere and do some other things, you will just go in the shade, wait for people to come, and then you can sell to them, or pay the entrance fee in the village.” Mogia, working in Olapa, comments that when other Maasai who have employment outside of the village see them waiting for clients to come to Olapa they “take us, like maybe we are stupid.” In addition, Shinka tells me that he did not enjoy his time singing and dancing in one of the villages, because he did not like sitting around waiting for tourists. This could perhaps be linked to the pastoral roots of the Maasai that would traditionally see men quite mobile and perhaps not as regularly confined to the village, as say the women would be. Although not inside the village fence, which I was told on my tour is where the women usually stay because of the danger of the wild animals, are these men, in their idleness, proximity to their homes and stationary presence feminized?

Again, the view of tourism is overwhelming positive, with a limited number of respondents reporting concerns. It is important to question here though whether this tremendous praise for the tourism industry communicated in interviews could be in part because of a believed affinity between me and tourists or perhaps even tourist agencies.

#### 4.2.3 Impact on culture

Despite the frequently cited benefits and some of the challenges and even problematic impacts of tourism, I found it interesting that when a question was worded as “Has tourism changed Maasai culture?” participants, for the most part, were very quick to answer that it will/has not. Out of the 15 interviews where I raised this question, in more than 70% of them, a version of ‘no’ was provided. This is interesting when we consider, for instance, that since 1977 it is illegal to kill animals, including lions for the ceremony involving warriors. Two men noted that they used to kill wild animals, but now because of tourism they conserve them and they stay with their cows (Fieldwork, Interview with Tumate and Ntalamia, July 12, 2017). A guide in Olapa village explained to me that tourism cannot alter Maasai culture because of the presence and guidance of the elders (Fieldwork, Interview with William, June 7, 2017). Defenses provided also included that



visitors just want to know about the culture they do not want to “spoil it” (Fieldwork, Interview with Shinka, July 21, 2017) or they “just come and see and then go” (Fieldwork, Interview with Noonkishu, July 12, 2017). Another individual answered that tourism is not causing significant changes to culture, but rather that Christianity is ‘to blame,’ commenting that,

Christianity now is something, it is a big problem changing the life of the Maasais. This is why you find many of the young people from the Maasais [...] they change like, they don’t like to wear like, like the way that I am dressing, or they don’t want to, they don’t want to live in like this kind of houses. Maybe they want to, they want to modernize their life [and] start on living in different kinds of houses, like the house people [live] in the town (Fieldwork, Interview with Jeremiah, June 12, 2017).

It seems that while the people I talked with recognize the economic benefits from tourism, they do not consider these to result in a change to cultural traditions and practices. This is likely due to collective historical memories of efforts by the Kenyan government, missionaries, colonial administrators and development workers to assimilate and modify the lifestyle of the Maasai (Snyder and Sulle 2011; Wijngaarden 2010). One could also conclude that one of the reasons that tourism has not been able to change Maasai culture is because it is believed to enable and encourage those things which they feel are central to Maasainess (such as keeping cows, *shukas*, and living in a circular village). This is in contrast to other foreign influences such as Christianity and education, which as noted above, may cause children to discard their ‘Maasai clothes.’ Yet, this is despite the indirect association of education and tourism, that is that with tourism more families are able to send children to school and that with an education, people may look for work outside the villages, thereby not living in the circular villages, possibly not wearing the *shukas* and maybe even not keeping cows, goats or sheep.<sup>44</sup> This also includes that with education young men are less likely to become warriors. We can also perhaps see the challenge that while Maasai feel that tourism provides for accumulation

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<sup>44</sup> Although one woman in my fieldwork explained that with more education one can buy more livestock.

of livestock, tourism may inhibit this with the private conservancies surrounding them and the reserve which forbids grazing.

Somewhat in contrast however, there were also a small number of people who believed that tourism offers an opportunity to help preserve culture (Cole 2006). As another elder explained to me, the tourists “do not want the culture to end,” which leads to the camps employing Maasai in positions such as watchmen and guides, who in turn are required to wear their *shukas* to acquire these positions (Fieldwork, Interview with Oloshiro, July 21, 2017). Furthermore, Michael, a village tour guide, explains that the dances in the village are done “to record the past” (Fieldwork, Interview, July 14, 2017) and Jeremiah remarks that Maasai have been able to maintain their culture because of the direct income, offered through tourism (Fieldwork, Interview, June 12, 2017).

