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The Maasai and the Lion King: Authenticity, Nationalism, and Globalization in African Tourism

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the Maasai and the Lion King: authenticity, nationalism, and globalization in African tourism

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In this article, I analyze how the Maasai of Kenya are presented in three different tourist performances—postcolonial, postindependence, and postmodern. Each site tells a different story, an alternate version of history, with its own perspective on the role of ethnicity and heritage within the nation-state and in the world community. Using a method of controlled comparison, I expand the theoretical dialogue in tourism debates by departing from the monolithic discourse that has characterized so much of tourism scholarship. [ethnic tourism, Maasai, globalization, performance, authenticity, ethnography, media images]

Early work on the anthropology of tourism documented a variety of tourist experience in terms of a typology of tourism, including ethnic, cultural, historical, environmental, and recreational tourism (Smith 1989:4–6), as well as a typology of tourists, including explorer, elite, mass, individual traveler, backpacker, and charter tourists (Cohen 1979; Pearce 1982; Smith 1989:11–14). All tourism and all tourists were not the same, but scholars in the field tended to reduce the variety by seeking the essence of the tourist experience, as a quest for authenticity (MacCannell 1976), a personal transition from home to elsewhere (Graburn 1989), a form of neocolonialism (Nash 1989), or a particular type of “gaze” (Urry 1990). The typologies of tourism and tourists ordered the data but yielded few insights. Exceptions to the generalizations were common, rendering questionable their usefulness; one was never sure when or where the general propositions were applicable.

More recent field studies of tourism among particular peoples have tended to avoid typologies and monolithic generalizations, but still there is a predilection to homogenize local tourist displays.¹ The Maasai are represented as male warriors (Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994), the Pueblo as female potters (Babcock 1990), the Balinese as living in a magical world of dance and drama (Bruner 1996b; Picard 1996; Vickers 1989), and the Tahitians as representing South Seas sensuality (Kahn 2000). In such cases, a single form of tourism becomes associated with one ethnic group in a given locality, similar to the effect that Appadurai (1988) observes for ethnography, where the connection between topic and place becomes the defining characteristic of a people, to the exclusion of other perspectives, for example, caste with India, lineage with Africa, or exchange with Melanesia. Tourism scholarship thus aligns itself with tourism marketing, in that scholars tend to work within the frame of the commercial versions of their sites. Grand statements about the nature of tourism in Bali or Africa or even more broadly in the “Third World” are sometimes the result, to

the neglect of more ethnographically based and nuanced analyses of the variety of tourist displays within any one culture area.

My objective in this article is to open up the theoretical dialogue in tourism scholarship, and I do so by applying a method of controlled comparison (based on Egan 1954), showing how one ethnic group, the Maasai, are exhibited for tourists at three different sites in Kenya. Although all three sites present a gendered image of the Maasai warrior (the personification of masculinity), a controlled comparison enables me to describe three ways of producing this image. Accordingly, I demonstrate how the breadth of meanings, ironies, and ambiguities in tourist performances emerges from a critical comparison of the processes of their production. For example, familiar concepts in the literature (such as authenticity, tradition, and heritage) are relevant in only certain touristic contexts. I emphasize the importance of the distinction—not fully appreciated in the anthropological literature—between domestic and foreign tourism, as well as the wide ranging impact of globalization on the staging of local tourism.² Further, I show that historically forms of tourism are parallel to forms of ethnographic writing. Finally, I examine the sites in terms of what I call the “questioning gaze,” my reference to tourists’ expressed doubts about the veracity of what they are seeing and the way their questions and skepticism penetrate the commercial presentation, undermining the producer’s dominant narrative.³

Elsewhere I have offered humanistically oriented descriptions of tourist performances privileging political complexities and local voices (Bruner 1994, 1996a, 1996b). My emphasis in this article is on the production and on the tourists, not on indigenous perceptions. My intention is to discuss each of the three sites so that the comparisons and juxtapositions between them become grist for the theoretical mill. What I say about any one site is designed to contrast with another.

By way of background, Kenya achieved independence from Britain in 1963 and has a population of approximately thirty million divided into about forty-two ethnic groups. The tensions between these many ethnic groups have at times been severe. Tourism is a major source of income, the main attraction being safari runs to view the wild animals in the game parks. The Maasai, presented at the three tourist sites I discuss, are a seminomadic pastoral group with a total population of about four hundred thousand in Kenya; Maasai also live in Tanzania (Spear and Waller 1993).

My three Kenyan field sites are Mayers Ranch (Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994), a privately produced performance organized by local entrepreneurs; Bomas of Kenya, a public production developed by the national government; and what a tour agency calls an “Out of Africa Sundowner” party at the Kichwa Tembo tented safari camp near the Masai Mara national reserve.⁴

A thumbnail sketch of each site follows. Designed for foreign tourists, the production at Mayers staged Maasai dancing in their warrior compound, chanting and carrying spears, proud and aloof. The production hid all outside influences and manufactured objects, presenting Maasai as timeless and ahistorical. Mayers reproduced a 19th-century colonial narrative (Knowles and Collett 1989) of Maasai men as exemplars of an African primitive, as natural man. It depicted Maasai men as brave warriors, tall and athletic, men who, at least in the past, would raid for cattle, kill lions armed with but a spear, consume raw foods such as milk and blood, and (as “Lords of East Africa”) instill respect and fear in others. The producers strived for tourist realism (the aura of authenticity), and the site was designed as a series of tableaux, set up for tourist photography. The tourists viewed the Maasai from a colonial subject position, as did early explorers and ethnographers. Mayers began in 1968 and flourished until the 1980s but was eventually closed by the government as the colonial aspects were

offensive to many Kenyans. I will discuss the relations between tourism and ethnography later, but I note here that the critique of colonialism within anthropology (Asad 1975; Hymes 1972; Marcus and Fischer 1986) was part of the same worldwide anti-colonial movement that led to the closing of Mayers Ranch in Kenya. Mayers is presented here as a baseline, as a superb example of postcolonial tourism that eventually gave way to newer modes of production.

Bomas is a national folklore troupe that presents the dances of Kenyan ethnic groups, including the Maasai, primarily for an audience of modern urban Kenyans. The mechanisms of production are prominently displayed. The dances are staged in an auditorium, with rows of seats and a bar in the back for the sale of refreshments. The theme of the production is Kenyan nationalism, to show that all the ethnic groups of Kenya are equally valued. Representatives of Bomas say that their aim is the preservation of Kenyan heritage, as if each ethnic culture is in the past and has to be recuperated in a museum-like setting. Bomas is an ethnic theme park for domestic tourists, a genre now found in many areas of the developing world.⁵

The Sundowner presents Maasai men dancing in the context of an "Out of Africa" cocktail party near an upscale tented safari camp on the Mara reserve. The Maasai performers mix with the tourists, who are served drinks and hors d'oeuvres by uniformed waiters. Globalizing influences are apparent, as Hollywood pop culture images of Africa and blackness are enacted for these foreign tourists as they sip champagne, alternately chatting among themselves and dancing with Maasai, all the while on safari in the African bush. These are post-tourists (Feifer 1985; Urry 1990:100–102), beyond traditional tourism, who want a gracious African experience, all the comforts and luxury of home, and a good show rather than staged authenticity.

At all three tourist sites, Maasai men perform for an audience, but there are important differences. These differences are evident in the modes of transportation taken by the tourists to each site, and I describe them here, as the journey to a tourist destination is itself an inherent part of the tourist experience. Mayers is located in the Rift Valley about fifty minutes by car from Nairobi. Most tourists reached Mayers over dirt roads as passengers in a van provided by a local tour company. Bomas is located on the outskirts of Nairobi along the public bus route, and a convenient way of going is to drive or to take a city bus. Kichwa Tembo safari lodge is located by the Masai Mara reserve. In 1999, to take one example in which I participated, a group of tourists on the Intrav agency "Out of Africa" tour first visited Ngorogoro Crater in Tanzania, then went by small charter aircraft directly from Kilimanjaro Airport in Tanzania to the Kichwa Tembo private airstrip in Kenya. The planes did not stop in Nairobi or go through Kenyan immigration or customs.⁶ They flew directly from Tanzania to Kenya, over nation-states, in a seamless journey from one game park to another, indeed a transnational experience. From the perspective of the tourists, there was no border crossing, as the "nations" of Tanzania and Kenya were not really experienced. The tour was above borders, traveling not just in airspace but in global space. Travel by van, public bus, and charter aircraft characterize the three tourist attractions.

First, I summarize briefly the material on Mayers and then contrast these data with Bomas and the Sundowner. The latter sites will receive most of my descriptive and analytic attention. Although this study deals with Kenya, I suggest that the different contexts of production may be replicated in many other areas of the world where tourism is prominent. For reasons I explain in the conclusion, my claim is that my approach in this article has relevance beyond Kenya.

