
Imaged or Imagined? Cultural Representations and the “Tourismification” of Peoples and Places

Imagé ou imaginé ? Les représentations culturelles et la « tourismification » des peuples et des lieux

Noel B. Salazar



Electronic version

URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/etudesafriaines/18628>

DOI: 10.4000/etudesafriaines.18628

ISSN: 1777-5353

Publisher

Éditions de l'EHESS

Printed version

Date of publication: 20 June 2009

Number of pages: 49-71

ISBN: 978-2-7132-2207-8

ISSN: 0008-0055

Electronic reference

Noel B. Salazar, "Imaged or Imagined? Cultural Representations and the "Tourismification" of Peoples and Places", *Cahiers d'études africaines* [Online], 193-194 | 2009, Online since 25 June 2009, connection on 21 April 2022. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/etudesafriaines/18628> ; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/etudesafriaines.18628>

Noel B. Salazar

Imaged or Imagined?

Cultural Representations and the “Tourismification” of Peoples and Places*

Peoples and places around the globe are continuously (re)invented, (re)produced, and (re)created as tourism marketers create powerful representations of them. This happens in a competitive bid by potential destinations to obtain a piece of the lucrative tourism pie, in a world marked by rapidly changing travel trends and mobile markets. If anything, tourism is part of what David Harvey (1989: 290-293) calls the “image production industry”, in which the representation of peoples and places has become as open to production and ephemeral use as any other. Because image-making has emerged as a crucial marketing tool, it variously influences peoples’ attitudes and behaviours, confirming and reinforcing them as well as changing them. Images travel, together with tourists, from predominantly tourism-generating regions to tourism destinations and back, leading to a “tourismification” of everyday life—“a socio-economic and socio-cultural process by which society and its environment have been turned into spectacles, attractions, playgrounds, and consumption sites” (Wang 2000: 197). Paradoxically, tourismification proceeds not from the outside but from within a society, by changing the way its members see themselves (Picard 1996)¹.

* This article is based on research supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. BCS-0514129, and additional funding from the School of Arts and Sciences, University of Pennsylvania (USA). The ethnographic fieldwork in Tanzania was conducted under the auspices of the Tanzanian Commission for Science and Technology (Research Permit No. 2007-16-NA-2006-171) and kindly sponsored by the University of Dar es Salaam. An earlier version was presented at the 10th Zanzibar International Film Festival Conference in 2007. I am most grateful to Joseph Ole Sanguyan and Monica C. Espinoza for their thoughtful comments and support.

1. Other scholars, including PICARD (1996) and WANG (2000), call this “touristification”. I prefer tourismification as a term because it is not the mere presence of tourists that is shaping this phenomenon but, rather, the ensemble of actors and processes that constitute tourism as a whole.

As Adrian Franklin and Mike Crang (2001: 10) point out, tourism “is not simply a function of changing local cultures caught in the stream of globalizing flows or the touristification of localities [...]. Touristic culture is more than physical travel, it is the preparation of people to see other places as objects of tourism, and the preparation of those places to be seen”. Rather than asking whether a given culture has become polluted or enhanced by tourism (and other global processes), a more salient question to ask is how tourism and its imaginaries are contributing to the (re)shaping of culture and society (Salazar 2005).

Tourismification is a universal phenomenon and an integral element of globalization. Global tourismification rapidly interlinks and intensifies the circulation of people, capital, images, and commodities. However, this is often a highly ambivalent development, not the least in zones of poverty. Tourismification can result in loss of cultural pride and complete reliance on tourism for subsistence. In many cases, tourism development has been largely responsible for forcing irreversible changes, either directly, by destroying or prohibiting traditional means of livelihood, or more subtly, by providing a potentially easy way to earn badly needed resources (Mowforth & Munt 2003). People in the margins often have little (economic) choice but to accept and to adapt to the tourismified identities and cultural views that are created for them. While cultural alienation is one possible outcome, tourism and tradition do not necessarily stand in polar opposition to each other (as the latter attracts the former), and tourism can lead to a resurgence and affirmation of local (ethnic) identities and competing discourses of heritage—be these real or imagined, authentic or invented (van der Duim *et al.* 2005). In other words, peoples and places are not simply re-presented, displayed, or enacted; the tourismification process involves performative relations of contestation, reification, and negotiation (Coleman & Crang 2002; Hall & Tucker 2004).

Tourismified communities borrow from traditional anthropology an ontological and essentialist vision of cultures, conceived as static entities with clearly defined characteristics, to represent themselves to visitors. Ideas of old-style ethnology—objectifying, reifying, homogenizing, and naturalizing peoples—are widely used by all kinds of groups, staking their claims of identity and cultural belonging on strong notions of place and locality. Ironically, this is happening at a time when scholars prefer more constructivist approaches to culture, taking it for granted that cultures and societies are not passive, bounded, and homogeneous entities (Gupta & Ferguson 1997). Of course, academic writings are only one among many sources of inspiration that shape tourism imaginaries of peoples and places². The

2. Imaginaries are 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 (GAONKAR & LEE

influence of popular culture media forms—the visual and textual content of documentaries and movies; art and museum exhibitions; trade cards, video games, and animation; photographs, slides, video, and postcards; travelogues, blogs, and other websites; guidebooks and tourism brochures; coffee-table books and magazines; literature; advertising; and quasi-scientific media like National Geographic—is much bigger (Morgan & Pritchard 1998). Throughout this article, the term “cultural representations” will be used to refer to such content.

In the case of sub-Saharan Africa, western imagery of the region has often been presented in the most literal sense of the word, in visual forms. These visual representations, which flourished especially during the colonial era, lay at the basis of stereotypical “us” versus “them” categorizations (Salazar 2007a). During colonial rule, for example, the British in East Africa highlighted Maasai life because, as colonizers, they wanted to promote an image of Africans as different and nobly primitive. Some authors have interpreted contemporary tourism as a continuation and silent perpetuation of these old processes of stereotyping and “measuring” African cultures in a hierarchical relation to western civilization (Mowforth & Munt 2003). According to Harry Wels (2002: 64), “we have replaced the stage for the African Other from Europe’s World Exhibitions, journals, scientific ethnographies, National Geographic, television-documentaries and so on, to Africa itself”. Tourism imaginaries often depict Africa in the same way as the continent was portrayed during the colonial period. Consequently, tourists long for

“pristine African landscapes with the picturesque thatched roofs dotted and blending into it and expect to hear the drums the minute they arrive in Africa, with Africans rhythmically dancing to its ongoing cadenza. That is Africa. That is the Otherness [...] for which they are prepared to pay money. This is the imagery to which the tour-operators have to relate in their brochures in order to persuade clients/tourists to book a holiday with them” (*ibid.*: 64).