### 4.3 Complicated threads

It is my hope that I have illustrated that while indeed benefits and challenges to tourism are defined, these are oftentimes not clearly differentiated, but rather contradictory, sometimes communicated even in the same sentence by a participant. Here we can find value in taking a brief pause to move beyond the recognition of solely human actors as agenic selves, capable of making decisions which affect the persons, objects and environment around them, and acknowledge the agenic capacities of materials and objects in tourism and representation of culture. As such, material engagement theory, as defined by Renfrew (2004) to be that which

is concerned with the relationships between humans and the material world and focuse[d] upon the use and status of material objects (mainly created objects or artefacts) which are employed to mediate in the interactions between human individuals, and between humans and their environment (23),

provides an excellent medium to address this. Furthermore, a more general view of material culture as simply the “relationship between people and things” will also be of value in this thought process (“Editorial” 1996:5).

For this section, an analysis of dress in tourism (and ‘everyday’ life) is worthy of attention and has received very little deep analysis in the context of Maasai tourism. Babb

(2012), speaking of Mexico and Peru, notes how in addition to language, dress was important for women and men in portraying an ‘authentic’ ‘Indianness’ for tourists (see also Wilk 1995 in Macleod and Carrier 2010; Wijngaarden 2010). In this realm, clothing or dress on Indigenous and host bodies has a great deal of agency, so much so that it is able to command and harness the gaze of tourists and assert a representation of authenticity. Drawing back on the definition of material engagement theory, we can say that Maasai dress (including items such as the *shukas* and beadwork) is thus *mediating* the *interaction* between tourists and Maasai people by visually communicating who is an authentic Maasai. I saw this for example in an excursion with some Enkang Oloirien guests to a market populated with Maasai and non-Maasai Kenyans, during which a guest made an assumption which suggested that those in the *shukas* were Maasai and those who were wearing ‘Western clothes’ (some of whom were also Maasai) were not. Vividly coloured *shukas*, *kangas* and beadwork are major attractors for tourists, as evidenced in a statement on a photographer’s post on the ‘Your Shot’ *National Geographic* website. This individual was present during the ceremony to open the school cum political rally, and of the event she writes, “The excitement was palpable as huge crowds of local Masai [*sic*] people gathered, all dressed up in their best, brightest clothing and layers of hand-beaded jewelry. Meeting different people where they live is such a rewarding part of travel.”

In responding to a comment praising her photograph of women attending the event, she writes, “It was such eye candy to be around them [...]. I never tired of the sight.”<sup>45</sup> Here, one could argue that a semiotic framework can describe the relationship of tourists to *shukas* and even beadwork. These, on black bodies in an African nation, signify the Maasai and the associated narratives that have been created in Western imaginations (Bruner 1991).

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<sup>45</sup> <http://yourshot.nationalgeographic.com/photos/10719976/>  
 Accessed July 3, 2018

Through ancestral perspectives passed down from the Enlightenment, we have tended to uphold the status of persons and denigrate the status of things, despite their ability to affect, constrain, influence, transform and even create people (“Editorial” 1996; Hodder 2014; Miller 2010). Unlike the analytical exercise I have just completed, there are those who argue for highlighting the very materiality of things, beyond simply their representative capacity (“Editorial” 1996; Miller 2010; Hodder 2014). Miller, a strong advocate for giving due (and proper) recognition to ‘stuff,’ notes, for example, how with Trinidadians clothes are not superficial, inactive objects used to represent someone, but rather through intensive labour in mutual constitution, become the person. Additionally, with Indian women and saris, he details not how the object—the sari—adorns the body to represent an identity, but rather that it actually creates the Indian woman; for example by explaining its “prosthetic quality” (2010:25). A material cultural informed analysis can also look beyond objects’ representative capacities by acknowledging that humans and social life require things. (Hodder 2014). Again, they are mutually constitutive and relationally produced (Miller 2010; Hodder 2014) and as noted by Hodder (2014), ‘entangled’ in a formulaic sum of things depending on things, humans depending on things, humans depending on humans and things depending on humans. He encourages acknowledgement of not just the relational production of humans and things, but to also consider the stronger notion of this dependence which takes the form of dependence as ‘enabling’ and dependence in terms of ‘constraint.’ To Hodder, such realities can be said to reflect ‘entanglement,’ which he defines as,

the dialectic of dependence and dependency between humans and things. The term “entanglement” seeks to capture the ways in which humans and things entrap each other. But it also seeks to recognize the ways in which a continual and exponentially increasing dynamism lies at the heart of the human experience. [...] [W]e f[ind] ourselves entrapped in the needs and demands of things and their limits and instabilities. (21)

Furthermore, Miller argues that objects’ strength and importance is not reflected in this capacity for enabling or constraining alone, but also in the ‘humility of things.’ That is, in their power to direct our action, setting frames for appropriate and inappropriate behaviour relatively unknowingly to the person(s) in context.