Mayers Ranch

Mayers Ranch was built by the Mayers, a British family who became Kenyan citizens. The Mayers came to Kenya early in the 20th century, eventually went into cattle ranching, drastically reduced their land holdings after Kenyan independence, and in 1968 established a tourist attraction on their land as a way of generating additional income. There have been four generations of Mayers in Kenya. Their current home-*stead*, located in the Great Rift Valley 30 miles from Nairobi, is blessed with a natural spring and features a verdant lawn and English garden. The Mayers hired local Maasai, some from families who had worked on their cattle ranch as herders, to build a Maasai *manyatta* (compound) for young warriors who would perform their dances and enact selected aspects of their culture for tourists. After viewing the Maasai performance, the tourists would then go to the Mayers's lawn for tea and crumpets.

The transition from the mud huts and brown dust of the Maasai compound to the lush green lawn and garden adjacent to the Mayers's main house enacted a key theme in East African tourist discourse, the contrast between the primitive Maasai and the genteel British, which evokes the broader contrast between the wild and the civilized. The tourists at Mayers experienced vicariously the wildness of the Maasai and, by extension, the wildness of Africa, only to return at the end of the performance to the safety of the Mayers's cultivated lawn, to the veritable sanctuary of a British garden in the Rift Valley. The Maasai dancers never spoke directly to the tourists. They carried spears and clubs, wore a solid red cloth, covered their bodies with red ochre, and braided and decorated their hair (see Figures 1 and 2).⁷ On the elegant lawn, the Mayers were gracious, socializing with the guests and telling stories about colonial times, while two black servants (not Maasai) dressed in white aprons and white chef's hats, served tea and cookies. As white settlers, the Mayers themselves were part of the tourist attraction, nostalgic relics of a colonial era. The performance was a fastidious and



Figure 1. Maasai warriors with spears at Mayers Ranch.

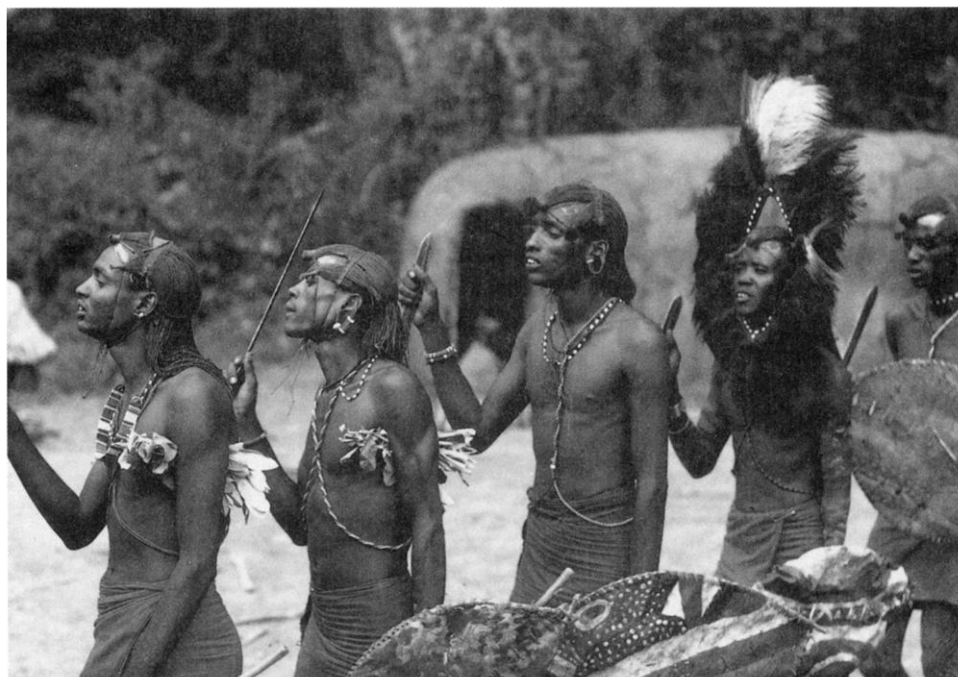


Figure 2. Maasai at Mayers dancing and chanting.

carefully constructed combination of tribalism and colonialism, which the tourists told me they found fascinating and romantic.

The show at Mayers Ranch was carefully edited and produced. The Maasai performers (or actors) were not allowed by the Mayers (the directors of the drama) to wear or display modern clothing, watches, or any industrial manufactured objects. The only souvenirs sold at Mayers were those handcrafted by Maasai. The entire performance was produced to achieve tourist realism, an ambience of authenticity, and the appearance of the real. The Mayers directed the Maasai to act as if they were what the foreign tourists regarded as 19th-century tribesmen, the African primitive. The ritual performed at the Maasai village was made to seem natural, as if the Maasai were dancing for themselves and the tourists just appeared there by chance. The constructedness of the site was masked. Some of the Maasai dancers had been to school and spoke English, but during performance time they remained aloof and mute.

I first gathered data from Mayers in 1984; when I returned in 1995, I learned that the performance had been closed. During lunch at the Mayers's home, Jane and John Mayers explained to me why they had been put out of business, and they did so, of course, from their own subject position, as descendants of a white British colonial family. It was a combination of factors, they said, but the primary reason was that the government felt they were exploiting the Maasai. The Mayers reported that an African American tour group visiting the ranch to watch the Maasai performance had objected strongly, complaining about its colonial aspects—specifically, that the Mayers lived in a big house whereas the Maasai lived in mud huts, and that the Mayers gave food to the Maasai as part of their compensation, which they felt was paternalistic. The Mayers's brochure said that the Maasai were a linguistic subgroup of the Nilotic, but other black American tourists objected strongly to the term *subgroup*, which they regarded as insulting. The key factor, however, according to the Mayers and others in

the tourism industry, was that many Kenyans felt the performance of Maasai warriors dancing in a European homestead was simply too anachronistic for modern-day Kenya.

After closing the tourist performance, the Mayers remained on their ranch and engaged in other income-producing activities. They missed the income from tourism, but Jane expressed a feeling of relief, saying they had felt "totally invaded" having 150 tourists come to their home on any given day. Jane agreed that a performance about tribalism and colonialism was indeed an anachronism in contemporary Kenya and felt it would be best if the Maasai were producing their own performance. Some of the Maasai who had worked at Mayers went to the hotels in Mombasa and the coast where they found employment as performers in Maasai tourist productions, and a few became involved in the sex industry, catering mainly to European women seeking a sexual experience with a Maasai man.

Rosaldo (1989) coined the phrase "imperialist nostalgia," noting that contemporary Western peoples yearn for the "traditional" cultures that the previous generation of Western colonialists had intentionally destroyed. Rosaldo's concept is not entirely adequate for my purposes as it refers primarily to a feeling (a yearning). Cultural tourism goes far beyond this yearning, recreating in performance idealized colonial images and other representations of the past, the pastoral, the original, and the unpoluted. Tourism frequently enacts imperialist nostalgia. Tourism performances, throughout the world, regularly reproduce stereotypic images, discredited histories, and romantic fantasies. The past is manipulated to serve the expectations of the tourists and the political interests of those in power, and because the Mayers, as ex-colonialists, had little power in modern Kenya, their operation could be closed. Mayers Ranch, a good example of tourism artfully produced in the postcolonial era for a foreign audience, catered to the darkest desires of the tourist imaginary, fixing Maasai people in a frozen past, representing them as primitive, denying their humanity, and glorifying the British colonialism that enslaved them.

Bomas of Kenya

The second attraction discussed in this article, Bomas of Kenya, constructs a different picture, for a different audience. Bomas, opened to the public in 1973, is a government museum of the performing arts, an encyclopedic presentation of the cultural heritage of a nation, performed by a professional dance troupe whose members are government employees.⁸ Their website says Bomas "offers Kenya in Miniature" (Bomas of Kenya 2000). Like Mayers, Bomas has regularly scheduled daily shows. The patrons pay admission, move into a 3,500-seat auditorium for the performance (see Figure 3), and then exit from the building to walk to the eleven traditional minivillages.⁹

Each village features the architecture of a particular ethnic group—Kikuyu, Kalenjin, Luhya, Taita, Embu, Maasai, Kamba, Kissii, Kuria, Mijikenda, and Luo—and consists of a few houses typical of that group, or as the Bomas web site says "the original traditional Architecture . . . as built by the ancestors" (Bomas of Kenya 2000). Significantly, there is no claim that the houses are those of contemporary peoples. Handicrafts are available for purchase in each village. The crafts shown, however, are not restricted to those produced by the members of any one ethnic group but are representative of all Kenyan groups, comparable to the crafts that can be found in any souvenir shop in Nairobi. Nor are the sellers necessarily members of the same ethnic group as those in whose village the array is located. A Kikuyu seller, for example,

