

GENDER IN CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE KENYAN MAASAI



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Lists of respondents addressed in this paper

Alex Kombe (Catholic) : he was sent to Oltepesi last year November to fulfill his task of being a catechist. He is living in a house made available by the Catholic Church, situated near the gate of the institute. Originally, he is from Loolakyr.

Elisabeth (Catholic) : Elisabeth is the wife of Emmanuel, who is the brother of Joshua Limpaso. They live in front of the institute. Together they have 9 children. All their sons (5) are handicapped, due to an abnormality in the genes of Emmanuel.

Elisabeth Inchapasha (Catholic) : an old woman from Olpolosie loo Kangere, an area bordering Oltepesi. Every now and then she came to visit The Oltepesi Cultural Institute.

Emely (Catholic) : she had to marry an old man when she was 16 years of age. Therefore, at an early age she became a widow. She has five children of which one boy is called Gideon and one girl is called Lucy. She is the neighbor of Mama Virginia. For a long time she worked at The Oltepesi Cultural Institute. With the arrival of Emelly Chepchumka she got transferred to the Parish of Mashuuru.

Emelly Chepchumka (Catholic) : she is not a Maasai but a Kalenjin. She is from Kajiado where she worked at the mission station for 11 years. A year and a half ago she was transferred to Oltepesi. She has four grown up children of which are two boys and two girls.

Emely Eduard (Protestant) : a young mother of two toddlers, named Victor and Mandela. Her husband is a teacher in Mashuuru. She herself spends time at home taking care of her sick grandmother. Originally she is not from Oltepesi, but came to live here when she was married off and had to follow her husband.

Father Antonio (Catholic): he is a Mexican priest and in charge of the Parish of Mashuuru.

Father Barabara (Catholic) : the successor of Father Karl, now being priest and in charge of the institute. He is from Tanzania but working for The Diocese of Ngong.

Father Karl (Catholic) : a missionary father at the Mill Hill Missionary from Tirol, Austria. He was the priest at The Oltepesi Cultural Institute during my two visits. He came to work for The Oltepesi Cultural Institute with Father Mol in 2005 and left last year 2013.

Father Martin: a priest from Poland who followed the Maa course at The Oltepesi Cultural Centre in 2010.

Father Mol (Catholic) : a Dutch priest and missionary belonging to the Mill Hill Missionaries. He was the founder of The Oltepesi Cultural Institute, which shifted from Lemek to Oltepesi in the year 2005.

H. Stoks (Catholic) : a Dutch theologian and researcher who has been working with the Maasai for over 40 years. He is traveling from place to place in Kenya and Tanzania, interested in languages and cultures and willing to offer courses at schools, institutes and universities. He supported Father Mol

in raising the institute.

John addressed as **Mwalimu John** (Catholic) : *mwalimu* means teacher. He was not teacher, but addressed by this term out of respect. He works for The Diocese of Ngong.

Joshua Limpaso (Catholic) : he is from Mashuuru but now living in Oltepesi. He is the intermediary between the Maasai community of Oltepesi and various NGO's. He is married and has a daughter and four sons.

Judith (Protestant of the Pentecostal fellowship) : teacher at the Guadalupe Primary School at Oltepesi. She is living with some of her children behind the institute in the hills; 25 minutes walking distance from the institute.

Kayok:(Catholic) the oldest son of Mama Virginia and brother of Tyson.

Kuresoi (Catholic) : she is one of the maids at the institute. She is young woman in her twenties, who is pregnant of her second child.

Lucy (Catholic) : the daughter of Emely. She is a in her twenties, living with her husband, two sons and a daughter.

Mama Saitoti (Protestant of the Anglican denomination in Mashuuru) : she is living close to the institute at ten minutes walk. She is from Kajiado, but came to live in Oltepesi in 2001. Mama Saitoti has ten children, of which three passed away. Saitoti is the eldest son, however handicapped. The other siblings who are mentioned in the thesis are Sheila, Samuel, Mary, Agnes and Besje.

Mama Virginia (Catholic) : a widow, living alone with her children, Kayok, Tyson and Julia. Dorothy, one of her daughters, left her parental house when she got married.

Memusi (Catholic) : the catechist from Imaroro where he is living with his daughter. He is responsible for the outstations: Ilengata, Imaroro and Parsinti.

P-ole Murero (Catholic) : he is from Lemek and now teacher at The Oltepesi Cultural Institute, teaching Maa language and Kipsigis. He supports the priest in running the institute, by for example doing the administrative work. Therefore he is one of the staff members of the institute.

Ruth Sautet (Protestant of the Dominion Chapel) : she is married to the Protestant Pastor in Oltepesi. They live next to the institute. She has grown up children who already left the parental house.

Santiago (Catholic) : a young man from Mexico, residing at the Parish of Mashuuru. He is helping Father Antonio in his missionary work.

Tyson (Catholic): the son of Mama Virginia. He is approximately 21-22 years old and he was sent to study at The University of Eldoret.

Some other young men in Oltepesi were **Sammy Rayiani**, **William Olososio** and **Albertus**. They attended the services at the Catholic Church.

Foreword

This thesis is written for my Master degree in African Studies at the University of Leiden. The thesis is based on a research carried out among the Maasai of Kenya, in Oltepesi. My first visit to Oltepesi was in 2010 followed by a second visit to the Maasai in 2013. Contrary to the first visit when I traveled with a fellow student and concentrated more on the general culture and the MAA language, the second visit to The Oltepesi Cultural Institute I travelled alone as a master student researching the Maasai in relation to Christianity. Specially I would like to thank great support received from P-ole Murero, a Maasai working for the management of the institute, who during my stay helped me in arranging appointments with the inhabitants of Oltepesi and providing me with useful information concerning the Catholic Church. P-ole Murero being a Maasai and me, being a Dutch woman, showed clearly our distinct opinions and views. However, he never got tired to get involved in discussions including topics like Christianity, women clothes or even food. P-ole Murero gave me an inside look in the Maasai feeling and thinking for which I'm very thankful. Back in the Netherlands, working on my thesis, I regularly stayed in the office of my supervisor Dr. R. Ross. I would like to offer my special thanks to him, for his support in writing and structuring my thesis and for his countless suggestions and advices. In particular his encouragements helped me in keeping faith in myself and pushed me through the entire process of writing my thesis. These last months were challenging and besides R. Ross also the support of my parents was of big value, who continued showing their interest in my research. My fascination for the Maasai has certainly been stimulated by H. Stoks, a theologian who has been living with the Maasai for over 40 years. I have deep admiration for his work, his knowledge and his passion for the Maasai. I would like to thank him for sharing his outstanding world and knowledge with me. It has been a unique and unforgettable experience to me.