Acknowledging the power of visual cues and clothing in tourism, I queried whether Maasai people modify and dress their bodies as part of routine practice or whether they believe such practices also involve (or perhaps wholly involve) a project (Ortner 2006) to command the gaze of the tourists. The results, like anything, were quite complex and depended on a number of factors. As I indicated before, I did notice occasions where a few Maasai in Olapa had changed their clothes for the presence of tourists.<sup>46</sup> In one instance in the village I asked one of the ladies, Jennipher, who spoke some English, whether she would be dancing that day, and she responded no and gestured that she was not wearing the right clothes. At this time she was dressed in a relatively plain skirt and t-shirt and not the two pieces of crossed red and yellow cloth draped over the body, with arms and neck adorned in beadwork and a *kanga* over the shoulders, as we can see on the women dancing for visitors featured in Plate 7. Additionally, another woman who was helping to fix the wood supports in the market at the back of the village was also wearing a skirt and a t-shirt and forced one of the younger men to give her his *shuka* to wear around her shoulders when a group of tourists came into the market. One afternoon I also witnessed the gate of Olapa appear as a vortex, when it took in one of the men who sing for tourists, dressed in pants and a t-shirt, and released him in ‘Maasai clothes.’ On a similar note, John explained to me that if he were to wear Western clothes to the village, the others would tell him to change. Later, he joked with one of his friends who usually works as a guide in Olapa, who on that day was wearing slacks and a white dress shirt for an interview for a position as an elections clerk, that he should “take this off, mzungus don’t want to see this.” John also told me that he mostly wears Western clothing, laughing that he wears the *shuka* because he has to “sell the culture.” This relates to an incident in the market where he jokingly acted out for another tourist and I how a Maasai may try to sell a client souvenirs, repeating the advertisement on a *shuka* package that one must purchase it, because it is a “fabric with a culture” (see Plate 8).

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<sup>46</sup> Margaret indicated explicitly that dress was not changed with the presence of tourists, but that decisions on clothing are more so based on whether she is working on the house (smearing), in the kitchen or if she is going to church. In the kitchen or smearing, she indicated that she would wear a skirt, t-shirt and a *shuka* (or likely the *kanga* too) (Fieldwork, Interview, July 23, 2017).



**Plate 7: Common dress worn by women in the Ladies' Dance (Photo by author)**



**Plate 8: "The Fabric with a Culture" (Photo by author)**

Perhaps as surprising to a tourist as it was to me, one lady told me that based on her experience formerly living in a village with no tourists, in comparison to one like Olapa where tourists are a common sight, in the former they wear more Western style clothing.

I asked why the people in Olapa wear shukas, and she said because they used to in the past (Fieldwork, Interview with Noonkishu, July 12, 2017).

Looking at whether or not something has changed with the presence of tourists and viewing clothing as simply a prop or costume taken out for the tourism performance; however, does little to communicate the more complex, nuanced and at times even tense relationship one has with their clothing. This limited analysis and recognition of *shukas* simply in terms of representing authenticity of Maasainess would not capture instances such as *shukas* being given at graduation celebrations<sup>47</sup> or being used as a tool to shine one's wood carvings available for sale in the market before tourists approach.

To delve further into the power of things, I would like to focus more intently on perspectives of the *shuka* I learned from John. During my time in the Mara, apart from pictures, I had not seen John in anything other than his *shukas* and rubber tire shoes. He often wore his Maasai blanket knotted at the top and draped over one shoulder (which he told me is how he wears it when he is warm), in comparison to Shinka, the other guide, who would often wear it appearing more like a cape with the knot on the front and long fabric falling behind him. When John gets cold, he tells me that he drapes it over the front of him with the knot on the back and the fabric blanketed across his shoulders. The *shuka* also works to cushion and protect him from the thorny and unforgiving earth. During interviews, for example, John would often lay out his *shuka* like a picnic blanket to sit on while he translated. He explained to me that he likes wearing the *shukas* because they are of a sturdier fabric and thereby easier to clean. In this discussion, he explained that tourism is not one of the reasons that the Maasai wear *shukas* and offered instead that it is because the Western clothes are easy to dirty, and sweat in (Fieldwork 2017).