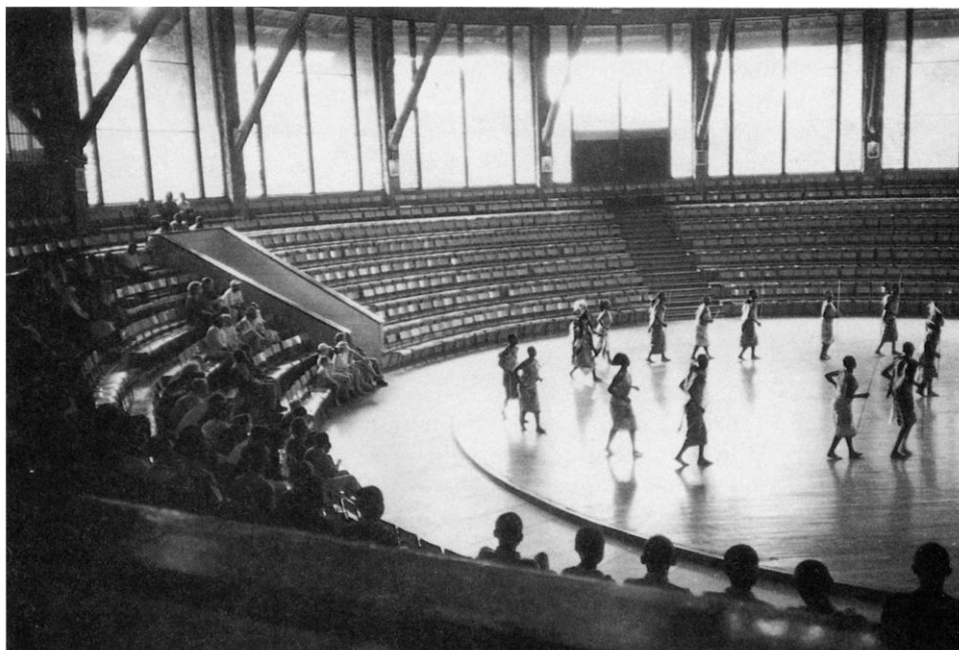


Figure 3. Dancers at Bomas. (Photo by Richard Freeman, used with permission)

might be found in the Maasai village. Further, no one actually lives in the villages; they are for display purposes only.

National dance troupes have been established in Uganda, Senegal, Mali, and most other African nations as part of government policy, just as performance troupes, ethnic village complexes, nations in miniature, and national museums have been established in many countries of the world. These sites differ, of course, but a general aim is to collect, preserve, and exhibit the art, culture, and history of a nation. To quote from a mimeographed information program distributed by Bomas of Kenya, "We specialize in traditional dancing and preservation of Kenya Cultural Heritage." The word *preservation* is a key. Whereas at Mayers the claim is that the Maasai are still living as they have for "a thousand years" and are essentially unchanged, Bomas talks of preserving, which implies that traditional ways no longer exist, that they are in danger of disappearing, that they belonged to the ancestors. Bomas makes a claim very different from the discourse directed toward foreign tourists. At Mayers, the Maasai occupy space in the ethnographic present; at Bomas they, and the other Kenyan groups, are in the traditional past.

At the top of the Bomas program one finds "REF: NO.BK/15/11," a reference number, typical of government documents everywhere. Other evidence of a nationalistic emphasis is easy to find. For example, the performance troupe calls itself the "harambee dancers." Coined by Jomo Kenyatta, the first president of Kenya, *harambee* is a powerful national slogan that means roughly "all pull together" (Leys 1975:75). In Kenya there are many harambee groups, sometimes called self-help or cooperative groups, and, indeed, there is a national harambee movement. The program distributed at Bomas consisted of six pages, including advertising, and described each act or scene in sequence—there were 22 in all. The last act, called the finale, was described as follows: "This is a salute in praise of His Excellency Hon. Daniel Arap Moi

the President of the Republic of Kenya." Such statements render the performance of traditional dancing explicitly nationalistic.

The Bomas harambee dance troupe consists of members of many different ethnic groups, and any member of the troupe may perform the dances of any of the other Kenyan groups. At Mayers, Maasai performed Maasai dancing, but at Bomas a Kikuyu dancer, for example, could do the dances of the Maasai, the Samburu, the Kikuyu, or any group. Bomas creates an ensemble of performers from different groups who live together at Bomas as a residential community in a harambee arrangement, almost as an occupational subculture, apart from their extended families and home communities. The harambee dancers from Bomas are available for hire all over the world and have made overseas tours to the United States, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Japan, and other countries.

The troupe acts as a single functioning unit, detaching ritual dancing from its home community and putting it in a museum, a professional theater, or on the national or international stage. The troupe becomes an explicit model of the nation, melding diversity into a modern organization, disconnecting heritage from tribe. The implicit message of Bomas is that tribal dances belong to the nation. By separating cultural forms from tribal ownership, Bomas asserts that the multiethnic heritage of Kenya is now the property of all Kenyans. As an expression of nationalist ideology, Bomas speaks about tribalism as memory, in performance, where it is less threatening.

Bomas tells a story for Kenyans about themselves and appeals most to urban Kenyans. Their web site states that visitors can see "rural Kenyan life" (Bomas of Kenya 2000). On Sunday afternoons, Bomas is crowded with local families who come with their children. Whereas the Mayers were hosts to foreign tourists and, on Sundays, to a resident expatriate British community, Bomas is host to a few foreign tourists but mostly to urban Kenyan families.¹⁰ Businessmen meet there for conversation over beer or coffee. It is a place for Kenyans to honor their ethnicity in an urban setting, to see dances that they might not otherwise have an opportunity to witness. Bomas also arranges special shows for schools and educational institutions in the mornings, two days a week, highlighting their educational function.

For purposes of this article, it is important to understand how Kenyan tourist discourse uses such terms as *tribalism*, *traditional*, *modern*, *primitive*, and *civilized*. The six-page program of Bomas does not once contain the term *tribal* or *tribesmen*, and it uses the word *tribe* only twice, and then merely descriptively, as the equivalent of *people* or *group*. In contrast, *tribal* and *tribesmen* are crucial terms in tourist discourse for foreigners. The tourist brochures issued by private tour companies advertising trips to Kenya for an American or European audience use *tribal* with the implicit idea that the people so characterized are primitive and representative of an earlier state of existence. Significantly, the term used in the Bomas program is *traditional* (see Figure 4), which contrasts with *modern*. The Kenyan audience at Bomas consists of modern urbanites, and what they witness on stage are their own traditional dances, part of a previous historical era, reflecting on their own present modernity in composite ways. Although sometimes used in the Kenyan media, the terms *tribal* and especially *tribalism* have a negative connotation in contemporary Kenya, as they have in many of the multiethnic nations of the world. The Kenyan government has long acknowledged deep-rooted ethnic identifications as a serious national problem (Chilungu 1985:15; Okumu 1975).

In brief, *tribal* is a term for foreign tourists used at Mayers, *traditional* is a term for domestic tourists used at Bomas, and *ethnicity* is a more neutral term, used by some Kenyans and anthropologists alike to avoid the derogatory or misleading connotations of

tribal or *traditional*. The terms have different associations in touristic, ethnographic, and political discourse. Bomas, in a sense, has taken the concept of the tribe, and put it in the archives or in the museum, where hopefully, it will be safe and out of the way.

The language of the Bomas program is revealing: Here are excerpts describing two of the Bomas acts:

The background to this item is the assassination of Nakhabuka, a young and beautiful girl of Abamahia clan in Bunyala, (Western Kenya). Her jealous boyfriend shoots her with an arrow at the river, because she has married someone else. Her great spirit enters the body of one of the villagers and demands that a wrestling dance be performed occasionally in her memory.

This item features a Giriama couple who are getting married. Unfortunately, the bride, having been bewitched just before the ceremony, threatens to refuse her man. It takes the skill of a famous medicineman to bring her back to agreement before the wedding can continue. The events of the wedding are heralded by the Gonda dance (performed mainly around Malindi on the Northern Coast of Kenya).

This is the genre of the folktale. Embedded in the Bomas program are minifolktales, dramatic narratives about everyday life. The stories are culturally and geographically specific. They refer to the Abamahia clan or to a Giriama couple and to such actual places as western Kenya or the north coast. These are real places. There is none of the generalized language of much of the tourist discourse produced for a foreign audience with its vague references to the untouched African primitive.¹¹ The function of such generalized references to tribesmen or to primitives is to distance the object, to depersonalize, to separate the tourist from the African. The Bomas stories, on the other hand, tell about the heritage of specific groups, ones with which the Kenyan audience can identify. That the stories tell about being bewitched, about a famous medicine man, and about spirits is part of the magical language of the folktale, but it also reflects a reality of Kenyan cultural life (Geschiere 1997).