Leiden, December the 11th 2014

Rebecca Heijs

Introduction

The Maasai are a pastoral group living in the savanna, on the eastern side of the African continent, mainly Kenya and Tanzania, sharing their land with other pastoral tribes. Their lifestyle results in a nomadic pattern. With their cattle and few belongings they keep migrating from place to place in search of grazing lands. In the course of these migrations, Maasai are strongly aware that they are living between heaven/sky and earth. The denomination for heaven is *Enkai*, also referring to rain or God, which both are situated above the heads of the Maasai. Earth is called *enkop*, the land under their feet. *Enkai* and *enkop* oppose each other and amid the Maasai living in between. The reality of the Maasai is the established relationship between heaven and earth. From heaven, rain flows down reaching the earth and flourishing life. Maasai men travel over *enkop* to find this water needed for their cattle. Besides, Maasai see the reality as a unity of complementarities, like heaven and earth, men and women, young and old, wet and dry. Complements organize life and bring about harmony and peace. Every single thing has its own meaning connected to this worldview. To clarify this statement an example could be the ideal pastoral diet, as described by K. Arhem (1989, p. 77). Milk is associated with women, who have procreative powers and bring life forth. For this reason only women are allowed to milk the cows and to distribute the fluid. Men in contrast have the responsibility to slaughter the cows and to allocate the meat. Meat symbolizes men power, death and social rebirth.

These beliefs and symbolism continue to play a role, even after evangelization took place. I am interested in understanding the way in which Maasai reacted to evangelization. Therefore, in this thesis, the main question is: to what extent do Maasai men and women in Oltepesi have contrasting attitudes towards the church and how far does this relate to gender specific attitudes towards *Maasainess* in its totality? This derives from the following considerations. The worldview of the Maasai is considered to be strictly organized. So, what happens when new elements deriving from the outside are introduced? These include the introduction of education, the economics of consumption, modernization and Christianity with its own worldview. Actually, 'a real Maasai holds a spear in one hand and a stick in the other hand. In which hand should he hold a book?'¹ This Maasai

¹T. van der Lee & J. Groenendijk, *Geheimen van de Maasai. Inwijding in een bedreigde cultuur*, (Balans, 2010), <http://books.google.nl/books?id=eWd1AAAAQBAJ&pg=PT34&lpg=PT34&dq=maasai+gezegde&source=bl&ots=Gr9v5Dzdr5&sig=LoUCrdKjxzBavAh7bOrQ0kvjEE&hl=nl&sa=X&ei=RQHvUsyfL6L30gWX-YDgCw&ved=0CCwQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=maasai%20gezegde&f=false> (28-01-2014)

proverb reveals that space for a book, or other new elements, is lacking.² This proverb could be explained by assuming that the Maasai have their own culture, with their own traditions, norms and values. For this reason, there is no need to introduce new elements, as new rituals or kind of thoughts. If *Enkai* /rain continues to fall down with regularity, cattle and humans will live. Thereupon, the world is good like it is now and nothing more is required. However, the proverb is based on a male perspective, since a spear and a stick do not belong to women. In fact, the elders symbolize the identity of the community but women are also vital in forming the unity between the complements. Both genders are crucial to create life. Therefore, the question should additionally be directed towards the other gender: are women able to hold a book? It seems that women made attempts to hold a specific book in their hands, namely the Bible. To hold a Bible in their hands could be assumed as having an access ticket to the church, the institution which has been influencing the environments and the lives of the Maasai. Maasai men and women negotiated their attitude towards, and their relationship with the church. The process of dealing with the church has been a continuous process, which nevertheless did not gain much attention and interest in previous sources, while there is a fairly large body of research related to the Maasai. The historian D.L. Hodgson, *The church of women. Gendered encounters between Maasai and missionaries* (2005) makes the interesting point that the church among the Maasai seems to belong to women. She described how missionaries created a female domain as a consequence of their evangelization strategies. Men chose to be excluded, stresses V.J. Donovan, a priest who worked among the Maasai in Tanzania. In his pastoral book *Christianity Rediscovered. Twentieth-fifth anniversary edition* (2003) he offers a good account on his strategy of approaching and visiting the Maasai homesteads instead of sending boys to school. During his work, he noticed that women were the majority of the converts. However, neither V.J. Donovan nor D.L. Hodgson consider the direct, existing relationship of the Maasai in connection with the church. Most sources do not focus on the personal feelings and motives of Maasai men and women to link with the church and how this connection was manipulated for their own benefits. Therefore, this Master thesis examines the direct role and influence of the church and the associated reactions of the Maasai. The younger generation of Maasai will be taken into account, although to a lesser extent. By going to school they got familiar with Christianity, but once acquired their diploma they tend to ignore churches.

² van der Lee & Groenendijk, *Geheimen van de Maasai*, <http://books.google.nl/books?id=eWd1AAAAQBAJ&pg=PT34&lpg=PT34&dq=maasai+gezegde&source=bl&ots=Gr9v5Dzdr5&sig=LoUCrdKjxjzBavAh7bOrQ0kvjEE&hl=nl&sa=X&ei=RQHvUsyfl6L30gWX-YDgCw&ved=0CCwQ6AEwAA#v=onepage&q=maasai%20gezegde&f=false> (28-01-2014)

Here again we find a difference in attitude between young men and young women.