In this paper, I use the example of the visual cultural representations surrounding the Maasai of East Africa to analyze how the (re)construction of Maasai society in Tanzania and its socio-cultural tourismification are framed within well-established notions of western dominance and superiority (for similar analyses in the Kenyan context Akama 2002; Berger 1996; Norton 1996; Wels 2002)³. I show how the romanticized imagery of the

2002). Tourism imaginaries are heavily influenced by mythologized (often western) visions of “Otherness” from popular culture, (travel) literature, and academic writings in disciplines like anthropology, archaeology, art, and history (PRATT 1992; SAID 1994; TORGOVNICK 1990).

3. This article is part of a larger project in which I examine how local tourism actors and intermediaries in Tanzania and Indonesia represent their cultural and natural heritage to a global audience of tourists (SALAZAR 2005, 2006, 2007b, 2008).

virile Maasai warrior—reinforced by different types of popular visual media such as nature documentaries, mainstream Hollywood entertainment, and semi-biographic films—has led to a true Maasai-mania that is profoundly affecting the daily life and culture of Maasai as well as other ethnic groups in the country. The ethnographic data for this study were collected during two periods in which I conducted fieldwork in Tanzania: three months in 2004 and eight months in 2007. They consist of participant observation notes of cultural tourism activities in southern Maasailand, transcripts of in-depth interviews with locals (Maasai and others) and short semi-structured interviews with international tourists, and collected secondary sources related to tourism and visual cultural representations of the Maasai (Salazar 2008). The interviews with locals were conducted either by me or by my Maasai research assistant. I did background literature research at the University of Dar es Salaam, the Economic and Social Research Foundation, Research on Poverty Alleviation, and the Professional Tour Guide School in Tanzania; the University of Pennsylvania in the USA; and the University of Leuven in Belgium.

Maasai Imaginaries

“The word was passed round that the Masai had come [...]. Passing through the forest, we soon set our eyes upon the dreaded warriors that had been so long the subject of my waking dreams, and I could not but involuntarily exclaim, ‘What splendid fellows!’ as I surveyed a band of the most peculiar race of men to be found in all Africa” (Thomson 1885).

The Maasai, speakers of the Eastern Nilotic Maa tonal language, are a widely dispersed ethnic group of semi-nomadic pastoralists and small-scale subsistence agriculturists who occupy arid and semi-arid rangelands in southern Kenya and northern Tanzania—collectively known as Maasailand. In Tanzania, they are said to have lived in the whole of the Serengeti plains and Ngorongoro highlands for some two centuries. Through their powerful (and stereotyped) media image, the Maasai have become “icons” of African traditionalism and unwitting symbols of resistance to modernist values (Galaty 2002).

For decades, the Maasai have been a source of fascination among tourists and cultural advocates who have been struck by their adamant refusal to abandon their culture. Overseas professional photographers have immortalized them in pictures carried in publications and on postcards. Multiple tales about their audacity are told and environmentalists laud their ability to sustain balance with nature, which allows them to co-exist with their cattle and wild game. However, this “pictorial fame” (Galaty 2002: 347) bears considerable political costs. The tacitly pejorative images that proliferate in film, tourism brochures, and advertising convey unspoken cultural presuppositions that shape public (mis)understandings of Maasai communities.

These images speak confidently about who the Maasai are, what they represent, and what their fates will be.

Ideas of Maasai traditionalism and conservatism are closely bound together with images of the Maasai male, alternately as a fierce warrior or obstinate pastoralist (Coast 2001). For early European explorers who encountered this nomad warrior “race”, Maasai *ilmurran* (warriors) represented the epitome of a wild and free lifestyle⁴. By publishing embellished accounts of their encounters with Maasai, these explorers reinforced the mythic images of Maasai as noble savages and icons of wildest Africa, and enhanced their own reputation for bravery and boldness (Hodgson 2001). Joan Knowles and David Collett (1989) sketch how the warrior archetype, one of several possibilities found in early explorers’ texts, was elaborated in ways that justified colonial policies, and later became the basis for postcolonial development initiatives⁵. In part due to these historical (mis)representations, Maasai are now considered an integral part of the African wilderness, an image that corresponds with a stereotyped western idea of the primitive, sexual, violent African, or the romanticized image of the noble savage (Hughes 2006). Edward Bruner (2002: 387) nicely summarizes the representational narrowing of Maasai culture as follows: “The basic story about the Maasai [...] is a gendered Western fantasy of the male warrior-proud, courageous, brave, aristocratic, and independent, the natural man, and the freedom-loving pastoralist. Associated with this warrior narrative are artifacts and adornments—shield and spear, beads, earrings, red ochre, sandals.”

Silver Screen “Maasai”

“He, who has travelled far, sees far”, Maasai proverb.

According to Neal Sobania (2002), the Maasai were amongst the earliest African peoples specified and named in mass-produced European images.

-
4. An *ilmurran* describes a stage in a Maasai youth’s life when he has been circumcised and incorporated into the newest age set. Circumcised young men are junior warriors, a traditional period of life associated with the establishment of a *manyatta*, a camp to protect their neighbourhood.
 5. Major colonial accounts that contributed to creating lasting stereotypes of Maasai culture include Richard Burton’s *The Lake Regions of Central Africa* (1860), Joseph Thomson’s *Through Masailand* (1885), Karl Peters’ *New light on dark Africa* (1891), Sidney and Hildegarde Hinde’s *The last of the Masai* (1901), and Marguerite Mallett’s *A white woman among the Masai* (1923). Representative traditional ethnological writings on the Maasai comprise Alfred C. Hollis’s *The Masai: Their language and folklore* (1905), Meritz Merker’s *The Masai: Ethnographic monograph of an East African Semite people* (1910), Louis S. B. Leakey’s *Some notes on the Masai of Kenya Colony* (1930), Henry A. Fosbrooke’s *An administrative survey of the Masai social system* (1948) and George W. B. Huntingford’s *The southern Nilo-Hamites* (1953).

As far as the commercial film industry is concerned, the Maasai have been over-exposed probably to a greater extent than any other ethnic group in Africa. This fascination with a “tribe”, whose traditional pastoral lifestyle and tall dignified bearing have come to symbolize “Africa” to many in the West, has increased dramatically over the past decades. The intensifying commercialization of the Maasai and their culture in movies, for instance, is a consequence of the high profile they have developed over the years, through their reputation for courage and unspoilt culture and the promotion of this image by international photographers, producers of documentary and ethnographic films, writers, and the tourism industry.