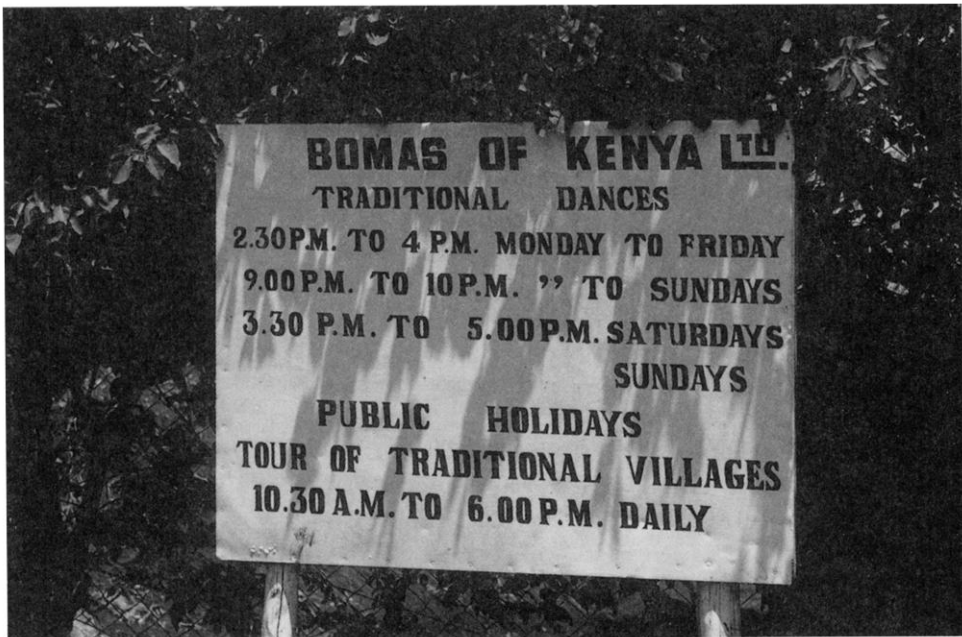


Figure 4. Bomas sign using the term “traditional” two times.

Mayers was performed in a Maasai compound, and all Western objects were hidden from the audience. Bomas is performed in a modern auditorium that contains a restaurant and a huge bar. Before, during, and after the performance, members of the audience can order drinks. Mayers was characterized by an absence of signs; at Bomas there are signs everywhere, including ones that give the price of admission, directions to the auditorium, directions to the traditional villages, even signs that advertise Coca-Cola. Each of the villages has its own sign.

Bomas is professionally produced with such technical virtuosity that it seems like a Kenyan Ziegfeld follies, with professional lighting, sound effects, and with the performers in matching costumes. At Bomas, the performers are clearly on stage and they smile at the audience, whereas at Mayers the Maasai were preoccupied with their dancing. At Mayers, toward the end of the dancing, the audience was invited to come on to the outdoor stage to view the performers close up, and to photograph them, whereas at Bomas there is an unbridgeable gap between the actors and the audience. The audience at Bomas does not mix with the actors on stage. Bomas gives one the feeling of being at a concert or at a theatrical production, and, indeed, Bomas employed an American producer for a time.

Mayers had a close fit between the performance and the setting and that was part of the message. Bomas has a lack of fit between the performance and the setting, and that too is part of the message. The genre of Mayers was tourist realism. The genre of Bomas is nationalist theater. Although both are studiously produced, Mayers was made to seem underproduced, and Bomas overproduced. The aim at Mayers was to mask the artifice of production. The aim at Bomas is to expose the processes of production so as to create a discontinuity between the production and what it is designed to represent. Mayers denied change. Bomas highlights change. Bomas detaches culture from tribe and displays it before the nation for all to see and share, and in the process Bomas aestheticizes, centralizes, and decontextualizes ritual. Ironically, what Bomas represents is what British colonialism was trying to achieve, the detribalization of Kenya. The British tried, but eventually failed, to turn Kenyans into colonial subjects. Bomas succeeds, in performance, in turning Kenyans into national citizens. Disjunction at Bomas is a rhetorical strategy, whereas at Mayers the strategy was to stress continuity. Mayers was a Western fantasy. Bomas is a national wish fulfillment. Mayers and Bomas are equally political and each tries to present its own version of history. Mayers was not an accurate reflection of contemporary Maasai culture, neither is Bomas an accurate reflection of Kenyan traditionalism.

Out of Africa Sundowner

Kichwa Tembo Tented Camp is described in the brochure as "luxurious enough for even the most pampered traveler," with private sleeping tents, electricity, insect-proof windows, a veranda, and an indoor bathroom with hot showers.¹² So much for roughing it in the African bush. The camp is located near the Masai Mara National Reserve, which is an extension of the Serengeti. The main attraction at the camp is game viewing from safari vehicles, but the Maasai are also prominent. There are Maasai at the private airport welcoming the incoming tourists, Maasai dancing at the camp, a scheduled visit to a Maasai village, and a briefing on Maasai culture by a Maasai chief, who began his talk to the tour group I joined by saying in English, "I think all of you must have read about the Maasai." I choose, however, to discuss the Out of Africa Sundowner party held on the Oloololo escarpment on the bank of the Mara River.

This performance introduces a new note into ethnic tourism in Kenya. The Sundowner is basically a cocktail party with buffet on a river bank in the bush. The Kichwa Tembo staff set up a bar, with a bartender in red coat, black pants, white shirt, and bow tie. The attraction is called the Out of Africa Sundowner, from the 1985 Hollywood movie starring Robert Redford and Meryl Streep, based on Isak Dinesen's (1938) book about colonial days in Kenya. *Out of Africa* (1985) was also shown to the tour group on the airplane en route to East Africa. The brochure from the tour agency describing the Sundowner says, "Standing at the precipice of the escarpment, the sun setting low amidst an orange and pink sky, it is easy to see why Africa so inspired Karen Blixen and Dennis Finch-Hatton." The brochure invites the tourists to experience the Sundowner, not from the point of view of the movie or the actors, or the book or the author, but rather from the point of view of the main characters in the story. It is all make-believe. At the Sundowner, waiters serve drinks and food to the tourists standing in groups or seated together in clusters of folding chairs. Then the Kichwa Tembo employees form a line, singing and dancing for the tourists, and the Maasai men begin their chanting and dancing (see Figure 5). The performance is remarkable in a number of respects.¹³

During the dance, individual Maasai dancers come among the tour group, take the hands of tourists, and bring them into the line, to dance with them. The other Maasai dancers smile in approval and visibly express their appreciation of the dance steps now also performed by the tourists. The remaining tourists laugh and comment; most nod in sympathy and enjoyment. A few of the dancing tourists look uncomfortable but make the best of the situation, while others rise to the occasion, dancing away, swinging about wildly, improvising, introducing dance steps ordinarily seen in an American disco (see Figure 6). After the dance, the Maasai again mix with the tourists, this time passing out free souvenirs—a necklace with carved wooden giraffes for the women and a carved letter opener for the men. These curios are given as if they



Figure 5. The Sundowner setting.



Figure 6. Smiling Maasai dancing with tourists at the Sundowner.

were personal gifts, but actually the tour agency at the camp buys these items for distribution at the Sundowner. It is all smiles and politeness.

At the Sundowner, the Maasai warrior has become tourist friendly. Gone is the wildness, or the illusion of wildness, or the performance of wildness, to be replaced by a benign and safe African tribesman. In Mayers Ranch, the particular appeal was precisely the tension between the wild Maasai and the cultured Englishman, but at the Sundowner that binary opposition is dissolved. At the Mayers performance, the tourists moved between two distinct spaces, the Maasai manyatta and the Mayers's lawn, the African space and the English space, the wild and the civilized. The Maasai did not enter the Mayers's area, for to do so would be a violation and would destroy the touristic illusion. At the Sundowner, however, the two spaces have merged—there is no separation between the Maasai and the tourists, but only one performance space where the two intermingle. By breaking the binary, ethnic tourism in Kenya is structurally changed (Sahlins 1981).

During the dancing at the Sundowner, the camp employees begin to sing a Kenyan song called "Jambo Bwana," written in the mid 1980s by a musical group called "Them Mushrooms."¹⁴ The song was first performed in a tourist hotel in Mombasa, became an instant hit, and is still known throughout Kenya. Them Mushrooms moved from Mombasa to Nairobi, established their own recording studio, and have performed abroad.

The message of "Jambo Bwana" is that tourists are welcome in Kenya, which is characterized as a beautiful country without problems. One tour agent in Nairobi said it is now the "tourist national anthem" of Kenya, as it is so popular with foreign tour groups. Prominent in the song is the Swahili phrase "Hakuna Matata," which in one version is repeated four times and means "no worries, no problem." The phrase itself has a history. In the 1970s, there was political turmoil in Uganda and in the states

surrounding Kenya. During this time, “Hakuna Matata,” although always part of coastal Swahili language, came to be widely used as a political phrase, to say that Kenya is safe; it was reassuring to refugees as well as to the citizens of Kenya. After Them Mushrooms wrote “Jambo Bwana” in the mid 1980s, the phrase “Hakuna Matata” became more associated with tourism.