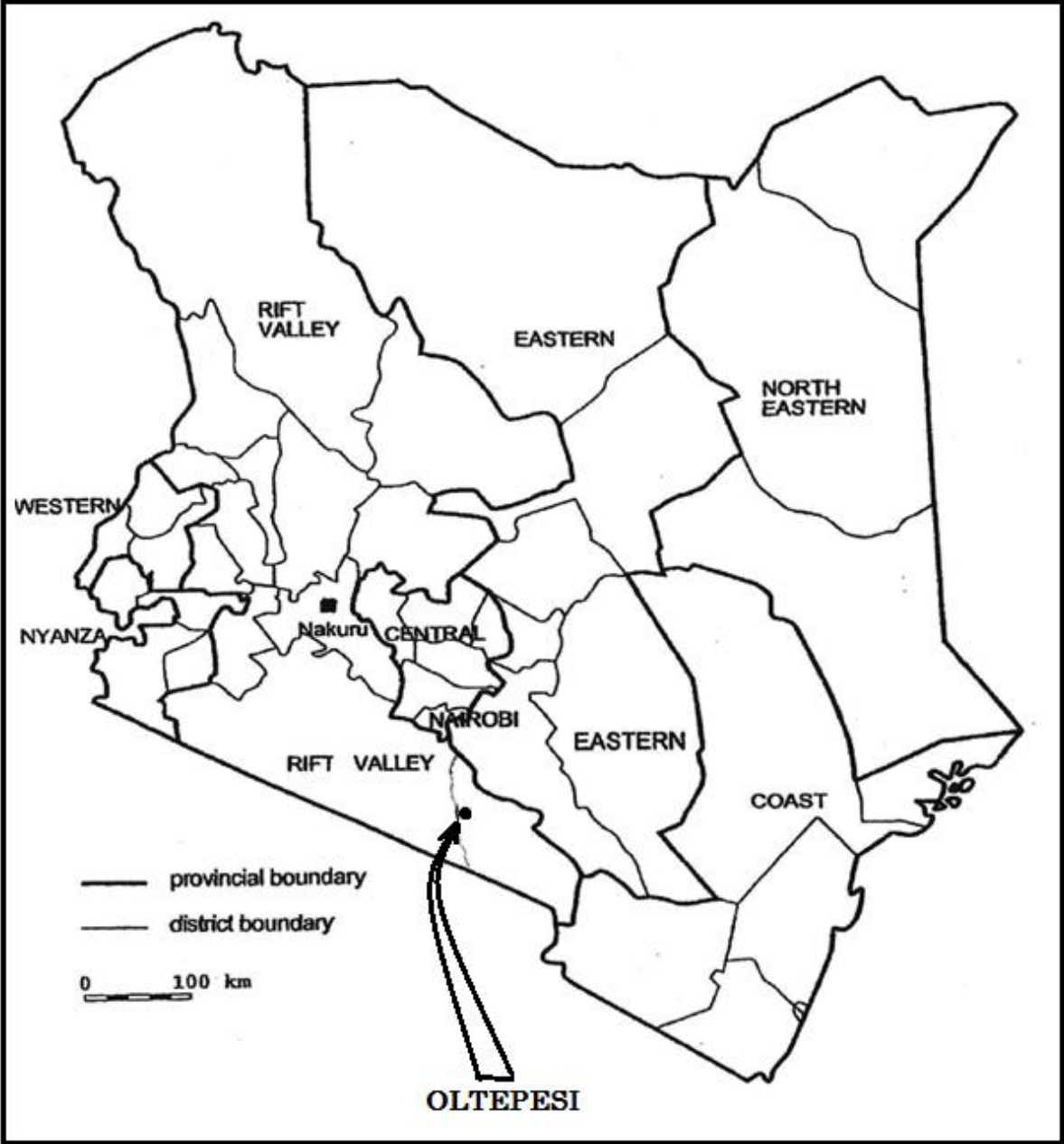
Moreover, Maasai have strong feelings of cultural conservatism. However, this differs depending on gender. Indeed, Maasai men in general are strong conservatives. Women, in contrast to men, are more prepared to accept influences deriving from the outside world. They use these influences to achieve changes. Women could relate to the church with the indirect intention of questioning the community and to ascertain the boundaries of the society by recognizing which developments and changes are admitted and which ones are too radical. It was interesting to investigate and to understand whether women actually support radical changes, or whether such changes are blocked due to pressure exercised by the community and by themselves. Indeed, it could be that women, together with men, do want changes within certain limits and are not interested in acquiring equal rights. Therefore, attention was paid at how Maasai consider themselves as Maasai, how they describe their identity and what it means for them to be a Maasai.

To sum up, the church redefines the gender division since men and women establish different relationships with the church. Contemporaneously men and women also work together to keep their community and culture alive. In that way they are both conservatives. However, women are slightly different, because they are prepared to question certain issues in their lives which could improve their life situation. Two elements are central in this Master thesis, namely the strong feelings of cultural conservatism on one side and the attractiveness of the church on the other side.

From the above overview, it is clear that many questions have to be answered. This Master thesis is constructed out of the following chapters. The first chapter deals with the **Geographical background: Oltepesi** and the second chapter is dedicated to the **Research methods**. The third chapter is titled: **Maasai traditional beliefs**. A description is given to understand the worldview of this pastoral group. Additionally, attention will be paid to the role of *Enkai* in Maasai life and how this divinity relates to human beings and to women in particular. The fourth chapter, **Evangelization of the Maasai**, delivers a concise and essential summary regarding the evangelization of the Oltepesi area. The fifth chapter is **Cultural exchange according to syncretism and inculturation. Theoretical approaches and Maasai's negotiations**. This chapter considers various theoretical approaches and discussions around inculturation and syncretism and how the Maasai reacted on evangelization. The two concepts of inculturation and syncretism share the same characteristics but are contemporaneously extremely different from each other. The sixth chapter **Oltepesi: the meeting point of missionaries and Maasai** is exploring which strategies were used in the field by missionaries, and how Oltepesi as an area influenced Maasai thoughts. It is essential to explore the area of Oltepesi, as my findings are relevant solely for the Maasai living in this location. The seventh chapter has been titled: **Men and women and their own distinct agendas**. This chapter will pay attention to

the Maasai, but now separated in two groups. On one side the group of men who are not willing to listen to the Christian teachings and rather invest time in protecting Maasai culture and its traditions. On the other hand, women developed new kind of hopes when the church opened its doors in Oltepesi. Additionally this chapter will shed light on various developments which took place in the area. Indeed, my own observations will be used, by describing the role of the church concerning the spheres of education, medical sustenance and job creation. In chapter eighth the Maasai will be evaluated on an individual basis instead of examining the Maasai in two groups. Therefore, this chapter, **Maasainess versus modernity**, is dedicated to establish a clear image regarding the Maasai in Oltepesi and their personal connections to the church. It also discusses the problematic opposition tradition/modernity. The inhabitants of this area could be divided in categories, with each category having its own or shared concerns regarding the changes in Maasai society. Finally, this Master thesis will be closed with a summary and conclusion.