Among the first Maasai to acquire international celebrity status was Tanzania’s Tepilit Ole Saitoti, who appeared in a National Geographic documentary, titled *Man of the Serengeti* (1972), about his work as a game warden in the Serengeti National Park during the early 1970s. Due to the success of the documentary, Saitoti was awarded scholarships that enabled him to study in the USA as well as in Germany, writing a thesis on the cohabitation of people and animals. His ethnographic books (Saitoti 1987, 1988) are considered accurate and sensitive in portraying Maasai traditions and culture. After completing his studies, Saitoti returned to Tanzania, where the National Geographic traced him again to document the changes in his life, from a game warden to an accomplished scholar, in *Serengeti Diary* (1989). To some, Saitoti’s efforts at representing Maasai are highly commendable, while others see it as heralding a new genre of Maasai disparagingly labelled the “professional Maasai”—denoting those who have amassed wealth for simply trading in the group’s culture. Interesting is the fact that Saitoti has become a tourism icon in his own right, with regular cultural tours being organized to his Olbalbal house in the Ngorongoro District. Ethnographic filmmakers have played an important role in disseminating nostalgic Maasai imagery too. Take the example of Melissa Llewelyn-Davis, who made five movies about the Maasai (and never completed her PhD in anthropology because she decided to stay in East Africa). Her first films (directed by Chris Curling), *Masai Women* (1974) and *Masai Manhood* (1975), were traditional authoritative documentaries. Both visual ethnographies were part of Granada Television’s Disappearing World Series. They are successful as colourful and dramatic pictures of an exotic society that has long appealed to Westerners as just what romantic savages should be like. As anthropological accounts, they are rather disappointing, although at the time they were among the best accounts available describing Maasai life.

Given the representational history of the Maasai briefly sketched above, it is not surprising that a number of feature films fit the Maasai within a postcolonial glorification and visual representation of colonial life, a recuperation of the era of those who conquered Africa. One of the clearest examples of this is the classic autobiographic movie *Out of Africa* (1985) in which Maasai—as African male “Others”—are seen as a sexual danger

towards white women. While presenting a nostalgic picture of colonial times, the film also focuses on the relentless decline of Maasai culture and tradition in the face of inevitable modernization. Likewise, the romantic German production, *Nowhere in Africa* (2001), tells the true story of a German Jewish refugee family moving to and adjusting to farm life in East Africa in the 1930s. When the father is suffering from malaria, he is being nursed back to health by his Maasai cook and bodyguard—a prime example of noble savage ethos. The young daughter falls in love with Africa and black culture, easily absorbing Maasai culture.

The casting of Maasai actors has broken new terrain in terms of the culture's exposure to the mainstream entertainment audience. Unfortunately, most films play on the line of exoticism and innocence, without bothering to tell the Maasai's own story or create parts that bring out their culture and intrinsic values. Rather than celebrating the Maasai, the movie industry is treating this people as it once treated Native Americans (Red Indians)—as a foil of adventure films, a convenient community of nameless, faceless “barbarians” who can be counted on to foolishly ride into a hail of bullets and lose every battle to the good guys. Some lobby groups, including Richard Gere's Survival International, have emerged to speak against the ridiculing of minority cultures, dealing with the issue at global level and listing protection of the Maasai among its priorities. Even without forcing Maasai to play degrading roles, commonly their parts do not require any acting skills. Typical poses display warriors resting on one leg while leaning on a huge spear as the African sun sets or rises on the background, herding cattle, or doing their trademark cultural jig, jumping high in the air. They are largely faceless, pliable, and with no speaking roles other than occasional chanting, mainly appearing as symbols to satisfy the filmmakers' ideal of exotic Africa. Newly emerging Tanzanian film directors understand the monetary value of Maasai warrior representations as well. Half the space of the promotional poster for the movie *Bongoland* (2003), for example, was taken in by a group of Maasai standing in front of a typical hut topped by a grass-thatched roof. During the Philadelphia premiere of the movie, filmmaker Josiah Kibira confessed that this was “purely done for marketing purposes”, because the entire storyline of the film is situated in the USA.

In the 1990s, Hollywood caught the Maasai bug and some major movies carried representations of the ethnic group, purely for visual effect. *The Ghost and the Darkness* (1996), which was shot in South Africa and based on a story about the man-eaters of Tsavo (Kenya), had a Maasai scene despite the fact that this does not appear in the original colonial story written by Colonel John Patterson. The band of brave warriors accompanies a maverick white hunter, brought in to dispatch the man-eating lions that no one else has been able to kill. This film heightened the already selective nature of popular images of Maasai pastoralists, presenting only male characters and offering lurid caricatures of their warrior nature. Sydney Kasfir

(2002) was able to research how the Samburu actors experienced the filming as well as how they portrayed the Maasai⁶. The actors were kept at a distance, unaware of the film's storyline and not always involved either in setting the terms of their employment. By the end of the shooting, however, they had become increasingly sophisticated about the sale and display of their own image. In the 1996 box office hit, *Independence Day* (1996), another group of Maasai was seen at the end of the movie, crawling out of a bush in Africa to join the rest of the world in the celebration when the United States saves the world from an invading alien force. In *Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life* (2003), some cheaply paid Maasai extras clad in bright red colours featured as mere exotic background image for star actress Angelina Jolie. It is telling that the casting agent tapped Benin movie star Djimon Hounsou to play the main Maasai character.

Although, or maybe because, Maasai are almost always represented as fierce warriors and excellent hunters of wild animals, they are remarkably absent in wildlife movies. Take the example of John Wayne's Oscar-winning wildlife adventure film *Hatari!* (1962), about a group of men trapping wild animals and selling them to zoos. This movie is widely believed to have put Tanzania on the Hollywood map of the world and greatly assisted in opening up the country's major tourism attractions. Although the movie was shot inside Arusha National Park with the help of Maasai to locate places and supplies, no Maasai figure prominently in the film. One notable exception to the rule is the spectacular IMAX production *Africa: The Serengeti* (1994), in which the migration of wildebeests and zebras is compared to the nomadic existence of "the proud Maasai people, ever seeking good grazing for their cattle herds". The documentary focuses on the exotic warrior diet—a mixture of milk and blood—and puts the Maasai in a time-frozen past by stressing how, "once the most formidable warriors in East Africa, the Maasai still defend their cattle and families with spears". However, not all wildlife lovers seem to appreciate that Maasai live close to their preferred animals (Århem 1985). On the Image Database website, one of the largest Internet movie databases, a reviewer of this documentary left the following comment:

"This is a great documentary with some amazing footage of wild animals. My only complaint is that they showed humans; that ruined it for me. They showed about 5 minutes of Africans [Maasai] in the Serengeti and how they live [...]. We see humans every day and it's too bad that they included some here⁷."

6. The Samburu are the northernmost of several Maa-speaking groups of cattle pastoralists. The merging of Maasai and Samburu identities in this film reflects both historical reality and current cultural politics. One of the casting reasons for using Samburu instead of Maasai is that they were considered more "traditional", referring to their relative lack of experience with the cash economy, hence financially more attractive to the filmmakers (KASFIR 2002).

7. <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0109049/>>.