“Hakuna Matata” is familiar to tourist audiences as the title song from the Hollywood movie *The Lion King* (1994), with music by Elton John and lyrics by Tim Rice. The lyrics repeat the phrase “Hakuna Matata,” defining it as follows:

Hakuna Matata!
 What a wonderful phrase
 Hakuna Matata!
 Ain’t no passing craze

It means no worries
 For the rest of your days
 It’s our problem-free philosophy
 Hakuna Matata!¹⁵

The hotel employees at the Sundowner then sang “Kum Ba Yah,” an Angolan spiritual, popular in the United States as a folk, protest, and gospel song. Despite its African origins, “Kum Ba Yah” is now established in U.S. popular culture and has taken on new American meanings. The phrase “Hakuna Matata” has been similarly appropriated and is associated with *The Lion King* (1994).

At the Sundowner, the performers present “Kum Ba Yah” with a Jamaican reggae rhythm, a musical tradition that, to many North Americans, equates good times, blackness, dancing, and Caribbean vacations.¹⁶ In other words, Africans have taken a phrase and a song originating in Africa and have performed it for the tourists with a New World Caribbean reggae beat. This musical tradition and the songs themselves, “Hakuna Matata” and “Kum Ba Yah,” have been widely interpreted in American popular culture as expressions of “Africanness” and “blackness,” and then have been re-presented to American tourists, by Africans, in Africa. What is new is not that transnational influences are at work, that a song or an aspect of culture flows around the globe, as ethnographers are already familiar with these processes. Nor is it new that a global image of African tribesmen is enacted for foreign tourists, as this is also the case at Mayers. What is new is that, at the Sundowner, the Americans, who have presumably made the journey in order to experience African culture, instead encounter American cultural content that represents an American image of African culture. The Americans, of course, feel comfortable and safe, as they recognize this familiar representation and respond positively, for it is their own.

This is globalization gone wild: Paul Gilroy’s (1993) “Black Atlantic,” transnationalism as a Lacanian mirror image, and Appadurai’s (1991) “scapes” as a ping pong ball, bouncing fantasy back and forth across the Atlantic. A reggae Lion King in the African bush. Points of origin become lost or are made irrelevant. Old binaries are fractured. The distance is narrowed between us and them, subject and object, tourist and native. Ethnography is transformed into performance, blurring the lines between genres in ways that go beyond Geertz (1983). What is left are dancing images, musical scapes, flowing across borders, no longer either American or African but occupying new space in a constructed touristic borderzone (Bruner 1996b; cf. Appadurai 1991) that plays with culture, reinvents itself, takes old forms and gives them new and often surprising meanings.

The colonial image of the Maasai has been transformed in a postmodern 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. Presented in tourism are songs that have African roots but that in North America and probably globally are pop culture images of Africa and blackness. Black Africa in the American imagination has been re-presented to Americans in tourism.

At the Sundowner, tourists receive drinks, food, a good show, an occasion to socialize, a chance to express their privileged status, an opportunity to experience vicariously the adventure of colonial Kenya, and a confirmation of their prior image of Africa. As post-tourists in a postmodern era, they may also revel in the incongruity of the event, of dancing with the Maasai, of drinking champagne in the African wilderness. But what do the Maasai receive? The answer must be seen against the backdrop of what the Maasai received at Mayers and receive at Bomas. The Maasai performers at Mayers received a small daily wage for each performance in which they participated, a measure of ground maize, and a pint of milk a day. They derived additional income from the sale of their handicrafts and from the tips they received by posing for tourist photographs. They were wage laborers, as are the performers at Bomas.

The Maasai on the Mara, however, are part owners of the tourist industry and receive a share of the profits from safari tourism, but this is neither readily apparent nor ordinarily disclosed to the tourists.¹⁷ The tourists see only what is exhibited to them in performance, but there is a vast behind-the-scenes picture. The Maasai receive 18 percent of the gross receipts of the "bed nights," the cost of accommodations at Kichwa Tembo per night per person. This can be a considerable amount as there are 51 units at the camp and the cost per night could be US\$300 to US\$400 in high season, or over US\$100,000 per week with full occupancy (Kichwa Tembo 2000). There are a total of 22 camps and lodges on the Mara, some even more luxurious and expensive than Kichwa Tembo. The entrance fee to the Masai Mara Reserve is US\$27 per person per day, and Maasai receive 19 percent of that fee. The percentages of 18 and 19 (odd figures) were the result of a long process of negotiation. The funds are accumulated and given to two county councils, and in one of these, the Transmara Council, where Kichwa Tembo is located, the funds are divided among the "group ranches," each based on one of the ten Maasai clans that own land on the reserve.

The Maasai ownership of most of the land on the reserve, as well as the land on which the camps and lodges are built, is the basis of their receiving a share of the gross receipts. Philip Leakey (a brother of Richard Leakey) reports that before the 1980s, Kenyan elite and foreign investors derived almost all of the income from international tourism (personal communication, February 19, 1999; see also Berger 1996). As a result, most Kenyans including Maasai were indifferent or even hostile to tourism, as they did not profit from it. Further, there was considerable poaching in the game parks. The depletion of the wildlife on the East African reserves posed a danger to the national heritage of Kenya and to the natural heritage of the world, not to mention that the deterioration of game threatened the entire tourism industry and with it a key source of foreign exchange. Things changed in the 1980s, as it was widely recognized that the way to gain the support of the Maasai for tourism development was to give them a stake in the industry, which the Maasai had argued for. Since then, there has been a drastic reduction in poaching on the reserve. The Maasai, who do not usually eat wild game, now have a financial interest in protecting the animals and in stopping poaching. Further, a new law was passed stipulating that anyone caught poaching in Kenya may be killed on sight.

The Maasai profit from tourism on the Mara in other ways. There are 170 park rangers on the reserve, and all are Maasai. The Kichwa Tembo package includes a visit to a Maasai village, where the villagers receive the US\$10 per person admission fee as well as the profits from the sale of handicrafts. One day I counted 80 tourists, for a total income of US\$800. When the Maasai perform their dances for tourists, they receive compensation. One group consisting of about 15 Maasai received US\$163 per performance. Again, tourists are not usually aware of these financial arrangements. Some Maasai on the Mara are wealthy by Kenyan standards, but that wealth is not visible to the tourists. Most Maasai have used their income to increase their herds of livestock—cows, sheep, and goats—which are kept away from the tourist routes.

Maasai are employed at Kichwa Tembo not only as waiters, chefs, and security guards, but in management positions as well. Yet, the tourists do not “see” these employees as Maasai. In the hotel context, the Maasai waiters are reserved and deferential in their white uniforms, avoiding eye contact with tourists and speaking only when spoken to. If waiters were to overstep the bounds of appropriate service behavior they would be reprimanded, whereas if the same Maasai performing for tourists as warriors behaved deferentially, they would be a disappointment to the spectators. All parties understand the behavior appropriate in each position, for it is a mutually understood symbolic system, and each party to the drama performs an assigned role. Within the lodge, the tourists are usually polite to the waiters but are disinterested, for they are perceived as service employees. Kichwa Tembo camp is a space that provides the comfort, luxury, and safety on which upscale tourism depends.

In contexts in which the Maasai are performing as “Maasai,” on display for tourists, it is tourist time. The Maasai men, adorned with red ochre, wearing red robes, beadwork, and sandals, and carrying sticks, change their demeanor—they become warriors. In performance, in these contexts, the tourists become voyeurs—there is a cornucopia of visualization, and the simultaneous clicking of many cameras. Ironically, on the same day a single individual might be a deferential waiter in the hotel during the serving of a meal, but a Maasai warrior, one of the “Lords of East Africa,” during performance time in the evening.

The Maasai, of course, are well aware of the discrepancy between their own lifestyles and their tourist image, and they manipulate it, but there are many complexities in the situation. Some Maasai, who have in effect become performers in the tourism industry, display themselves for tourists, to be observed and photographed, and if asked, they reply that they do it for the money. They play the primitive, for profit, and have become what MacCannell (1992) calls the ex-primitive. This is the case for performers at all three sites, at Mayers, Bomas, and the Sundowner. Tourism for them is their livelihood, a source of income. On the other hand, I knew one Maasai business executive who assumed “ethnic” Maasai traits only during his nonworking hours. He dressed in Western clothing with shirt and tie during the work week in Nairobi, where he spoke English, but on most weekends, wearing jeans and a T-shirt, and speaking Maasai, he would return to his native village to become a pastoralist to attend to his extensive herd of livestock. On ceremonial occasions, he would wear traditional Maasai clothing and dance and chant in Maasai rituals. To put it another way, what touristic or ethnographic discourse characterize as Maasai “ethnic” traits, may, in tourism or in life, be displayed situationally, depending on the context, which is probably the case universally for all ethnicities. Identities are not given, they are performed by people with agency who have choices.