Map 1 Kenya and location of Oltepesi





Geographical background: Oltepesi

This chapter focuses on the Maasai in Oltepesi, Kenya. The word Oltepesi derives from the Maasai language, called Maa, and is the name given to the tree *Senegalia Abyssinica*, referring to the umbrella thorn tree. This tree grows vividly in Maasai environments. However, central in this Master thesis is the area in Kenya which is called Oltepesi. This area is reachable by taking the coach from Kajiado, which departs once a day, and travelling for approximately four hours, 70km³, southwards. The coach operates between Kajiado and Sultan Hamud. Therefore, people arriving from the Mombasa road could board the coach when it drives in the other direction, namely from Sultan Hamud to Kajiado. It will probably still take a couple of years before this sandy, almost impassible road will be covered with tarmac. Oltepesi, I call it an area and not a village, because the Maasai houses are scattered among the environment. From here the people travel an hour by foot to reach the nearest cattle market, found in Mashuuru, a village with some shops and a market every Wednesday. The savannah environment, with the *Senegalia Abyssinica*, thorns, bushes, red earth, dust and hills at the background is the suitable habitat for giraffes, gazelles, zebras and hyenas. The dust will change in mud during the rainy seasons of April, May, October and November.

The Maasai tend to depend mainly on their cattle. Only a few pieces of land are dedicated for the production of tomatoes and maize. Some Maasai tend to grow vegetables near their houses, with little success, due to the dry and not fertile land.

In the bordering villages, as Imaroro and Matapato, most people are acquainted with Oltepesi, due to the presence of The Oltepesi Cultural Institute. The Oltepesi Cultural Institute is a project initiated by Father Mol in 2005. Father Mol is a Catholic Priest from the Netherlands. He was sent to Kenya for missionary work, instructed by the Mill Hill Missionaries. Therefore, the centre does officially belong to the Mill Hill Missionaries and is furthermore part of the Diocese of Ngong. There is also a Catholic Church in Oltepesi, build by the Guadalupe Missionaries who have their parish in Mashuuru. Nowadays, Father Barabara is the priest in charge of the institute.

Father Mol erected the institute with the intention of creating a suitable place to study the Maasai culture and language. He chose Oltepesi, because it borders the lands of four Maasai clans: the Ilkaputiei, Ilmatapato, Ildala le Kutuk and Iloitokitoki. However, Oltepesi is mainly inhabited by Maasai belonging to the Ilkaputiei. The Oltepesi Cultural Institute was of importance as this Master

³ <http://www.elimu2.info/mashuurusec/content.php?pid=24>, (05-01-2014)

thesis contains the results of a survey carried out in June and July 2013 in the Oltepesi area. I chose this area, as I visited the region previously in 2010. Therefore, I was familiar with the area and I already got acquainted with some Maasai families. Further, this place was suitable for my research due to the strong differences among the Maasai of this area. In Oltepesi, Maasai dressed in the traditional clothes live together with Maasai wearing pants or skirts. Furthermore, some families earn their living by being active in the labor market while other families prefer to maintain themselves by herding their cattle. In addition, the Maasai in Oltepesi are more interested in the wider world. Indeed, when crossing the dried-up river one could notice the difference in mindset of the community of Oltepesi in contrast to, as for example, the Maasai in Matapato; since the latter is holding on more fiercely to the Maasai traditions. Moreover, in Oltepesi many transitions were taking place as a result of the presence of the church and its missionaries, who worked in their outstations and constantly tried to attract new priests and researchers. Oltepesi has always been a meeting point for people of different nationalities and interests; for this reason Oltepesi was the most suitable place to start carrying out my first research.

It is important to stress that the survey in this paper is based solely on the Maasai of Oltepesi. The conclusions and findings are not necessarily relevant for Maasai living in other parts of the country. Every Maasai clan has its own characteristics and do react differently to changes and progress. Furthermore, differences between the Maasai originated also precisely because of the actions of missionaries. Missionaries used various strategies and methods to evangelize the Maasai.⁴ The Catholic Maasai in Lemek are different from the Catholic Maasai in Kajiado. Finally, the Catholic Church in Oltepesi is represented by The Oltepesi Cultural Institute. Therefore, when speaking about the institute, I indirectly refer to the Catholic Church as well.

⁴ P. Kollman, 'Classifying African Christianities, part two: the anthropology of Christianity and generation of African Christians', in: *Journal of religion in Africa*, vol. 40, (2010), p. 136.



Research methods

My survey was carried out in June and July 2013 in Oltepesi, Kenya, based on a qualitative research method. A.E. Fortune, W.J. Reid and R.L. Miller Jr., the editors of the book *Qualitative research in social work* mention that the aim of qualitative research is to view the world and to understand the research topic from the perspective of a group.⁵ It concerns the human experience. As it exposes the emotions, the opinions and the beliefs of individuals, qualitative research is adequate to study various factors like gender roles, ethnicity or religion.⁶ Therefore, the research method of qualitative research is based on asking questions which discuss the topic of interest on an extensive and detailed basis. Afterwards, the topic of survey will be discussed by using the words of the respondents. It will not be illustrated by statistics. If a certain research belongs to the sector of social work, qualitative research will expose the personal feelings of its respondents, for example it uncovers what kind of help they attained and how they personally felt about it. Furthermore, qualitative research deals with the interpretation of the researcher. In other words, the researcher will interpret the words of the respondents in order to draw conclusions.⁷ Indeed, this research concerning the Maasai and their personal connection to the church is partly based on my personal interpretations. S.B. Merriam (2009, p. 8-9) states that qualitative research is based on an interpretative research. By trying to understand the world, individuals create their own meanings and realities. Therefore there is not one single reality. The research tries to uncover this complex system of realities which are socially constructed. S.B. Merriam (2009, p. 8-9): "Researchers do not 'find' knowledge, they construct it".