The French-made *Masai: The Rain Warriors* (2004) is the first production to be solely populated by real-life Maasai and spoken entirely in their native Maa tongue. The cast had no previous acting experience and everything was shot in the highlands of Kenya, presented as a timeless place untouched by modernity. The storyline, seemingly based on a Maasai legend, follows a group of courageous teenagers who are sent out to secure the mane of the fiercest of all lions, as an offering to the rain gods—a traditional Maasai rite of passage. While this is a much more realistic cultural representation, it still capitalizes heavily on the warrior stereotype. However, as Bruner (2001: 894) argues, “the colonial image of the Maasai has been transformed in a post-modern era so that the Maasai become the pleasant primitives, the human equivalent of the Lion King, the benign animal king who behaves in human ways. It is a Disney construction, to make the world safe for Mickey Mouse”. His assessment is nicely illustrated in *The White Massai* (2005), a German autobiographical movie evocating the fantasy of what it is like to step outside western culture and into Maasai culture (actually Samburu). It is a hopelessly romantic love story about a young Swiss lady who falls for a Samburu while on holiday with her boyfriend in Kenya. After overcoming many obstacles, she moves into a tiny mud hut with him and spends four years in Kenya, until the dream starts to crumble and she finally flees back to Europe with her baby daughter.

In animations, Maasai frequently appear as tourism attractions for Westerners. In the *Wild Thornberrys* episode *Critical Masai* (2000), the explorer family is camping near a Maasai village. When the natives visit the Thornberry camp, the children of the family run into their Maasai friend who is trying to prove himself as a warrior. This inspires the kids to compete to see which one of them is more of a warrior themselves. *Simpson Safari* (2001) tells the hilarious story of The Simpsons family safari to Tanzania. Of course, their holiday includes a visit to a Maasai village as well. The Simpsons are portrayed sitting by the campfire with the chieftain, drinking a traditional Maasai beverage from calabashes. The family does a spit-take when their local guide tells them it is cows’ blood and the villagers find their behaviour uproarious. The Simpsons children show off some of the “tribal” body adornments the Maasai gave them—neck rings (of the style most commonly found among the Ndebele people in South Africa and Zimbabwe) and a clay lip plate (as worn by the Mursi people of the Omo Valley in south-western Ethiopia). Later, the family goes more or less completely native and dances around the fire with the Maasai. Through exaggeration and irony, the makers succeeded in presenting a highly self-critical analysis of western representations of wildest Africa. Finally, it is worth mentioning that *The Lion King* (1994), undoubtedly the most influential animation made about (East) Africa, does not feature any Maasai, even if the landscapes unmistakably refer to the wide Serengeti plains and the Ngorongoro area—the latter still the home of many Maasai in Tanzania.

Tourismified Maasai

“Visual tropes of traditionalism and martial virtue, contemporary images of pastoralists are seemingly dependent on the tourist gaze. In industrially designed encounters, tourists at once absorb, reflect, and mentally recreate the pictorial pastoralists they view while on safari through some of the world’s most spectacular landscapes and its most unusual herds of wild animals” (Galaty 2002: 351).

Apart from the amazing wildlife, it is an undisputed fact that the Maasai are the flag-bearer of Tanzanian tourism. The relationship between tourism and Maasai culture in the country has been largely determined by safari imaginaries. This can be partly explained by the fact that the most popular “northern circuit” game areas are situated in regions where Maasai reside. The well-established representational attraction of the Maasai in (western) tourist-generating countries is another explanation for their relationship with safari tourism. In fact, until recently Maasai were virtually the only ethnic group extensively used to represent the Tanzanian people on the one hand (*e.g.* the global *Tanzania, Authentic Africa* campaign of the Tanzania Tourist Board), and to fulfil the tourists’ expectations to see typical authentic Africans on the other hand⁸. Although the country is populated by over 120 different ethnic groups, most foreign visitors only think of the Maasai as “local people” (Bachmann 1988; Spear & Waller 1993). Unsurprisingly, *ilmurran* with their distinctive long ochre dyed plaited hair, colourful blankets, and jewellery, are one of the main features associated with Maasai by the large numbers of international tourists who visit Maasailand. As participant observation and short semi-structured interviews during safari tours confirmed, international tourists want to catch a glimpse of warriors with their lion hunting equipment (spears, clubs, and knives) and women decorated with beads and a child on their back in their most traditional habitat⁹. They not only want to set eyes on the Maasai—“as seen on television”—but also want to immortalize the experience by taking their pictures or filming them and buying tangible souvenirs to be reminded of the “historical” encounter.

In conventional tourism circles, the Maasai have traditionally been represented as a unique and esoteric community that represents the essence of real Africa, namely as a people who have managed to resist western influence and to retain their “exotic” culture. As a consequence, overseas tour

-
8. The much smaller ethnic group of Hadzabe bushmen of Karatu District (Eastern Rift Valley) are now being promoted aggressively by Tanzania’s tourism industry as the last “authentic” hunter-gatherers of East Africa.
 9. Visitors to Maasai-inhabited areas in Tanzania do not come to see only, or primarily, the Maasai. Their attraction is mainly to the wildlife and a visit to a Maasai settlement is combined with a wildlife-viewing safari through the African savannah. This was not different in the past. Although the Maasai and their cattle have been crucial elements in the Serengeti ecosystem, they were merely a footnote to Theodore Roosevelt’s hunting safari of 1909, the event that turned America’s attention to East Africa.

operators and travel agents often market the Maasai as one of those extraordinary, mysterious indigenous African communities that have remained untouched by western influence and the global forces of modernization. These forms of tourism imaginaries are usually represented as ideal for tourists, particularly Euro-American tourists, who are keen on exoticism and adventure in the manner of the early European explorers (although fieldwork showed that Asian visitors touring Maasailand also liked this). In most instances, foreign tourists, and particularly those from North America and Europe, want to see Africans and the African landscape in the same way as they saw it during their formative years of image-moulding, when images of the black continent were usually based on information dating back to the colonial period (Wels 2002: 64). Therefore, many Westerners long for pristine African landscapes dotted with picturesque huts topped by grass-thatched roofs. They also expect to hear the sound of drums the minute they arrive in Africa, and to see African natives rhythmically dancing to the ongoing cadence, representing real and quintessential Africa (Norton 1996). As the visual cultural representations discussed above, tourism projects the Maasai as primitive people who “walk tall” amidst the deadly Africa wildlife.