A spatial/platial analysis also further enriches an analysis of a man's relation to the *shuka*. During my time in the Mara I noticed that Olmoleliani would not wear his *shukas* when he went to Narok for business, to meet with investors for community projects or to

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<sup>47</sup> During my time in the Mara this occurred in celebrations for a man completing his military training and for men becoming rangers in the conservancy.

get his car fixed; or when he went to Nairobi to pick up visitors. Additionally, in the town bars I would see that most of the men I knew in Olapa who worked as guides and/or sing and dance for tourists would not wear their *shukas*, but instead t-shirts or long sleeve shirts with jeans or pants. When I asked John where he wears his *shuka*, he answered that he wears it at home and when he is out with his livestock (although I did see pictures of him holding his infant daughter and wearing more Western clothes). I offered a lead to him of why the Maasai do not wear *shukas* to the bar and he noted: “Ya, nobody because you are after girls, and the girls think you are, you are like well dressed, when they see you wearing the *shuka*, they can tell you are from the village. You are a village boy.” According to John, these girls do not like ‘village boys’ because they think that they do not have money. Both guides at the Village Homestay did not seem to have the option of whether or not to appear as village boys as they always wore their *shukas* when accompanying me and/or other guests to the bar (Fieldwork 2017).

In addition to donning the *shuka* when tourists are present, John noted a situation where it proved beneficial. To embark on his American adventure, John was required to obtain a number of documents including a Visa. He retold his experiences in securing his Visa, during which on his first attempt he was denied. Committed to travelling abroad, he tried again, this time with a degree of frustration and stronger determination and, as he said to me, clad in his *shukas*. He posited that maybe the *shuka* played a role in his success the second time, suggesting that it communicated to the official that he was Maasai, and therefore not going to abandon his land and escape to the U.S.

In looking at pictures from his trip, at first I was surprised to see him wearing his ‘traditional clothing,’ with a *shuka* over his right shoulder in front of iconic American monuments. This surprise likely stemmed from my assumption that clothing choices would reflect those he made in less Maasai spaces such as the bar and large cities like Nairobi. I later learned however that that one of the purposes for his stay was to work with a fairly new organization looking to support Indigenous rights. Although I did not



ask, it caused me to wonder if this ‘traditional’ garb also travelled to the land of the free for publicity/political purposes.<sup>48</sup>

Analyzing clothing, such as the *shuka*, in terms of semiotics by looking at what it might represent to tourists (and even other Kenyans) also does not fully capture the ‘engagement’ between it and its wearer (Miller 2010). There seem to be similarities between John’s engagement with this vibrant gridded fabric and Indian women and the sari. Both involve ‘changing of appearance’ in the presence of others (*shuka* grabbed for in the presence of tourists, or out with cattle, and strategically to communicate certain land connections) illustrating that they are social. Furthermore, they are not ‘taken for granted’ and are ‘manipulated’ according to need, with the *shuka* for example: sitting, to regulate body temperature and gathered and tucked when on a motorcycle. Like the sari, the *shuka* “forces a continued engagement and conversation with its wearer and a constant pressure to respond to changes in one’s surrounding social environment” (2010:30-31). Furthermore, “[t]he sari[/*shuka*] is like a fellow actor, constantly on stage, whose presence must always be remembered. The sari[/*shuka*] turns a woman[/*man*] into a person who interacts with others and with the self through this constantly shifting material” (2010:31).