But boundaries are elusive. As de Certeau (1984) suggests, spatial patterns are not composed of rigid unbreakable regulations, flawlessly executed, but are spatial

practices, characterized by transgression, manipulation, and resistance, as individuals appropriate space for themselves. I give two examples. While watching the dancing at the Sundowner, I noticed one man, a waiter in black pants and white shirt, who picked up a club and began dancing along with the red-robed Maasai. He was out of place, apparently a Maasai waiter who decided to join his fellow tribesmen, but it was a broken pattern.

At Kichwa Tembo, one of the tourists, an African American woman, had taken an optional nature walk with Maasai guides. During the walk they came upon a pride of 12 lions. The woman reported that she had never been so scared in her life, but the Maasai guides urged calm and slowly moved the group away from the lions without incident. After that dramatic encounter, while resting and chatting, the woman showed the Maasai guides a picture of her grown daughter, a strikingly beautiful woman. One of the guides announced to the woman that he wanted to marry the daughter, but the woman passed it off and they continued on the nature walk. Later, back at the camp, the Maasai man came to the woman with his father, a marriage spokesman, and offered 25 head of cattle for the daughter, with the implication of a still larger offer, a huge bride-price. The father urged the woman to consult with her own marriage brokers, and then to meet again to negotiate—a Maasai practice. When the woman told me about this incident, I playfully suggested that the least she could have done would have been to transmit the offer to her daughter and let her make her own decision. But the woman replied that her daughter was finishing her studies at a prestigious law school in California, was very driven and ambitious, and would not want to be the second wife of a Maasai villager. Boundaries are not rigid—tourists and natives do move into each other's spaces.

Maasai then are incorporated into the safari tourism industry on the Mara in a dual capacity. First, they are part owners, possibly partners, and certainly beneficiaries. Second, they are also performers in a touristic drama, a secondary attraction to the wild animals on the reserve, but clearly objects of the tourist gaze. As the Maasai receive a share of the profits and a stake in the industry, the question may be asked, to what extent do they control the images by which they are represented? My observations suggest that if the Maasai now have economic and political power, they do not exercise it to influence how they are presented in tourism. As the Maasai say, they are in it for the money and are willing to play into the stereotypic colonial image of themselves to please their clients, the foreign tourists. As one Maasai explained to me, the European and American tourists do not come to Kenya to see someone in Western dress, like a Kikuyu. The Maasai put on the red robes and red ochre and carry clubs so the tourists will be able to recognize them as Maasai.

Who is producing the Sundowner Maasai? Kichwa Tembo tented safari camp was built by the tour agency Abercrombie and Kent, but was recently sold to another company, Conservation Corporation Africa. Regardless of the particular company involved, the Out of Africa Sundowner is produced by tour agencies and, by extension, by international tourism to meet a demand. Tourism is marketing, selling a product to an audience.

The production is skillful because the hand of the tour agency is masked in the presentation of the Maasai. It is the Maasai dancers who distribute gifts directly to the tourists at the Sundowner (with gifts provided by the tour agent), it is the Maasai chief who collects the \$10 fee to enter the village (but it is the tour agent who selects the village), and it is a Maasai (hired by the tour agent) who provides explanations of Maasai culture. At Mayers, the entrance fee was given to the Mayers or to their staff, and the staff provided the commentary on Maasai lifeways. It was apparent at Mayers that

white Europeans were explaining and producing Africans, with all its colonial overtones. At Kichwa Tembo, however, Maasai explain Maasai culture, but briefly, as most tourists are not really interested in a deeper ethnographic understanding. In Maasai tourism generally, at Mayers, Bomas, and the Mara, there is a master narrative at work, but it is usually implicit, a background understanding. On site, textual content is less prominent than evocative visualizations, songs, dance, and movement. In a sense, the producer is more important in Maasai tourist attractions than the writer. At the Mara, a casual observer might say that the Maasai are producing themselves, but I believe it more accurate to say that the tour agents are the primary producers, with the Maasai at best relegated to a minor role. The role of the tour agent is concealed, which is part of the production.

If 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. The startling implication, for me, is that to develop a new site for ethnic tourism, it is not necessary to study the ethnic group or to gather local data, but only to do market research on tourist perceptions. I know these statements are somewhat conjectural, but is it too speculative to contemplate that the Maasai will eventually become (rather than just appear as) the pop culture image of themselves? I do not believe in the homogenization of world cultures caused by globalization, for local cultures always actively assert themselves, and I would argue for the long-term integrity of the Maasai. But the issue is raised, how well will the Maasai continue to compartmentalize themselves and separate performance from life? The line separating tourist performance and ethnic ritual has already become blurred in other areas of the world with large tourist flows, such as Bali. The Balinese can no longer distinguish between performances for tourists and those performances for themselves, as performances originally created for tourism have subsequently entered Balinese rituals (Bruner 1996b; Picard 1996). Where does Maasai culture begin and Hollywood image end?

writing tourism and writing ethnography

To summarize thus far, Mayers presented the tourist image of the African primitive, Bomas presents the preservation of a disappearing Kenyan tradition, and the Sundowner an American pop-culture image of Africa. The tourists at Mayers sat on logs facing the performance area in a reconstructed Maasai village, at Bomas sit in tiered auditorium seats facing the stage, and at the Sundowner on folding chairs on the escarpment as the performance evolves around them. The performance and the setting were concordant at Mayers; are detached at Bomas; and at the Sundowner, the most global message is delivered in the most natural setting, along a river bank in a game reserve. Mayers served English tea, Bomas serves drinks at the bar, while the waiters at the Sundowner pour champagne. The binary opposition at Mayers is between the African primitive and the civilized Englishman; at Bomas it is between traditional and modern Kenyans; and at the Sundowner, the binary is dissolved because the performance presents what the tourists interpret to be their own transnational media image of Africa. The master trope at Mayers was tourist realism, at Bomas it is undisguised nationalism, and at the Sundowner it is a postmodern image.

Mayers, Bomas, and the Sundowner differ in many respects but all three sites combine tourism, theater, and entertainment. All take simultaneous account of the prior colonial status, local politics, national forces, and global international requirements. I have emphasized globalization at the Sundowner site, but there clearly are global dimensions to Mayers and Bomas. Mayers (as tourist realism) and Bomas (as

national theater) are examples of transnationalism, and both arose in Kenya as an extension of the postcolonial condition, one for foreigners and the other for locals, for as Oakes (1998:11) says, both authenticity and tradition are themselves modern sensibilities. In the 1960s, Mayers reworked a 19th-century colonial narrative for foreigners, and Bomas is a recent variant for domestic tourists of public displays of living peoples. Such displays have a history dating back to European folk museums (Horne 1992), World Fairs (Benedict 1983), and even earlier (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:34–51; Mullaney 1983). Bomas most resembles the ethnic theme parks of contemporary China (Anagnost 1993), Indonesia (Bruner 2000; Errington 1998; Pember-ton 1994), and other nations (Stanley 1998).

Viewed historically, the three tourist sites parallel three different forms of ethnographic writing. Mayers Ranch can be likened to ethnographic realism—it strived for an aura of authenticity based on a prior image of what was believed to be the authentic African pastoralist. When Mayers was opened in 1968, colonialism was gone in Kenya, a thing of the past, but there were still many British expatriates and a worldwide longing for a colonial experience—an enacted imperialist nostalgia—that Mayers produced for the ex-patriate community and foreign tourists.

Authenticity has figured prominently in tourism scholarship since Boorstin (1961) and MacCannell (1976). Boorstin characterizes tourist attractions as pseudo-events, which are contrived and artificial, as opposed to the real thing. MacCannell sees modern tourists as on a quest for authenticity, which is frequently presented to them as “staged authenticity,” a false front that masks the real back stage to which they do not have access. For both Boorstin and MacCannell, there is a real authentic culture located somewhere, beyond the tourist view. Contemporary anthropologists would not agree with the early work of Boorstin and MacCannell, for as anthropologists now know, there are no originals, and a single “real” authentic culture does not exist. Of course, all cultures everywhere are real and authentic, if only because they are there, but this is quite different from the concept of “authenticity,” which implies an inherent distinction between what is authentic and what inauthentic, applies labels to cultures, and values one more than the other. There is no one authentic Maasai culture, in part because Maasai culture is continually changing and there are many variants. If one were to identify, say, a 19th-century version of Maasai culture as the real thing, one could then look further, back to the 18th century or to a more distant region, as the locus of the really real Maasai. It is an impossible quest.

The same vision is apparent in ethnographic realism (Marcus and Fisher 1986; Rosaldo 1989; Tedlock 2000), the basic mode of ethnographic writing until the 1960s. The classic monographs in Africa (e.g., Evans-Pritchard 1940) did not describe what the ethnographers actually observed at the time of their fieldwork but was a construction based on the prevailing anthropological vision of a pure unaltered native culture. As in anthropology, where the hypothetical ethnographic present was discredited and colonialism criticized, so too was Mayers Ranch disparaged and eventually closed. Mayers existed historically before either Bomas and the Sundowner, but it was an anachronism, doomed from the beginning.