John Akama (2002), who did a historical analysis of the development of the Maasai image and the representation of their culture in the tourism industry, argues the latter has taken over colonial images to use Maasai culture as “additional anecdotes” in the safari experience. Many stories and elements of Maasai culture therefore have been torn from their socio-cultural context to function as entertainment around the safari campfire. Examples of this are the jumping warriors and their heroic stories about the killing of lions and their sexual potency, as expressed by the number of wives. This Maasai image is being used to contribute to the adventurous and authentic atmosphere of the wildlife safari. These Maasai representations fit perfectly within the fantasy of authentic indigenous Africa: living in mud huts, herding cattle, seemingly untouched and unaware of the globalized world. The romance of the safari pairs the viewing of game with the scenes of nomadic Maasai. Because of their presence near the most popular game parks and their worldwide image, the Maasai are both being pushed and pulled into the front region of tourism, resulting in the apparent freezing or standstill of their culture. Their lasting place in tourists’ imagination is partly due to the common belief that they still live in harmony with nature. While true to a degree, this idea leads to the attitude, reinforced by tourism promotions, that the Maasai are part of the landscape, not so unlike wildebeest and zebras. In reality, the same protected areas that draw tourists were often created by removing the Maasai people from their lands (Neumann 1998)¹⁰. However, Tanzanian tour guides now jokingly say that foreign

10. In 1959, with the establishment of Serengeti National Park, the Maasai who lived there were evicted and moved to the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. In 1974, they were forced to evacuate some parts of Ngorongoro as well, because their

visitors do not come to see the “big five”—a hunting term historically used to denote the five most dangerous African animals: lion, leopard, rhinoceros, elephant, and buffalo—but the “big six”: the big five plus the Maasai¹¹.

Maasai (Images) on the Move

“It was also in Zanzibar that we started seeing the famous Maasai people, a beautiful tribe mostly living in Kenya and Tanzania now but I believe originally from Ethiopia (don’t quote me on that). I had read about them some and had heard many interesting things about them, particularly how eccentric and colourful their appearance is. There is a small number of Maasai in Zanzibar. They sell jewellery, the traditional beaded jewellery that they themselves wear and we of course all managed to have half our bodies adorned with it by the end of our island stay”¹².

Due to popular cultural representations such as the ones discussed earlier, every tourist seems to “know” the Maasai—a fact some business-minded Maasai themselves exploit (Bruner 2001; Bruner & Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994). Indeed, many Maasai now portray “traditional” versions of themselves for tourists, maintaining a well-developed sense of self-objectification and self-commodification. Those not wanting to take part in the tourism game, often motivated by a strong wish to protect traditional Maasai culture, are forced to retreat to remote locations. However, Maasai culture, like any other culture, is dynamic and evolves to adapt to new circumstances. Group members are now intermarrying, adopting the languages and livelihoods of neighbouring communities, and participating in various national and international development activities. Martha Honey (1999: 220) nicely illustrates these changes:

“It was a classic African scene: A Maasai elder, caught in a time warp, entering his kraal, as his ancestors had done for hundreds of years. But there was a twist to this photo-perfect panorama. The Maasai was Moringe Parkipuny, former Member of Parliament, former college professor, and social activist, and his compound was a newly built Maasai secondary boarding school.”

presence was believed to be detrimental to wildlife and landscape. In the 1980s, they faced further restrictions as the conservationist attitude of the government stiffened. In 2006, the Tanzanian government even gave an ultimatum to Maasai communities living inside Ngorongoro—around 60,000 people—to vacate the area by end of the year.

11. While observing a classroom interaction in a tour guide school in Arusha, I heard a teacher tell the apprentice driver-guides (only a minority of whom were Maasai) that many western female tourists travel all the way to Tanzania for only two things: to see a lion and [...] a Maasai penis (confirming the widely spread imaginary that Maasai men are well endowed).
12. <<http://www.travelpod.com/travel-blog-entries/gracielanstanley/preparations/1142082900/tpod.htm>>.

The forces of modernization and globalization have visibly penetrated into traditional gear as well. The customary animal skins have been replaced by polyester tartan blankets produced in Pakistan. The beads used in ornaments that undergo frequent revisions to keep up with the latest fashions come from the Czech Republic. The traditional knives are cheaply imported from China, the blades sharpened and made smaller so that they fit locally made protective sheaths. The *ilmurran* are increasingly seen using cell phones, smoking cigarettes with filters, wearing socks and shoes or putting on watches (which are often taken off the moment foreign visitors shows up). Finally, many Maasai children are now attending primary and secondary school and there is a rapidly growing group of well-educated urban(ized) Maasai, although there is still a very clear gender bias (Coast 2002).

Tourism generally has been a nuisance because photographic safaris have commoditized much of Maasai culture (van der Cammen 1997). Of course, the degree of influence of tourism on Maasai settlements varies according to their location relative to main access roads. However, virtually no communities are left completely untouched by visiting foreigners. Whereas tourism alone should not be held responsible for all changes Maasai communities are currently undergoing, the tourismification process has quickly turned their traditions into a cultural tourism commodity, part of an all-inclusive package¹³. One of the major predicaments is that so many of the traditional activities of the Maasai are now against the law; and precisely those illegal activities are most appealing to tourists¹⁴. The conversion of culture into an object of tourism means that traditional values are transformed into commercial ones, in a bid to meet (projected) tourist expectations and desires. This transformation comes with several semantic changes, both positive and negative to vernacular traditions. Many Maasai themselves, like other indigenous groups, seem to be selling their own marginality. Were they not marginal to and different from the tourists, they would not have attracted the latter's attention. In order to sustain such commodity and to continue attracting customers, they have to maintain their difference. They may try to put on a show, for example (Bruner & Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994). Blue jeans, watches, and cell phones are concealed behind spears, feathers, and other ornaments or may be taken off for the duration of the show. However, in order to sustain itself over time, such a show has to be well disguised. It would be self-defeating if it were too blatant (Bruner 2001). Spears, clubs, jewellery and artwork were initially

13. Other factors that have greatly contributed to transforming the Maasai way of life are (global) trade, missionary activities (including schooling), and, increasingly, new information and communication technologies (*e.g.* the use of mobile phones and the Internet).

14. The British banned, unsuccessfully, the practices of the *ilmurran* in 1921, and the postcolonial East African governments all have laws against lion hunting, cattle raiding, and female circumcision.

just part of the culture of the Maasai. Normally they only produced them for their own subsistence, but eventually they discovered that it is worthwhile selling these artifacts to tourists. Nowadays, an extensive manufacturing system is set up to produce tourist art. Even used machetes and leaking calabashes used to transport milk are sold to eagerly paying visitors.

The fact that Maasai are seen as an auxiliary to wildlife tourism strengthens the marginality argument regarding the Maasai as an object of tourism attraction. Maasai are seen as an extension of wildlife; hence, they are regarded as most marginal (almost as marginal as wild animals) from the centrality of the so-called “civilized” human existence and society. Many have become voiceless warrior performers. When learning to be themselves they are asked to participate in a predetermined representation of themselves, for others. Maasai artistry is today being harnessed to meet the growing tourist souvenir market, and age-old ceremonies are being turned into visitor shows. Culture has become a flexible capital to be used profitably and has to yield a return. Interlocking Maasai communities with tourism maintains, defends, or contests some key societal institutions. A new development within *boma* (settlements) along touristic circuits, for instance, is the permanent presence of warriors. These *ilmurran* play an important role in performing dances and seem to be extending their interests into the market place, whereas traditional customary practice stipulated that they should live together in their own temporary *manyatta* in surrounding bush areas (Ritsma & Ongaro 2002: 132). My fieldwork observations and findings from short interviews confirmed that tourists usually do not realize that most of the Maasai settlements they visit were specifically built for tourism purposes.