Despite these positive results of the *shuka* in mediating relations between tourists and Maasai, and with the case of John, Maasai and a government worker, John considers it embedded with agency that leads to not so favourable results. We could compare this to the objectification process Miller discusses, drawing from Hegel, Marx and Simmel, that an object may achieve an autonomous status in which it may serve us, but is contradictory in that it can also act against us. In a couple of situations John made remarks which indicated that he felt that other Kenyans who were not Maasai see the *shuka* and think that the wearer (the Maasai man) is not intelligent. From John’s

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<sup>48</sup> Winjgaarden (2010) cites a participant in her research who as an international student in an American university would wear his *shukas* at conferences and cultural events to represent Kenya, to the delight of other attendees. On his advancement to a doctoral degree without completing his Master’s she goes so far to remark that “the extraordinary leap his academic career has made in the United States is owed in part to the way in which he vocally and visibly represents his people” (115).

perspective, it is creating an unfavourable relationship between Maasai and non- Maasai Kenyans as he assigns lesser characteristics which he believes others are thinking. This is because the *shuka* wearer and observer are entangled in a web with both tangible and intangible ‘things’ such as (‘post’) colonialism, development, independence, tribalism, capitalism and racism. Again, we can see complexity and contradictions by looking at the view of another man who sings in Olapa, who tells me that when in Nairobi, he wears his machete and *shukas*, causing Nairobi men to fear him and Nairobi women to “run for him,” both on account of the bravery he believes these materials communicate (Fieldwork, Interview with Parkire, July 19, 2017; see also Wijngaarden 2010). The *shuka* may make the Maasai man (Miller 2010), but he has a certain degree of ambivalence to it perhaps in how others see him. It creates and solidifies his identity in social situations between tourists and other Kenyans, but each group may have different reactions towards it and the assigned positioning the wearer thus has (“Editorial” 1996).

#### 4.4 Summary and Conclusions

Like the tourists, the Maasai with whom I spoke offer quite positive reviews of their tourism experience. Instead of their highlights being going to the park or walking amongst a herd of wild herbivores, they often report opportunities associated with children’s education as the primary benefit. Maasai believe that tourists travel from far away to see their culture and to see how they live. This includes their dress, body modifications and housing styles. Furthermore, there are connections between how Maasai consider their culture different in comparison to other Kenyans who have lost their culture, by adopting Western lifestyles. According to the men and women I spoke with, this results in tourists’ interest in the Maasai, rather than in one of the other more than 40 ethnic groups in Kenya.

With these findings it appears that there is a relationship between what is defined as culture and what is perceived as valued by tourists (*shukas*, bangles, mud-dung homes) Here we can suggest that tourism and the tourist gaze may be involved in “constructing local visions” of Maasai culture (Gillespie 2018:86). I agree with Gillespie that while this may demonstrate some congruence with Hobsbawn and Ranger's (1983) ‘invented

tradition,' that it is inappropriate to consider all elements of culture represented at tourism sites as a "charade" (2018:86). This is supported, for example, by the findings here which indicate that content for cultural representation is garnered from a variety of sources, including lived experience.

Concluding with the *shuka* illustrates its role as both an actor and metaphor in Maasai experiences with tourism. It is an actor in that it is able to, among other capacities, command the gaze of international tourists, all while forcing continuous engagement with its wearer. It is a metaphor in representing its conflicting external perspectives. On the one hand tourists imbue it with a degree of intrigue, and on the other, Kenyans with disdain. In doing so it allegorizes the complications and contradictions in the tourism industry itself. In foregrounding the red fabric, beyond just the camera lens, we see its entanglement in structures and frameworks such as development, globalization, modernization, ('post') colonialism, tribalism and nationalism, as is the general experience of men and women involved in Maasai owned and operated cultural tourism initiatives.

## Chapter 5

### 5 Stringing all the beads together

Complex. In comparing my experience visiting the Maasai village five years ago to my present experience at the three research sites I worked in, I would argue that *this* seven-letter word now captures the modification in my outlook. Rigid adjudications of whether tourism is wholly beneficial and perhaps empowering, versus wholly negative and exploitative are futile. Contestation and contradictions arise throughout. What may be beneficial in terms of increasing income through tourism in order to grow livestock numbers, will at the same time likely prove challenging with the rise in individualized land tenure, PCPs and other conservation projects and their corresponding limited access to grazing resources. Even so, one must not discount the prime importance placed on income stemming from tourism in terms of the ability to send children to school and to diversify livelihoods, voiced by most Maasai men and women I spoke with. In addition to these oft cited benefits, tourism is also conceptualized and assessed as compatible with pastoral activities and considered, by most, to result with little or no problems and challenges. For those who did note concerns, these included: effects of tourists giving gifts and candy to children, corruption by driver-guides, the seasonality of employment, idleness of Maasai men working in the villages hosting clients and problems related to relationships between visitors and Maasai. Even with these cited at times, Maasai men and women I talked to spoke quite highly of the ‘*olashumpai/enkashumbai*’ ‘clients,’ often considered to be travelling from far away to learn about Maasai life and culture.