In order to obtain a general view of the Christian sphere in Oltepesi, data was collected through open ended, semi-structured questions (see appendix). In some cases the families were approached at their homes for holding the interview. In other circumstances, the interviewees were approached in a more spontaneous fashion; simply having a conversation without any expectations or feelings of pressure by the respondents.

⁵ A.E. Fortune, W.J. Reid, R.L. Miller Jr. (eds.), *Qualitative research on social work*, (West Sussex, Colombia University Press, 2013), p. xi.

⁶ N. Mack, C. Woodson, K.M. MacQueen, G. Guest, E. Namey, *Qualitative research methods: a data collector's field guide*, (USA, Family Health International, 2005), p. 1.

⁷ Fortune, Reid, Miller Jr. (eds.), *Qualitative research on social work*, p. xi.

The questions were not fixed in a pre-determined order. The advantage of this kind of research method is the creation of flexibility. The respondents are able to answer the questions in their own words.⁸ The questions were formulated depending on how the conversation developed. During the interviews I did not use a voice recorder. The respondents reacted defensively by seeing the voice recorder as they did not understand the necessity and the real intention of it. Therefore, I simply made notes during the conversation. I always carried a notebook with me, alongside two pages with the questions I did not want to forget during the interviews. In the evening I wrote down the interviews more elaborately, adding the parts I had not annotated. The questions posed orally were focused on attaining information about: the influence of the church, the role of the church in the environment, the relationship between the Protestant and the Catholic Church, the personal relationship of the respondents with the Christian religion, the difficulties in attending church services and the difficulties in being a Christian. Using open questions was more suitable since women did not mind being involved in a conversation and answering questions regarding their own life and ideas. However, when I approached them to ask for their collaboration I felt a lot of distrust. It seemed that they preferred not to intermingle in my questions and research and most women kept stressing their lack of time due to the demanding work of the household duties. When having an interview, the distrust of the respondents gradually flowed off.

Problematic is that not every concept is measurable, according to H.R. Bernard. Feelings such as compassion, hatred or jealousy are not easily measured. Therefore, a researcher could be involved in the use of two indicators, namely asking questions or pay attention to observable facts.⁹ During my research period I used both indicators contemporaneously. I posed questions to the respondents and I observed them carefully. Indeed, besides only asking questions I joined the Maasai in their daily activities. I attended all the church services and ceremonies in the areas of Oltepesi and Mashuuru. Together with the catechists and four upcoming priests I visited regularly outstations, where we, together with a few Maasai, prayed and interpreted the Bible. Actually, the method of collecting data by posing questions and by observing the respondents fits appropriately in the approach of ethnography, namely to study a culture.¹⁰

The respondents to the questionnaire were mostly women. Only a few men were prepared to cooperate, precisely because they had strong connections with the Catholic or Protestant church,

⁸ Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, Namey, *Qualitative research methods: a data collector's field guide*, p. 3.

⁹ H.R. Bernard, *Research methods in anthropology: qualitative and quantitative approaches*, (United Kingdom, AltaMira Press, 2011), p.29.

¹⁰ Fortune, Reid, Miller Jr. (eds.), *Qualitative research on social work*, p. xiii.

as being a pastor or priest, as a catechist or working in association with The Oltepesi Cultural Institute. Concerning the women, they did not all have a special relation to the church or the institute. From this group the majority was Catholic and the rest joined the Protestant Church. Except for one catechist, every respondent had children and was married. The age of the respondents varied between approximately 24 and 60 years old. No formal interviews took place with the youth; however during informal conversations they provided information worth of noting. Since Oltepesi is a Maasai area, the respondents were all Maasai, except for one woman who worked at The Oltepesi Cultural Institute and belonged to the Kalenjin tribe. I was not able to attain the collaboration of Maasai men who did not join the church. I had the feeling that they were not interested in collaborating and supporting me in my research. Indeed, they tried to avoid me and not meet at our appointments. Actually, I experienced some of these difficulties with women as well. We made appointments but regularly they were not home at the appointed time. During my research I made use of the method of snowball sampling.¹¹ Some Maasai with whom I already made contact supported me in finding other informants. They used their own networks to send me to other Maasai whom I could interview.

Additionally, my lack of knowledge of the Maa language, despite of a previous course, was most problematic, making it complicated to approach both men and women. During my first visit at Oltepesi in 2010 I followed the Maa course. This three month course however was not sufficient; hence my Maa knowledge did not enable me to have serious and in-depth conversations with the Maasai. Even my knowledge of Swahili was not sufficient. The Maasai, mainly the older generation, who never attended school, were not able to speak English. Hence, we could not communicate with each other or having an interview. Chris Parsitau and Alex Kombe supported me several times by translating during some interviews. Alex Kombe was the catechist of Oltepesi and Chris Parsitau was a young man who worked for H. Stoks and P-ole Murero as a driller, at the time when I was following the Maa course. Furthermore, the Maasai are not easily approachable because they prefer keeping distance from the unknown, in this case me. At the same time many were delighted about my presence. They always welcomed me in their houses and offered tea and food. However, I felt that they preferred not intermingling in my affairs and therefore were not sincerely willing to support me in doing an interview. For the people who actually were prepared to answer my questions, I used to visit them at their homes, in order to let them feel at ease.

¹¹ Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, Namey, *Qualitative research methods: a data collector's field guide*, p. 5-6.



Maasai traditional beliefs

In the introduction I indicate that the Maasai live “between heaven and earth”. Both heaven and earth have been created by the divinity called *Enkai*, who subsequently made a pact with the human beings. This chapter will focus on this divinity and on its presence in Maasai lives. It would be interesting to see and to grasp why Maasai consider it essential to array their lives in accordance with the attendance of *Enkai*.