Some Maasai themselves have been accused of peddling falsehoods as a means of enticing foreign visitors. It is partly because of poverty, but more and more Maasai are exploiting the situation and, as some confessed to my Maasai research assistant, they do not mind fabricating untruths about their culture to make money. People in some areas have resorted to begging or seeking to be photographed for cash (Turton 2004). They have become so aware of how to extract money from tourism that foreign visitors on occasion have been horrified at their boisterous and frantic attempts to be photographed and videoed, in exchange for hard cash. According to Akama (2002),

“various forms of unwanted behaviour and vices of mass tourism have been noted in Maasailand. They include incidents of prostitution, alcoholism, smoking, and drug taking. The Maasai youth are especially influenced by tourist behaviour and are enticed to indulge in such deviant activities.”

Not only Maasai culture in general is changing; some Maasai themselves are exploring new horizons. In the coastal towns of Kenya and on the beaches of Zanzibar, the places where most of the package tourists stay, there are many Maasai. Attracted by potential employment opportunities

and the seeming wealth of touristic regions, up-country Maasai have migrated to these coastal areas. Benefiting from their image, they take up jobs as security guards, sell artefacts and adornments along the beach or in towns, and perform traditional dances in hotels. In Zanzibar's Stone Town, for example, there are plenty of Maasai tourist art traders. They all migrated from the northern districts of Arusha and Kilimanjaro, basically following the tourist movements. Many of them were first employed as *walinzi* (guardians) in hotels, but then—being extremely popular with tourists who tour the national parks in the north of Tanzania—became an attraction themselves and now perform for tourists. Most have been in the tourism souvenir trade for a while and travel regularly between the mainland and Zanzibar. Quite a number of them got into tourism after the severe droughts of the 1990s, when most of their cattle died. They are well aware of their aesthetic appeal to a foreign tourism gaze. Interestingly, most of Stone Town's Maasai or Maasai-style tourist art is actually made by Zanzibari people. The Maasai men who make beaded jewellery are a cultural oddity, because, in their own culture, beading is a woman's task. Recently, also Tanzanian Maasai women started migrating from Maasailand to Dar es Salaam and other cities, even as far as Zanzibar, Kampala, and Nairobi. They produce and sell beads and traditional medicines for cash to support their families.

This phenomenon of migration is indicative of an overall intensifying impoverishment of the Maasai (Coast 2002). Only very few migrated for frivolous reasons, and those few are seen by others as deviants, likely to stay in town and become "lost" to the more traditional Maasai community (May 2003: 17). Many Maasai blame the recent decline in economic circumstances on their lack of schooling. Formal education was historically shunned, partly due to the mobile life style, and also because the relevance of it for pastoralism was not evident. Young Maasai men who travel to the coast to become "beach boys" may expand the sense of roaming adventure long associated with their age grade, but elders are concerned about their moral decline from encounters with western tourists (Hodgson 2001). The new migrants usually profess a profound dislike for life in the city, and an expressed goal to earn enough to replenish their shrunken livestock herds and return home; a wish to remain pastoralists (albeit not in a traditional way, but making use of modern commodities and new information and communication technologies) and politically as well as socio-culturally independent. Unfortunately, few Maasai seem to be reaping substantial financial benefits from tourism.

Tourism Trap?

"Pastoral peoples find themselves in a kind of trap. To the extent that they want a share of the tourist dollar, or want the income derived from selling their images to the Western media, then they are required to enact the Western fantasy. But

to the extent that they enact the Western fantasy, they then reproduce and hence perpetuate that fantasy. To enact is to construct” (Bruner 2002: 389).

Through the tourismification process, many Maasai have discovered their culture’s capacity to make its own impact upon the global economic scene. This has quickly resulted in a loss of some of its characteristics, mainly because tourism development is embedded in Maasai cultural factors. Cultural narratives are ambivalent and cannot exist any longer without reference to tourism. Instead of providing an accurate representation of Maasai history and culture, tourism has continued to present the colonial images and stereotypes concerning the Maasai as a backward community that provide additional anecdotes to western tourism lurking for exoticism and adventure in the African wilderness. The incorporation of *ilmurran* into an “economy of performance” for tourists evidences how the self-exploitation of one’s own culture—“being-themselves-for others”—predominates where few economic alternatives prevail (Bruner & Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994).

When human agents occupy a contested space that they are striving to legitimize, they reproduce their identity through the confirmation of cultural representations that speak to their conceptions of themselves and their interpretation of what they perceive to be tourists’ perceptions of them. Therefore, un-coordinated tourism development presents an immense power to destroy territorial and local identities. According to Akama (2002: 43), “it can be argued that instead of tourism assisting to ameliorate social and economic problems that are confronting the Maasai, it has become part of the process of marginalization of the Maasai and the distortion of their historical and cultural values”. At the same time, tourism has proved to be an integral part of the Maasai cultural process and it provides institutionalized and prestigious forms through which these cultural and ideological processes can be mediated.

In tourism, culture is always re-worked, re-packaged, and re-produced for new audiences (Bruner 2001). This mediation of culture need not necessarily lead to homogenization (the “end of history” approach) but can also create hybridization (whereby cultures learn and adapt from each other). Dean MacCannell (1976: 14) argues that “what remains of the primitive world are ex-primitives, recently acculturated peoples lost in the industrial world, and another kind of ex-primitive, still going under the label primitive’, a kind of performative primitive”. While it brings in modernization of local traditions, often making destinations unattractive to the eyes of cultural tourists, the process of tourismification also leads to a movement of identity affirmation, variously called “traditionalization”, “indigenization”, or, in this case, “maasaization”. This case study of the tourismified Maasai culture has tried to move beyond chronicling the “invention of tradition” for tourists to a more nuanced examination of the ways in which history, politics, and touristic performances are intertwined. There may be a monolithic romanticized, distorted, and exoticized image of the Maasai

in international tourism discourse, but what is crucial for an understanding of tourism imaginaries is to ethnographically examine particular sites to determine how global imageries are locally enacted. One of the points I have tried to make in this article is that popular visual media play a huge factor in influencing tourist expectations, and, ultimately, the attitudes and behaviours of those that are visited as well. In the case of Africa, Amy Staples (2006: 394) recently reminded us that “largely as a result of independent and commercially sponsored safari films, as well as the Hollywood safari films that followed in their wake, African cultures with spectacular dances, colourful costumes, and exotic practices became emblematic of the continent”. These kind of images-as-imaginaries are so powerful because “they not only enact but also construct peoples, places, and stories” (Bruner 2002: 387). It is important to acknowledge that images are never politically neutral; they have real world consequences, sometimes unintended ones, and sometimes consequences that contradict precisely what the images were designed to convey. No matter how, cultural representation of ethnic groups is a political act. As far as Maasai are concerned,

“a diffuse train of associations is triggered by distinctive cloth-wrapped bodies, self-consciously designed hair-pieces, patterns of lobe extension and scarification, arrays of jewellery, and weapons seemingly joined to bodies, which transcends particularities of time, place, and cultural affinity. Those associations include tenacious traditionalism, localism, difference” (Galaty 2002: 348).