An effort to influence the political culture of Kenya, Bomas emerged in response to those forces that led to political activism within anthropology during the 1970s, the epoch of the civil rights movement and the emergence of new nations. The genre is ethnographic activism. Bomas depicts traditional Maasai culture as fast disappearing, requiring that it be preserved in museum archives or in artistic performance. As a collective past, Maasai culture as represented at Bomas becomes part of the national heritage of postindependence Kenya. Bomas is a response to the intense nationalism

that characterized many newly independent multiethnic Third World countries. The basic problem for the nation was how to express ethnicity yet simultaneously to contain it, a problem not yet resolved in many African states.

The Sundowner is an outgrowth of global media flows, electronic communication, and pervasive transnationalism. It is for foreign post-tourists, produced in the style of postmodern ethnography. Unlike Mayers, it rejects the realist genre. Unlike Bomas, it rejects nationalist rhetoric. Postmodern ethnography describes juxtapositions, pastiche, functional inconsistency, and recognizes, even celebrates, that cultural items originating from different places and historical eras may coexist (Babcock 1999). Contemporary ethnographers no longer try to mask outside influences, nor do they see them as polluting a pure culture (Bruner 1988).

In performance, the Sundowner is more playful. It intermingles elements from the past and the present, is less concerned about points of historical origin, and does not strive for cultural purity. The comparison is not quite that neat, however, as the Sundowner tourists do occupy a colonial position and do want to view "primitive" Maasai; nevertheless, there has been a shift in the stance of the audience. Post-tourists at the Sundowner are willing to dance with the Maasai and joke with them, and they are not that fastidious about authenticity. But postmodern tourists, and ethnographers, have not entirely overcome the contradictions of their modernist and colonial pasts. Many postmodern ethnographers, it must be recognized, still struggle with an inequitable colonial relationship and vast differentials in wealth and power between themselves and the people they study. Further, ethnographers, as those who write, control how culture is represented.

That the three sites correspond to different genres of ethnographic writing is not unexpected as both tourism and ethnography are disciplinary practices, products of the same worldwide global forces. Ethnographers are not entirely free from the dominant paradigms of their times. As an ethnographer studying tourism, ethnographic perspectives are reflected back to me by the very tourist performances that I study. The predicament, of course, is not restricted to an anthropology of tourism; it is inherent in the ethnographic enterprise (Bruner 1986).

the questioning gaze

I use the phrase the "questioning gaze" to describe the tourists' doubts about the credibility, authenticity, and accuracy of what is presented to them in the tourist production. The key issue is that tourists have agency, active selves that do not merely accept but interpret, and frequently question, the producers' messages (Bruner 1994; Jules-Rosette and Bruner 1994). In Bomas, authenticity both is and is not an issue—it depends on which Kenyan is speaking, as there is no monolithic local voice. Some Maasai are illiterate, others have been educated at Oxford University; some live in the game parks, others in the city; some are pastoralists, others are doctors, lawyers, and businessmen; some have a stake in the tourism industry, others have not. Urban Kenyans I know have told me they enjoy seeing their native dances at Bomas, as they do not travel frequently to their home areas, and even when they do they are not assured of witnessing a dance performance. They respect the ethnic diversity exhibited at Bomas, and they appreciate the performance as well as the entire Bomas experience. In addition to the dancing, Bomas features picnic sites, a children's playground, football, volleyball, badminton, table tennis, and a swimming pool. In other words, it is more than a display of Kenyan ethnic culture for intellectuals, ethnographers, and foreign tourists; it is a family recreational site.

Yet not all local observers share this view. Originally from Uganda, Christine Southall (a scholar specializing in East Africa) suggested to me that many Kenyan intellectuals laugh at parts of the Bomas performance, criticizing the inaccuracies in its representation of tradition and regarding its characterization of the various ethnic groups as inauthentic. In 1999, Jean Kidula, a Kenyan musicologist who has worked with the Bomas performers, explained to me that Bomas is a failed project because the original objectives were not achieved. The aim in the early 1970s was to construct a national dance troupe that would accurately perform the ethnic arts of Kenya. She feels that the dances now performed are not authentic so that Bomas has become a tourist thing, folkloristic, and commercial. The difficulty was that once the dance troupe was formed the performers began to innovate, and over the years the original tribal dance forms were changed. Kenyan people, she says, understand this but keep going to Bomas primarily because it is entertaining. To these two scholars, authenticity is important, and they criticize Bomas for not achieving it.

Commenting to me on Bomas, Jane Mayers said that "it's not true in any respect," meaning that the Maasai dance at Bomas is not necessarily performed by Maasai, that no one lives in the villages, and that their dance troupe is professional. The questions become, what is seen as true, and how does a performance derive its authority. There are different meanings of authenticity (Bruner 1994), but from my perspective, Mayers, Bomas, and the Sundowner are not authentic in the sense of being accurate, genuine, and true to a postulated original.

Anthropologists, at least in the past, have tended to regard tourism as commercial, even tacky. From the perspective of realist ethnography, tourism is a disgraceful simplification, an embarrassment, like an awkward country cousin who keeps appearing at cherished field sites (Bruner 1989; de Certeau 1984). Some U.S. anthropologists, Kenyan intellectuals, and foreign tourists might experience Bomas as being superficial and inauthentic—but that would be to miss the point. At Bomas, traditional dances are placed in such a high-tech setting and the production is so professional that the dances become detraditionalized. The modern auditorium, the bar, the signs, and the commercialism are not necessarily experienced by Kenyan visitors as an intrusion, for they serve to remind the Kenyans that they are not in a tribal village but in a national folklore museum.

Although the issue for some Kenyan intellectuals is authenticity, the issue for many Kenyan tourists, based on my interviews, is doubt about the validity of the nationalistic message of Bomas. The message of the producers is not necessarily the one received by their tourist audience. Kenyan people from all segments of society are very well aware of the reality of ethnic conflict in Kenyan society, and hence those Kenyans who visit Bomas have their doubts about the ethnic harmony portrayed there. The understanding of Kenyans in this respect is similar to the Americans who celebrate the Abraham Lincoln rags-to-riches narrative that everyone can be president, yet they know that no American of African, Native, Asian, or Hispanic descent, and no woman or Jew, has been elected president of the United States.

In this sense, Bomas is like Lévi-Strauss's (1967:202–228) definition of a myth, in that it tries to resolve a contradiction between a vision of Kenyan national integration and the reality of ethnic conflict and separatism, just as in the United States the Lincoln myth tries to resolve a contradiction between an ideology of equality and an actuality of discrimination. The function and the promise of national myths is to resolve contradictions, if not in life, then in narrative and performance. Nor is it a false consciousness, as the Marxists would have it, for most Kenyans and Americans are aware of these discrepancies.

At Mayers Ranch, many tourists had their own doubts, which they expressed to me, for the performance was too picture perfect, too neat and well scheduled, and the back stage of the performance as well as the actualities of Maasai life were too well hidden. Tourists vary, for to be a tourist is not a fixed slot to be occupied but is a role to be fashioned and performed (Jules-Rosette and Bruner 1994). Some tourists willingly surrendered themselves to the experience of the Mayers performance. One tourist told me that he was on vacation in Africa to relax, and he simply accepted whatever was offered to him. For him, there was no questioning gaze, or at least it was suppressed. Others behave as if they are in a graduate anthropology seminar: They are obsessed with issues of authenticity and question the truth value of everything. They ask, "Are these Maasai for real?"

One American student at Mayers Ranch during my visit kept muttering to herself and to anyone else who would listen that the Maasai were being exploited, which may have been the case. The African American tourists who complained about Mayers to the Kenyan government did not see the performance as the producers intended, as a story about the English and the Maasai, but focused on skin color, as an example of whites producing blacks. This is interesting as it exports an American political sensibility to an African context (Bruner 1996a). Tourists, however, like the rest of us, have the ability simultaneously to suspend disbelief and to harbor inner doubts, and sometimes to oscillate between one stance and the other. The questioning gaze may be pushed aside, so that tourists may delight in the excitement and danger of being with the Maasai and play, in their imagination (even temporarily and tentatively) with the colonial slot into which they are being positioned. For them, Mayers was good theater, and many made a conscious effort to engage the Mayers fantasy and to identify with the plot and the characters, at least during performance time, despite inner doubts.