ENKAI

Mama Saitoti, a mother who lived ten minutes walk from the cultural institute, mentioned, without any doubt, that non-believers do not exist. She enlightened the matter by stating that every person realizes the existence of something powerful, responsible for the creation of the world around us. In the old days, even before the disembarkation of missionaries, the Maasai were accustomed to worship the divinity *Enkai*, also written as *Engai* or *Ngai*. The devotion of *Enkai* was shared with the Kikuyu. It is not possible to trace which group borrowed the concept of *Ngai* from the other. Concepts and ideas have always flowed easily across ethnic boundaries.¹² It may be that the Maasai, the Kikuyu and the Kamba accustomed the notion of *Enkai* from the Cushitic indigenous group the Dorrobo.¹³ Additionally, the Maasai would never claim their beliefs to be the ultimate truth. They would argue that the truth is not known to them, *Enkai* alone knows the truth.

The Maasai tend to address *Enkai* with anthropomorphic terms. However, theologically God is not recognized as having eyes and ears like human beings.¹⁴ D.L. Hodgson (2005, p. 23) states that *Enkai* should be considered as a divinity and not a God or a likeness of God.¹⁵ *Enkai* is a unity as well,

¹² J. Karanja, *The missionary movement in colonial Kenya: the foundation of Africa Inland Church*, (Göttingen, Cuvillier Verlag, 2009), p. 83.
<http://books.google.nl/books?id=F1ezIgyomGIC&pg=PA83&dq=enkai+masai&hl=nl&sa=X&ei=06PKUp7DEYeZ0QW5n4BI&ved=0CD4Q6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=enkai%20masai&f=false>

¹³ H. Stoks, *Hemelen dauwt: 'God' in de Oostafrikaanse savanne*, p. 86. <http://www.stoks.nl/hans/enkai.pdf>.

¹⁴ T. Olsson, 'Verbal representations of religious belief: a dilemma in the phenomenology of religions', in: E. Reenberg Sand and J. Podemann (eds.), *Comparative studies in history of religions: their aim, scope, and validity*, Denmark, Special Trykkeriet Viborg a-s, 1999, p. 78.

¹⁵ D.L. Hodgson, *The church of women. Gendered Encounters between Maasai and missionaries*, (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 23.

containing the two genders male and female.¹⁶ However, D.L. Hodgson (2005, p.22) revealed that *Enkai* is mostly addressed with the female gender. By way of explanation, the word *Enkai* is composed by the female prefix *en-*. Furthermore, *Enkai* is strongly connected to the concept of fertility, as it grants life on earth. When coping with *Enkai*, the Maasai point towards the sky, to the earth and other natural elements. *Enkai* is considered as the rain and in fact the meaning of the term '*Enkai*' is therefore 'rain'.¹⁷ Sky and earth are *Enkai* at the same time, *Enkai Nabo*, God is One. *Enkai* is namely everywhere; she resides in the sky, but she is also present and felt among the human beings on earth. Hence, *Enkai* is far and near simultaneously.¹⁸ The deeds of *Enkai*, which are in accordance with her sentiments, are recognized in the manifestations of nature. Rain is considered as her blessing, whereas her displeasure will be recognized in the absence of rain. When displeasure will turn into anger the sky will be shaken by thunder and lightning. Dependent on her actions, *Enkai* was called *Enkai Narok* (Black God) when being benevolent and helpful, or *Enkai Nanyukie* (Red God) when being angry and vengeful.¹⁹ H. Stoks elaborates on Hodgson's descriptions. He explains that the appellations of *Enkai*, like *Enkai Narok*, are deduced from the colors of the sky. Literally translated, *Enkai Narok* is 'Black God'. In the Maa language, *narok* represents both the color blue and black. Therefore, *Enkai Narok* refers to the color of heaven. A blue sky is a bright sky and a sky filled with clouds when rain is coming. *Enkai Nanyukie* is a red sky, warning the people to return home with their cattle, since upcoming storms and rain will create dangerous rivers.²⁰ The actions of *Enkai* could never be predicted.²¹

Additionally, H. Stoks reports about the existence of opposites, namely earth and heaven, with the Maasai living in between. Above their heads they see the sky/*Enkai*, and under their feet they feel the earth, *Enkop*. Heaven and earth are the only reality in Maasai life. Heaven provides the earth with rain, and this water is the main source of living, as it is responsible for the flourishing of grass, trees, flowers, cattle and other life. Contemporaneously, the earth is the land of the human

¹⁶ Hodgson, *The church of women*, p. 36.

¹⁷ K. Arhem, 'Why trees are medicine', in: A. Jacobson-Widding and D. Westerlund (eds.), *Culture, Experience and Pluralism. Essays on African ideas of illness and healing*, (Stockholm, Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1989), p. 75.

T. Olsson, 'Philosophy of medicine among the Maasai', in: A. Jacobson-Widding and D. Westerlund (eds.), *Culture, Experience and Pluralism. Essays on African ideas of illness and healing*, (Stockholm, Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1989), p. 239.

¹⁸ Karanja, *The missionary movement in colonial Kenya*, p. 83.

¹⁹ Hodgson, *The church of women*, p. 31.

²⁰ Stoks, *Hemelen dauwt*, p. 88.

²¹ Arhem, 'Why trees are medicine', p. 80.

beings, and therefore the Maasai are responsible in creating and nurturing peace and harmony. Moreover, the reality is a unity of complementarities: up and down, heaven and earth, man and woman, old and young, wet and dry.²² It is not about the equality between the elements but about the complementarity. As was said before, *Enkai* is a unity containing the two genders male and female.²³ Even if *Enkai* grants life on earth she is not capable of nurturing and protecting life on earth on its own. For this reason she made a pact with the Maasai. Rain and fertility came in exchange for the honoring of *Enkai*, in a reciprocal relationship. With the relationship between God, the giver, and the Maasai as the receivers, the latter attained the responsibility to protect life and everything which was created by *Enkai*, thereby attaining redemption from calamities in the present day.²⁴ Hence, the perception of salvation is a pragmatic idea. S. ole Saibull and R. Carr (1981, p. 16) mention that the Maasai describe themselves as being the chosen people of *Enkai*. Because of this unique relationship *Enkai* blessed them by offering cattle. This explains why Maasai are cattle owners.²⁵ This thought granted the Maasai the right to be active in cattle raids, in order to entitle all the cattle of the world, and spreading terror amongst neighboring groups. Besides, protection from *Enkai* flows together with the presence of the cattle. During daytime there is protection outside the village, since cattle will be released to graze. During the night protection of the Maasai will shift to the village, when the cattle will rest in the *kraal*, the village.²⁶ According to S. ole Saibull and R. Carr (1981, p. 20), the belief of being the chosen people could have been a reason why early Christian missionaries were not successful in converting the Maasai. Maasai were not interested in the God of the white people, since they already had a valuable relationship with *Enkai*.