In addressing the first research question pertaining to organization of cultural tourism activities, Maasai cultural representation in tourism sites in the Mara continues to be influenced by colonial images and narratives transferred through *mediascapes* and governed by the tourist gaze. These create an imagined world of timelessness and disconnected, pure pastoral people living harmoniously with nature (Appadurai 1990). Maasai at the sites I worked in appear to be aware of these depictions as evidenced by guides, in particular at Olapa, following these ‘scripts’ of their ‘imagined lives’ pieced together with tidbits of past and present realities (Appadurai 1990:299) . In doing so, we

see the work of the reciprocally reinforcing mutual gaze (Maoz 2006). With this, we can agree with van Beek and Schmidt's (2012) argument against MacCannell (1992) that tourism sites are anything but 'empty meeting grounds.' Rather, they can be bubbles with physical infrastructure for both tourist and host, but also containers for myths, stereotypes, struggles, misunderstandings, benefits, and the list goes on (Mbaiwa 2012). On this Bruner (2001:287) expresses concern that, "[i]f the Maasai at the Mara are behaving in accordance with a generalized Western representation of Maasai and of African pastoralists, then tourism in a foreign land becomes an extension of American popular culture and of global media images."

While arguing that he does not give credence to globalization's ability to homogenize all cultures, "for local cultures always actively assert themselves," Bruner raises the question: "how well will the Maasai continue to compartmentalize themselves and separate performance from life?" He then asks, rather provocatively, "[w]here does Maasai culture begin and Hollywood end?" (897). I have some concerns with these queries.

While being a 'tourismified community' (Salazar 2009) does involve selection among a repertoire of cultural expressions and indicators, often those that are easily presentable, 'exotic,' and of greatest appeal to the tourist gaze—in the case of Maasai cultural tourism, this will include among others, the warriors dancing and jumping (van Beek and Schmidt 2012)—the romanticized colonial narratives and likely those from American popular culture which Bruner speaks of, are not always performed and at times are openly contested. We see this for example with John's discussion of why boys opt for schooling instead of warriorhood. I would therefore argue that it is not very useful to look into Bruner's question of where Maasai culture starts and western tourism imaginaries end, considering especially that it has been generally agreed upon that cultures are not bounded, but rather have long borrowed and influenced each other. This has included the dialectical relationship between Maasai and European cultures (Salazar 2009; Wijngaarden 2016, 2012, 2010, 2008). A move in the right direction is found in Salazar's question of "how tourism and its imaginaries are *contributing* to the (re)shaping of culture and society" (2009:50, emphasis added).

The process of globalizing flows of imagery, technologies and tourists, coupled with more localized conceptions of identity, is embodied in John's notion of himself and others as 'modern warriors.' This idea shares similarities with Wijngaarden's (2010) notion of the 'cosmopolitan savage.'<sup>49</sup> In reference to Maasai men in their 20s and 30s involved in tourism, she uses this concept to illustrate their practice of incorporating characteristics from the Euro-American savage or primitive trope to reap benefits in living cosmopolitan lives. As we see with John's experiences, this is a world where wearing a *shuka* may help in earning money to buy a cellphone, so as to advertise and stay connected with tourists beyond the tourism sites, perhaps enabling travel abroad. However, like John's experiences, Wijngaarden highlights the disjuncture in views of Maasai outside the cosmopolitan centres of tourism sites, in the mixed non-Maasai Kenyan views of them as emanating more from the *ignoble* savage trope.

We can see evidence of hybridity in identity and cultural representation at tourism sites in the Mara (Bresner 2014; Wijngaarden 2010; Salazar 2009). The Village Homestay, Olapa and even sales at the gate appear to be encompassed in a process of place creation and a localization of identity, so as to engage and participate in larger political economic structures (Oakes 1993). Oakes captures this in the statement that

“[t]he locality is not the political counterpart to the global, not merely the ‘refuge’ of cultural politics which distract us from grander conflicts of history; it is the ever shifting and unstable stage we build to play out those grand conflicts themselves” (1993:49).