The Intrav tour agency that took the group to the Sundowner was skilled and sophisticated in catering to upscale tourists. It was an "Out of Africa" tour not just in the sense of the Isak Dinesen book, but in the sense of being literally "out" of Africa, above Africa, so as to protect the tourists from hassles, waits, and crowds, and to shield them from experiencing the darker side of Africa, the poverty, starvation, brutality, disease, dirt, corruption, and civil wars. The Sundowner itself went smoothly but there was an earlier instance, a memorable occasion in Tanzania, when Africa broke through the bubble. The tourists I spoke with were very disturbed about it. On a trip from Lake Manyara to Ngorogoro Crater, over a two-hour ride, the cars carrying the tourists passed a number of painfully poor Tanzanian villages. As each village came into view, emaciated children dressed in rags ran after the cars with outstretched hands, hoping for a handout, and they continued running even after the cars had passed far beyond them. The drivers did not stop, but I saw many of the tourists continuing to look back along the dusty road at the desperate children. Afterward, with pained expression, one woman tourist commented on the shocking disparity of wealth between the members of the tour group and the Tanzanian villagers, noting the contrast between our luxury and their poverty. Another said she felt ashamed to have spent so much money on a vacation while these villagers had nothing. It was a fleeting but significant moment. The tourists talked about it for days and were obviously distraught. Its significance extended beyond that one specific incident to the entire tourist itinerary, raising the larger question in the tourist consciousness, what else was being concealed on their tour of Africa? The incident materialized an inner doubt. By carefully orchestrating the "Out of Africa" tour, the agency had tried to suppress and silence parts of Africa, but they did not entirely succeed.

The tourists' identification with Africans in this instance is reminiscent of the position of the character Dennis Finch-Hatton in Isak Dinesen's, *Out of Africa* (1938). In that book, Finch-Hatton, a white colonialist, casts a critical eye on the institution of colonialism, identifies with the independent pastoral Maasai, and is ultimately buried in a Maasai grave. In structural terms, he was a bridge between the civilized and the wild, flying freely over the African landscape, with the ability to move back and forth between the two domains of the binary. The tourists on the "Out of Africa" tour who participated in the Sundowner may want to be accepted, even blessed, by the primitive Maasai, if only temporarily, as a kind of absolution for the privileged position that haunts the edges of their dreams. They may relish the gifts, smiles, and dancing on the Sundowner as evidence that they are liked, or at least welcomed, by the Maasai. The African American woman on a walking tour with the Maasai who encountered the lions may retell that story, not only as a tale of unexpected adventure (always a source of good stories for tourists) but as a way of identifying herself with the Maasai.¹⁸

At Mayers, Bomas, and the Sundowner, there are always doubts among the tourists about what they are "seeing," doubts that differ from tourist to tourist, but that move beyond what has so artfully been constructed for them. The questioning gaze is a penetration of the constructedness devised by the producers, but it is also more, in a number of respects. First, there is always an unpredictability of meaning about any performance, for individuals attribute their own understandings to the event, which may not be predicted in advance, and these understandings may change over time. Second, some tourists apply a frame to the activity of sightseeing and to everything else that occurs within the tour. A well-traveled tourist, for example, once whispered to me as we were about to watch a performance, "Here comes the tourist dance." It made no difference to her what particular ethnic dance was on display, except that it was presented within a touristic frame. It was a tourist dance, period. For other tourists, more inclined to surrender, an immersion in the physicality of the dance activity itself was more important than any explanation or attribution of meaning. This verges on what Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998:203–248) describes as an avant-garde sensibility, where the experience itself is more important than the hermeneutics. Further, in many cases, tourists simply do not understand what they are seeing and make no effort to interpret Maasai dance and culture. Even to those tourists most willing to open up to the experience and to accept the producers' fantasy, there is still, in MacCannell's terms, "an ineluctable absence of meaning to an incomplete subject" (2001:34). It is what Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998:72) has called the irreducibility of strangeness. Urry's (1990, 1992) tourist gaze is too empiricist, too monolithic, too lacking in agency, and too visual to encompass these varied tourist reactions. The tourist gaze does not have the power of Foucault's (1979) panopticon, for it is not all-seeing and enveloping. It is variable, and there are seepages and doubts.

In this article, I have described how the Maasai of Kenya are displayed in three tourist sites originating in different historical eras and in disparate social milieus. I emphasize that touristic representations of a single ethnic group are multiple and even contradictory. I also discuss the parallels between tourism and ethnography especially evident in the concept of the questioning gaze. I demonstrate how ethnicity, culture, and authenticity gain and lose meanings in diverse touristic and world contexts. My approach has been to study local tourist performances by the methods of ethnography, to take account of tourist agency, and then to compare systematically the various sites with attention to the national and global frames within which they are located. Constructionism, my main theoretical thrust, is not an escape from history

or ethnography. Such an approach enables the ethnographer to explore similarities and differences, to embrace complexity, and to open up new possibilities.

notes

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1. Recent works on tourism include Abram et al. 1997; Boissevain 1996; Castaneda 1996; Chambers 2000; Cohen 1996; Crick 1994; Dann 1996; Desmond 1999; Handler and Gable 1997; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998; Lanfant et al. 1995; Lavie and Swedenburg 1994; Löfgren 1999; Nash 1996; Oakes 1998; Picard 1996; Rojek and Urry 1997; Schein 2000; and Selwyn 1996.

2. Adams 1998 and Cheung 1999 are exceptions.

3. My "questioning gaze" was inspired by MacCannell's (2000) concept of the "second gaze," which he developed in opposition to Urry's (1990) "tourist gaze." I agree with most of MacCannell's critique of Urry. See also Kasfir 1999.

4. When referring to the Maasai people, current scholarly practice is to use a double *aa*, derived from the language group Maa. The game reserve Masai Mara, a proper name, is spelled with a single *a*.

5. In 1984, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and I did fieldwork together at Mayers Ranch, which we published, and at Bomas, which we did not publish. I returned to Kenya in 1995 and 1999, revisited old sites, gathered new data, and initiated fieldwork on Maasai tourism on the Mara, including the Sundowner. For the past 15 years, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has influenced my work on the Maasai and on tourism.

6. Members of the tour group had to obtain visas, but their passports were collected by the Intrav tour guides who handled all the immigration and customs arrangements.

7. All photos are by the author, except for Figure 3, which is by Richard Freeman.

8. Bomas of Kenya was initiated by the government in 1971 and opened in 1973 under the Kenya Tourist Development Corporation, a part of the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife.

9. As there are 42 ethnic groups in Kenya, but only 11 traditional villages in Bomas, many groups are left out, although some are represented in performance. There is no representation of such minorities as the resident Indian population.

10. It will be helpful to examine the charges for admission to the Bomas performance. At the time of my visit, a Kenyan citizen paid about one-third the amount charged to a foreign tourist, and a resident child paid only about one-third of the amount paid by a Kenyan adult making it financially feasible for many Kenyans to come to Bomas for a family outing with their children.

11. The African Classic Tours (1986) brochure states:

Here in East Africa, we can still view the world as our primitive ancestors saw it, in its natural state, without the influences of modern civilization. . . . Here are the living remains of prehistoric human cultures, people who still live by hunting and gathering: nomadic peoples living in small family groups. Here we can view the daily struggle for survival . . . and see people and wildlife living, for the most part, unaffected by our rapidly changing society.

12. All quotes from the brochure for the Intrav "On Safari in Africa" trip February 2 to 25, 1999.

13. At this point, I must acknowledge the ambiguity of my subject position especially at the Sundowner, for I oscillated between being a tourist and being an ethnographer, on the one hand enjoying the scene, talking with the tourists, avidly taking photographs, and on the other hand studying the event, making ethnographic observations, and writing field notes (see Bruner

1996b). All ethnographers occasionally experience a similar oscillation, between being there as a participant in another culture, (merging into the ongoing activity) and the demands of being a scholar, striving for the distance and objectivity necessary to write for an anthropological audience. I have felt this tension the most in my work on tourism rather than in other ethnographic endeavors (cf. Bruner 1999).

14. I am indebted to Mulu Muia, Duncan Muriuki, and to Jean Kidula for helpful information on the musical scene in Kenya. I also note that data was gathered by modern electronic means, by e-mail and the internet. Bomas, Kichwa Tembo tented camp, and Them Mushrooms all have their own web sites.

15. I do not know the relationship between the use of Hakuna Matata in "Jambo Bwana" and in the Elton John-Tim Rice song. Neither the lyrics nor music are the same, but the phrase, Hakuna Matata, is equally prominent in both songs.

16. Them Mushrooms also are known for reggae, and for fusions of reggae with local musical traditions. Them Mushrooms are credited with recording, in 1981, the first reggae song in East Africa, with CBS Kenya Records. Their inspiration was Bob Marley, the Jamaican reggae musician (Them Mushrooms 2000). Reggae also has a political meaning, connected to the Rastafarians.

17. Wood (1999) reports that funds flow inequitably to the Maasai chiefs and politicians, and there have been many accusations of corruption. Berger (1996) discusses these inequities, offers solutions, and shows how the Maasai are being integrated into the tourism industry in Kenya. Kiros Lekaris, Stanley Ole Mpakany, Meegeesh Nadallah, and Gerald Ole Selembo have helped me better to understand how the Maasai on the Mara do profit economically from safari tourism.

18. I thank an anonymous reviewer for the *American Ethnologist* for many of the ideas in this paragraph.

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