To repeat, Maasai need to work together to protect the creations of *Enkai* and to protect themselves as a community. P. Spencer (1988, p. 39, 200) adds that every source of life has to be protected. This thought includes the expectancy that women have to be protected at all costs, since they bring forth life and hereby the future of the community. Women's characteristic of being fertile established a special relationship with *Enkai*. Even to kill a lioness with cups will be doomed as a crime. Earlier I mentioned that *Enkai* is able to show her pleasure or displeasure by ceasing or making it rain. Indeed, she could bless or even curse the human beings, a strongly feared characteristic

²² Arhem, 'Why trees are medicine', p. 88.

²³ Hodgson, *The church of women*, p. 36.

²⁴ F. Wijsen, 'Popular Christianity in East Africa: inculturation or syncretism', in: *Exchange*, vol. 29, n. 1, (2002), p. 50.

²⁵ Olsson, 'Verbal representation of religious beliefs: a dilemma in the phenomenology of religions', p. 84

²⁶ P. Spencer, *The Maasai of Matapato. A study of rituals of rebellion*, (London, Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 15.

among the Maasai. A curse will arise when wrong has been done,²⁷ therefore, sacrifices need to be offered to God.²⁸

Maasai hold on to certain moral standards such as social hospitality and communal use of the resources like water and grazing land.²⁹ The creation of the divinity has to be shared with all the human beings. H. Stoks stressed that in Maasai ideology individual competition is strongly rejected. Every Maasai is required to share their belongings and wealth with his family and friends. This idea fits properly in the concept of cooperation. Cooperation is essential and in consequence co-wives, families and friends do support each other in managing the daily tasks. When working together there are extra hands, resulting in better production, greater wealth, stronger defense against enemies and higher chances to expand the community in the future.³⁰ In this cooperating community the identity of an individual is insignificant. Adversely, the identity of the group is meaningful.³¹ The information of P. Spencer (1988, p. 15) varies from the ideas of H. Stoks. He notes that ideologically Maasai need to live and to be self-sufficient independently. However, this is usually not the case. Maasai create local networks of interaction which are essential in supporting and working together and for exchanging information. Maasai of the same area or village will share their meat amongst each other and they will collaborate in protecting the village and their cattle.³²

SPEAKING TO ENKAI

In the first part of this chapter it was claimed that *Enkai* was considered as the one who could reward or punish human beings. For this reason, Maasai are constrained to worship this divinity and to plead for her mercy. In awe of the very few extensive descriptions of “traditional” Maasai religion, H. Stoks stresses that praying meant ‘to speak to *Enkai*’ and not ‘to talk with *Enkai*’ because *Enkai* is not

²⁷ Spencer, *The Maasai of Matapato*, p. 218.

²⁸ Olsson, ‘Philosophy of medicine among the Maasai’, p. 236-237.

²⁹ H. Spaling, ‘Enabling creation’s praise: lessons in agricultural stewardship from Africa’, in: D.J. Evans, R.J. Vos and K.P. Wright (eds.), *Biblical holism and agriculture. Cultivating our roots*, (California, William Carey Library, 2003), p. 108.

³⁰ D.A. Mungazi, *Gathering under the mango tree. Values in traditional culture in Africa*, (New York, Peter Lang Publishing, 1996), p. 31.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 51.

³² T.T. Spear, R.D. Waller, *Being Maasai: ethnicity and identity in East Africa*, (James Currey Publisher, 1993) p. 298.

recognized as a human being or a divinity with human characteristics.³³ It was favored to pray in the vicinity of or under a tree, because God hears through trees. A tree symbolizes 'long life', an aspect desired by men and an aspect belonging to *Enkai*.³⁴ It was a common thing to see men and women 'speaking to *Enkai*' in times of danger, periods of drought or famine. During these collective prayers gender segregation was still maintained with men standing at the right and women at the left. Moreover, as regards to worshipping *Enkai*, there was a difference between the two genders. Women used to pray daily in contrast to men who prayed less frequently. Indeed, both men and women considered women as the ones being responsible for the daily meditations with *Enkai*. Women namely hold more influence in nurturing and expanding life in their homesteads. It was therefore not surprising that women established relations with Christianity. This point will be explained more elaborately in chapter 7. The responsibility in worshipping *Enkai* also entailed being central agents in rituals of creation and transformation.³⁵ By facing the north or the rising/setting sun, women expressed their gratitude towards *Enkai* who protects their children and cattle and who expands the prosperity of families and their herds. To pray together was not always sufficient with for example upcoming wars or persistent drought. At these times, Maasai approached the religious leader called the *Iloibonok*, who had supernatural powers and prophetic gifts. He could close the gap between humans and *Enkai* by reading the mind of the divinity.³⁶ By representing God on earth the *Iloibonok* had destructive and creative powers.³⁷ Besides honoring the *Iloibonok*, Maasai do not have a detailed belief in ancestral spirits, confirms D.L. Hodgson (2005, p. 26). However, the ideas of A. Hurskainen (1989, p. 139-140) are more reliable. Partly he agrees with D.L. Hodgson by stating that Maasai are strictly monotheistic. However, in some places like the Kijungu area, Terat, Loiborsoit, Naperera and Simanjiro, Maasai became interested in ancestral veneration and spirit possession, because they made contact with other tribes, as the agriculturalists, during the rinderpest epidemics in 1894.³⁸ K. Arhem (1989, p.80) recounts that Maasai do not hold on the concept of afterlife. When a person dies, his soul will die as well. Humans are part of nature and when dying the body will

³³ Stoks, *Hemelen dauwt*, p. 85.

³⁴ Olsson, 'Philosophy of medicine among the Maasai', p. 241-242.

³⁵ Hodgson, *The church of women*, p. 36-40.