Although not expressed to a great extent by my research participants, concern over protecting culture and loss of culture due to 'modernizing influences' (including tourism) has been cited (Wijngaarden 2010). Tourism seems to be considered by some to be a strategy to shelter and continue to practice Maasai culture and tradition, as we see with Michael's proclamation that dancing for tourists offers a way to "record the past." (see also Mara Guides Association n.d.). These however must be protected through new

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<sup>49</sup> I would not argue that these are the same however, because I do not think that cosmopolitan is to modern, as 'savage' is to 'warrior' from John's perspective.

formulations such as incorporating the benefits of ‘modernization’ including education, and technology (Wijngaarden, 2010). Here concepts and configurations such as modern/cosmopolitan versus traditional/warrior and even real versus imagined are not opposed but reconfigured and reinforcing (Wijngaarden 2010). Hybridization at tourism sites is undoubtedly a political project as it leads to a firm assertion of identity tied to specific locations, while enacting ‘global imaginaries’ (Salazar 2009:65). We can see the political impacts for example in the Mara Guides Association’s view of the “opportunities in the tourism sector to allow us [Maasai] to stay on our land and to practice our culture” (Mara Guides Association n.d.) A notion of hybridity at tourism sites is also useful in explaining an occasion I witnessed of people who live in the village showing interest in a group of warriors dancing when tourists were not around. This was expressed by crowding around them, taking pictures with their phones and even joining in, akin to international visitors.

On this point, I think there is room for concern with literature which positions tourism activities as separate from “local daily life” (Wijngaarden 2010:13). In exploring the goals and objectives of hosts, sheer time spent at tourism sites, the similarities between how culture is defined and what is considered of interest to tourists; how can we consider it disconnected from ‘daily life?’ Here in Canada, when meeting someone I will likely be asked “What do you do?—what do I ‘do’ to make money. With an average work week of forty hours, a job/career would most certainly be considered part of someone’s daily life, and perhaps even their ‘identity.’ I have long found tourists’ distaste towards hosts using their (or tourists’ perception of their) cultural identities for income as particularly interesting and frankly, hypocritical. I do not think one would consider a server in a restaurant as ‘unauthentic,’ or really any other position in the service and hospitality industry. I believe the Maasai men and women with whom I spoke would share sentiments with Ortner’s discussion of money/income as motivation for Sherpas engaged in Everest mountaineering expeditions. Money, she writes, “is the beginning, not the end, of understanding why they climb.” This is because, “money as a sign points to the Sherpa’s own desires, their own notions of the good life, their own senses of what they would do and how they would live if they had the means.” (1999:66). She then eloquently turns the modernist authenticity discourse on its head, with:

The point is that, for all its negative positioning within a certain Western countermodern imaginary, money points precisely toward (as much as it might seem to point away from) something we may think of as an “authentic” Sherpa cultural universe, a framework within which they articulate their own desires in something like their own terms (67).

Again, this largely takes the form of a notion of a good life which includes growing herds and sending children to school. Rather ironically, those same tourists who scorn villager’s interest in earning a monetary income,<sup>50</sup> may be the ones stopping at the schools of village children and donating teaching supplies. In praising tourism most often for its income earning capacity, I think it is safe to consider it, within a largely western framework, as a job. Perhaps if done so more commonly by tourists<sup>51</sup> (and researchers) we would be better positioned to stop corruption by groups such as driver-guides.

Maasai cultural tourism, like mountaineering, operates in a game of masculinity, for example with notions such as the ‘modern warrior’ and the ‘cosmopolitan savage.’ Women are excluded from these narratives, leaving us to question how women fare in a gendered industry, and here specifically one which operates through the image of the *male* warrior (Bruner 2001). Is there a feminine counterpart to the modern warrior or the cosmopolitan savage? How does this absence affect women’s access to cosmopolitan lives? While in the Mara, I had the opportunity to visit the Maa Trust, whose Maa Beadwork project is working to elevate the benefits women receive from tourism through a more formalized selling structure, which includes exporting to international markets.