Everybody seems to “know” the Maasai—with spears and shields dancing or charging across the open plains—at a time these pastoral communities are faced with political marginalization and are often being dispossessed of their land. The silent assertions that are partners of the explicit images through which they are conveyed suggest, wrongly, that pastoralists are unready to grasp the opportunities of modernization, are unproductive in their use of the rangelands, and represent unworthy trustees of the environmental resources of the great East African savannah (*ibid.*). The cinematic exploitation of Native Americans only began to break down when big-name Hollywood luminaries such as Marlon Brando spoke out against their negative portrayals¹⁵. Who is willing to do the same for the Maasai?

The Research Foundation - Flanders (FWO) and Marie Curie Fellow (7th European Community Framework Programme) at the Interculturalism, Migration and Minority Research Centre, University of Leuven, Belgium, and Visiting Research Associate at the Centre for Tourism and Cultural Change, Leeds Metropolitan University, UK.

15. When Brando received a Best Actor Academy Award in 1972, he sent the Native American actress Sacheen Littlefeather on stage to reject the Oscar. By doing this, Brando wanted to chastise the Hollywood community for its detrimental portrayal of (Red) Indians and bring national attention to the American Indian siege at Wounded Knee, South Dakota.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

AKAMA, J. S.

- 2002 "The Creation of the Maasai Image and Tourism Development in Kenya", in J. S. AKAMA & P. STERRY (eds.), *Cultural Tourism in Africa: Strategies for the New Millennium* (Arnhem: Association for Tourism and Leisure Education): 43-53.

ÅRHEM, K.

- 1985 *Pastoral Man in the Garden of Eden: The Maasai of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area, Tanzania* (Uppsala: University of Uppsala).

BACHMANN, P.

- 1988 "The Maasai — Choice of East African Tourists — Admired and Ridiculed", in P. ROSSEL (ed.), *Tourism: Manufacturing the Exotic* (Copenhagen: IWGIA): 47-64.

BERGER, D. J.

- 1996 "The Challenge of Integrating Maasai Tradition with Tourism", in M. F. PRICE (ed.), *People and Tourism in Fragile Environments* (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons): 175-197.

BRUNER, E. M.

- 2001 "The Maasai and the Lion King: Authenticity, Nationalism, and Globalization in African Tourism", *American Ethnologist* 28 (4): 881-908.
- 2002 "The Representation of African Pastoralists: A Commentary", *Visual Anthropology* 15 (3): 387-392.

BRUNER, E. M. & KIRSHENBLATT-GIMBLETT, B.

- 1994 "Maasai on the Lawn: Tourist Realism in East Africa", *Cultural Anthropology* 9 (4): 435-470.

VAN DER CAMMEN, S.

- 1997 "Involving Maasai Women", in L. FRANCE (ed.), *The Earthscan Reader in Sustainable Tourism* (London: Earthscan).

COAST, E.

- 2001 *Colonial Preconceptions and Contemporary Demographic Reality: Maasai of Kenya and Tanzania* (London: University College, Human Ecology Research Group).
- 2002 "Maasai Socioeconomic Conditions: A Cross-Border Comparison", *Human Ecology* 30 (1): 79-105.

COLEMAN, S. & CRANG, M. (eds.)

- 2002 *Tourism: Between Place and Performance* (New York: Berghahn).

VAN DER DUIM, R., PETERS, K. & WEARING, S.

- 2005 "Planning Host and Guest Interactions: Moving Beyond the Empty Meeting Ground in African Encounters", *Current Issues in Tourism* 8 (4): 286-305.

FRANKLIN, A. & CRANG, M.

2001 "The Trouble with Tourism and Travel Theory?", *Tourist Studies* 1 (1): 5-22.

GALATY, J. G.

2002 "How Visual Figures Speak: Narrative Inventions of 'The Pastoralist' In East Africa", *Visual Anthropology* 15 (3): 347-367.

GAONKAR, D. P. & LEE, B. (eds.)

2002 "New Imaginaries", *Public Culture* 14 (1).

GUPTA, A. & FERGUSON, J. (eds.)

1997 *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology* (Durham: Duke University Press).

HALL, C. M. & TUCKER, H. (eds.)

2004 *Tourism and Postcolonialism: Contested Discourses, Identities and Representations* (London: Routledge).

HARVEY, D.

1989 *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Oxford: Blackwell).

HODGSON, D. L.

2001 *Once Intrepid Warriors: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Cultural Politics of Maasai Development* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press).

HONEY, M.

1999 *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: Who Owns Paradise?* (Washington: Island Press).

HUGHES, L.

2006 "Beautiful Beasts' and Brave Warriors: The Longevity of a Maasai Stereotype", in L. ROMANUCCI-ROSS, G. A. DE VOS & T. TSUDA (eds.), *Ethnic Identity: Problems and Prospects for the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham: Altamira Press): 246-294.

KASFIR, S. L.

2002 "Slam-Dunking and the Last Noble Savage", *Visual Anthropology* 15 (3): 369-385.

KNOWLES, J. & COLLETT, D.

1989 "Nature as Myth, Symbol and Action: Notes Towards a Historical Understanding of Development and Conservation in Kenyan Maasailand", *Africa* 59 (4): 433-460.

MACCANNELL, D.

1976 *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Schocken Books).

MAY, A.

2003 *Maasai Migrations: Implications for Hiv/Aids and Social Change in Tanzania* (Boulder: University of Colorado, Institute of Behavioral Science).

MORGAN, N. & PRITCHARD, A.

1998 *Tourism Promotion and Power: Creating Images, Creating Identities* (Chichester: John Wiley).

MOWFORTH, M. & MUNT, I.

2003 *Tourism and Sustainability: Development and New Tourism in the Third World* (London: Routledge).

NEUMANN, R. P.

1998 *Imposing Wilderness: Struggles over Livelihood and Nature Preservation in Africa* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

NORTON, A.

1996 "Experiencing Nature: The Reproduction of Environmental Discourse through Safari Tourism in East Africa", *Geoforum* 27 (3): 355-373.

PICARD, M.

1996 *Bali: Cultural Tourism and Touristic Culture* (Singapore: Archipelago Press).

PRATT, M. L.

1992 *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge).

RITSMA, N. & ONGARO, S.

2002 "The Commodification and Commercialisation of the Maasai Culture: Will Cultural Manyattas Withstand the 21st Century?", in J. S. AKAMA & P. STERRY (eds.), *op. cit.*: 127-136.

SAID, E. W.

1994 *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books).

SAITOTI, O. T.

1987 *Maasai* (New York: Harry N. Abrams).