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<sup>50</sup> This can be seen in a comment thread on the *Lonely Planet* website, entitled ‘Warning about Maasai Mara village scam.’ In this rather heated post, ‘overblood’ writes: “the main reason for posting here is to just warn you that these Maasai “villagers” (who know the latest Man United scores and have cars) will try and milk you for every bit of cash you have, even though you paid a ridiculous entry fee to the village.” Accessed July 12, 2018 from <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/thorntree/forums/africa/kenya/warning-about-maasai-mara-village-scam>

<sup>51</sup> Fortunately, we may be seeing evidence of this shift with comments such as “I didn’t want to visit the Maasai village [...] because I had read here that it was very touristy. But my friend insisted, and our guide insisted that it was not all touristy, but had some authenticity. In the end, I agreed that it was a very worthwhile visit. No, not everyone may live there. Yes, they’re trying to make money off of your visit [...], but the homes, living conditions and conversations were fascinating and gave us far more real knowledge about the Maasai than we otherwise would have had - more real than reading a book.” Accessed July 16, 2018 from [https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowTopic-g293747-i9226-k6339710-Masai\\_village\\_visit-Tanzania.html](https://www.tripadvisor.ca/ShowTopic-g293747-i9226-k6339710-Masai_village_visit-Tanzania.html)



This is in response to challenges such as the inability for women to receive tourism income from leased lands. With the likely upsurge in projects such as this and the steady increase in the education of girls, we can question whether this will lead to a greater incorporation of women in the discourse of Maasai tourism. Will there be a modern mama?

With tourism presented as an economic panacea for Indigenous and ethnic minority populations (Bunten 2010b; Courtney 2009; Kalavar et al. 2014) and the country's political and economic investments in the industry, a critical examination of the impacts and experiences of Maasai as a minority, but heavily involved and impacted group of people, is mandated. However, I believe it is important, as a researcher (and even perhaps, a 'responsible traveller'), to not automatically dismiss such engagement as exploitative or unauthentic. In doing so, like others (e.g. Bunten 2010a, 2010b, 2015; Stronza 2008; Tonnaer 2008; Wijngaarden 2016) my aim for this research is to give Maasai participants an expanded venue to express their own thoughts on the industry. I move a step beyond looking at the representations and narratives apparent in tourism sites (Bruner 2001, 1991; Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994), and focus on how these have become altered, resisted and imbued with Maasai meaning (Ortner 1999). In the process, it is not my intention to follow the common Western tropes of African pastoralism as idyllic; tourism is demanding and often undervalued work, as I am sure you would be told by a Maasai woman who sat at the gate all day and did not sell anything. Indeed, incorporating Ortner (1999:150) we can see that Maasai cultural tourism itself is a serious game, whose purposes for Maasai men and women include generating income with high stakes of livelihoods and family stability. This game is played by differentially positioned actors including tourists (themselves diverse), mediators (they too diverse) and hosts (yet again diverse), all with potentially overlapping and at times contesting projects. These are of course organized within an arena of discourses including development, identity politics, modernization, indigenization and masculinity. Maasai men and women working in Olapa, at the Village Homestay and the women selling at the gate are not exploited and powerless in totality. Rather, with each vertical leap, bead strung and tourist welcomed they are carving out a space in a complex and intertwined industry to pursue personal and familial projects that

they themselves see as important within past and present conceptions of time and place.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Ethics Approval Form



**Western  
Research**

Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board  
NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

**Principal Investigator:** Dr. Sherrie Larkin

**Department & Institution:** Social Science\Anthropology, Western University

**NMREB File Number:** 109164

**Study Title:** Gender, Representation and Identity in Maasai Owned Cultural Tourism Operations

**NMREB Initial Approval Date:** April 28, 2017

**NMREB Expiry Date:** April 28, 2018

**Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:**

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Other	Letter of Confidentiality to be signed by translator/interpreter	2017/03/10
Other	Anticipated question/prompts for group and individual interviews	2017/03/17
Western University Protocol		2017/04/13
Letter of Information & Consent		2017/04/13
Other	Participant Log	2017/04/13

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

EO: Erika Basile \_\_\_ Grace Kelly  Katelyn Harris \_\_\_ Nicola Morphet \_\_\_ Karen Gopaul \_\_\_



## Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** Kara Kelliher

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2009-2014 B.Soc.Sc

The University of Western Ontario  
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2016-Present M.A.

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**Related Work  
Experience** Teaching Assistant  
The University of Western Ontario  
2016-2017

### **Presentations:**

Presenter, "Gender, Identity and Representation in Maasai Cultural Tourism: A Discussion of Initial Fieldwork and Preliminary Findings" Third Annual Conference: Emerging Issues in Research and Development, Maasai Mara University  
June 2017