1988 *The Worlds of a Maasai Warrior: An Autobiography of Tepilit Ole Saitoti* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

SALAZAR, N. B.

2005 "Tourism and Glocalization: 'Local' Tour Guiding", *Annals of Tourism Research* 32 (3): 628-646.

2006 "Touristifying Tanzania: Global Discourse, Local Guides", *Annals of Tourism Research* 33 (3): 833-852.

2007a "Representation in Postcolonial Analysis", in W. A. DARITY (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* (Farmington Hills: Thomson/Gale).

2007b "Towards a Global Culture of Heritage Interpretation? Evidence from Indonesia and Tanzania", *Tourism Recreation Research* 32 (3): 23-30.

2008 *Envisioning Eden: A Glocal Ethnography of Tour Guiding*, PhD dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania.

SOBANIA, N.

2002 "But Where Are the Cattle? Popular Images of Maasai and Zulu Across the Twentieth Century", *Visual Anthropology* 15 (3): 313-346.

SPEAR, T. T. & WALLER, R. (eds.)

1993 *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity in East Africa* (London: James Currey).

STAPLES, A. J.

2006 "Safari Adventure: Forgotten Cinematic Journeys in Africa", *Film History* 18 (4): 392-411.

THOMSON, J.

1885 *Through Masailand* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle and Rivington).

TORGOVNICK, M.

1990 *Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals, Modern Lives* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).

TURTON, D.

2004 "Lip Plates and the People Who Take Photographs': Uneasy Encounters between Mursi and Tourists in Southern Ethiopia", *Anthropology Today* 20 (3): 3-8.

WANG, N.

2000 *Tourism and Modernity: A Sociological Analysis* (Oxford: Pergamon Press).

WELS, H.

2002 "A Critical Reflection on Cultural Tourism in Africa: The Power of European Imagery", in J. S. AKAMA & P. STERRY (eds.), *Cultural Tourism in Africa: Strategies for the New Millennium* (Arnhem: Association for Tourism and Leisure Education): 55-66.

FILMOGRAPHY

ALLERS, R. & MINKOFF, R.

1994 *The Lion King* (Burbank: Walt Disney Pictures): 88 mins.

DE BONT, J.

2003 *Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life* (Los Angeles: Paramount Pictures): 117 mins.

CASEY, G.

1994 *Africa: The Serengeti* (Hollywood: Graphic Films): 39 mins.

CURLING, C. & LLEWELYN-DAVIS, M.

1974 *Masai Women* (London: Granada Television): 55 mins.

1975 *Masai Manhood* (London: Granada Television): 55 mins.

EMMERICH, R.

1996 *Independence Day* (Culver City: Centropolis Entertainment): 145 mins.

HAWKS, H.

1962 *Hatari!* (Edinburgh: Malabar Productions): 157 mins.

HOPKINS, S.

1996 *The Ghost and the Darkness* (Beverly Hills: Constellation Entertainment): 109 mins.

HUNTGEBURTH, H.

2005 *The White Massai* [Die Weisse Massai] (Munich: Constantin Film Produktion): 131 mins.

KIBIRA, J.

2003 *Bongoland* (Minneapolis: Kibirafilms): 105 mins.

KIRKLAND, M.

2001 *The Simpsons: Simpson Safari* [Season 12, Episode 17] (Los Angeles: Twentieth Century Fox): 22 mins.

LINK, C.

2001 *Nowhere in Africa* [Nirgendwo in Afrika] (Geiseltal: Bavaria Film): 141 mins.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

1972 *Man of the Serengeti* (Washington: National Geographic Society): 50 mins.

1989 *Serengeti Diary* (Washington: National Geographic Society): 54 mins.

NOBLE, R.

2000 *Wild Thornberrys: Critical Masai* [Season 3, Episode 5] (New York: Nickelodeon): 30 mins.

PLISSON, P.

2004 *Masai: The Rain Warriors* [Masai: Les guerriers de la pluie] (Issy-les-Moulineaux: Mars Distribution): 94 mins.

POLLACK, S.

1985 *Out of Africa* (Los Angeles: Mirage Entertainment): 150 mins.

ABSTRACT

The various ways in which peoples and places around the globe are represented and documented in popular media have an immense impact on how tourists imagine and anticipate future destinations. Even though tourism discourses take a variety of forms, visual imagery seems to have the biggest influence on shaping tourists' pre-trip fantasies. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, this paper illustrates the dynamic processes of cultural tourismification in Tanzania's so-called "northern circuit". In many parts of the world, famous nature documentaries, mainstream Hollywood entertainment, and semi-biographic films about this region have become fashionable icons for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole, often reinforcing a perfect nostalgic vision of the black continent as an unexplored and time-frozen wild Eden. While tourism representations have overwhelmingly focused on wildlife, an increasing demand for "meet-the-people" cultural tourism is increasingly bringing local people into the picture. Interestingly, locals are commonly portrayed while engaging in vibrant rituals or in inauthentic, staged poses wearing celebrative costumes. As an example, the paper discusses how the romanticized image of the virile Maasai warrior, dressed in colourful red blankets and beaded jewellery, has led to a true Maasai-mania that is profoundly affecting the daily life and culture of Maasai and other ethnic groups.

RÉSUMÉ

Imagé ou imaginé? Les représentations culturelles et la « tourismification » des peuples et des lieux. — Les différentes façons dont les peuples et les lieux sont représentés dans les médias populaires ont un impact immense sur la manière qu'ont les touristes d'imaginer et de prévoir leurs futures destinations. Bien que les discours sur le tourisme prennent des formes diverses et variées, les images semblent avoir la plus grande influence sur la façon dont les touristes rêvent leurs voyages. Basé sur un travail de terrain ethnographique, ce texte illustre les processus dynamiques de tourismification culturelle dans ce qu'on appelle « le circuit du nord » de Tanzanie. Dans beaucoup d'endroits du monde, les documentaires célèbres sur la nature, les divertissements grand-public de Hollywood et les films plus ou moins biographiques de cette région sont devenus des icônes à la mode pour l'Afrique subsaharienne, renforçant souvent une vision nostalgique du continent noir comme un Eden sauvage inexploré et figé dans le temps. Alors que les représentations du tourisme se sont principalement centrées sur la faune et la flore, une large demande « de rencontrer des gens » se fait sentir. De plus en plus, le tourisme culturel fait entrer la population dans le paysage. On montre fréquemment les habitants pratiquant des rituels vibrants ou habillés de costumes de cérémonie dans des mises en scène sans authenticité. En exemple, ce texte traite de l'image idéalisée du guerrier massai, viril, paré dans des couvertures rouges et orné de bijoux, qui mène à une vraie « massai-mania » qui affecte profondément la vie quotidienne et la culture des Massai et d'autres groupes ethniques.

Keywords/Mots-clés: Tanzania, Maasai, cultural representation, tourism imaginary, tourismification/Tanzanie, Massai, représentation culturelle, imaginaire touristique, tourismification.