³⁶ <http://www.bluegecko.org/kenya/tribes/maasai/beliefs.htm> (05-01-2014)

³⁷ Arhem, 'Why trees are medicine', p. 81.

³⁸ A. Hurskainen, 'The epidemiological aspect of spirit possession among the Maasai of Tanzania', A. Jacobson-Widding and D. Westerlund (eds.), *Culture, Experience and Pluralism. Essays on African ideas of illness and healing*, (Stockholm, Almqvist and Wiksell International, 1989), p. 139-140.

dissolve with nature again, in order to create new life. For this reason, a body will not be buried but laid outside to be eaten by wild animals, so as to dissolve with nature again.³⁹

This last aspect, of a body returning to nature, illustrates that Maasai are not concerned with being rewarded in the afterlife, like Christian people usually do. *Enkai* is necessary in offering them salvation from calamities in the present day. In other words, all the aspects with reference to the veneration of *Enkai* are meant to offer protection. Indeed, D.A. Mungazi (1996, p. 65) announces that the aspects of honoring *Enkai* do further contain issues of respect, cooperation, trust and peace. To illustrate, it is crucial to show respect to elders. The elders have been dwelling on earth for a long period, longer than the younger generations. This provided them abundant knowledge about life and the world. Furthermore they have a close relationship with the ancestors, meaning that approaching the elders with disrespect is indirectly abusing *Enkai*.⁴⁰ The term cooperation refers to a point discussed before, namely the idea of working together with *Enkai* to protect and nurture life on earth. Maasai should be confident in *Enkai* and being convinced that their divinity will offer them salvation. These aspects altogether, to have respect, to cooperate and to be trustful will deliver meaning and purpose in life and will result in a state of peace. That is, people and *Enkai* will live in harmony as a whole. This clarifies why Maasai find it essential to systemize their lives in accordance with the presence of *Enkai*. It is namely necessary to satisfy *Enkai*, who loves the good people and would punish the evil ones.⁴¹ Indeed, the issues of cooperation and respect are also part of the morality of the Maasai. Good moral behavior is needed to maintain the wellbeing in the society and between its members. Morality exercises influence on religion and religion in turn influences the totality of life. Any action out of line with any sphere would upset the balance of the universe. Selfish ideas, as personal property, are rejected. Religion is about the protection of life. Morality will pleasure *Enkai*, who at his turn will express his gratitude by protecting families and their herds.

³⁹ Arhem, 'Why trees are medicine', p. 80.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 51.

⁴¹ V.J. Donovan, *Christianity Rediscovered. Twenty-fifth anniversary edition*, (New York, Maryknol, Orbis Books, 2003), p. 33.



Evangelization of the Maasai

Literature about the history of missionary work in Kenya is abundant, reflecting the number of different Christian denominations at work in the country. Nevertheless, there was relatively little evangelization among the Maasai. This chapter is mostly based on the knowledge of H. Stoks and P-ole Murero, who guided me at The Oltepesi Cultural Institute. H. Stoks is a Dutch theologian, who has been living with the Maasai over 40 years. He travels from place to place in Kenya and Tanzania, studying the language and culture of the Maasai. P-ole Murero is a teacher in Maa language working at The Oltepesi Cultural Institute. He is partly responsible in running the institute.

Christianity touched Kenya already before the colonists came ashore. As a matter of fact, Christianity spread to North Africa in the middle of the 1st century. One of the first churches was established in Egypt, namely the Orthodox Church of Alexandria. It expanded successfully by reaching the Nubia Kingdom in Sudan and various areas in Ethiopia. However, Christian life diminished drastically with the conquest of North Africa by the Arabs. However, Christianity did not fade out completely.⁴² According to N.W. Sobania (2003, p. 46) the first real concrete contacts in Kenya with Christianity were laid by Portuguese sailors and traders in the fifteenth century. Apparently there is a variety of stories trying to describe the events of these early years, in the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Z. Nthamburi mentions again other protagonists, such as the Portuguese Captain of Kilwa who converted 40 people in 1506.⁴³ N.W. Sobania (2003, p. 46) is convinced that Johann Ludwig Krapf was actually the first missionary man to approach the locals at the East African Coast, out of religious interest instead of trading intentions. He became active in Kenya in 1846 and represented the British Church Missionary Society. Although he made contacts with the Swahili speaking Mijikenda people, he was not successful in converting them. The Mijikenda were not interested in his Christian story. This lack of interest was also felt amongst the missionaries belonging to the United Methodist Free Church in 1862. Both mission stations eventually decided to make a change of target group. Instead of concentrating on the local population it was more rewarding to aim at fugitives and slaves, who were individuals with weak, unstable positions in their communities and therefore

⁴² <http://exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/students/curriculum/m14/activity4.php> (17-09-2014)

⁴³ Z. Nthamburi, *The beginning and development of Christianity in Kenya: a survey*, <http://sthweb.bu.edu/history/beginning%20and%20development%20of%20christianity%20in%20kenya.html> (15-07-2014).

sensitive for outside influences. This shift of target group resulted in the first Christian converts around 1888. Slaves and fugitives approached the missionaries and became dependent on mission stations, a place where they found psychological and physical support.⁴⁴ Contemporaneously, the local population remained indifferent, since slaves and fugitives were considered as outcasts. Therefore, it was disappointing for missionaries, when these Christian converts were not capable of converting the local populations.⁴⁵ It was only in the twentieth century when mission stations, like the American Holy Ghost, the British Mill Hill Fathers, the American Baptists, the British Anglican and the Scottish Presbyterians started to explore and move to the inner parts of the country.⁴⁶ This tendency arose at around 1890 with the termination of the Kenya-Uganda Railway.⁴⁷ This was followed by the formal declaration of Kenya as a British protectorate in 1895.⁴⁸ In this period, missionaries were most successful in converting the Kikuyu. In 1898 several mission stations like the East African Scottish Industrial Mission aided the Kikuyu during the famine period.⁴⁹

H. Stoks informed me about the story of evangelization in Kenya in connection with the Maasai. The British colonizers deliberately ignored the Maasai. With the second migration, taking place until 1913,⁵⁰ the Maasai were moved into a district under the railway, expanding from Mombasa to Lake Victoria. The Maasai reserve was a closed district, to which even the church was not admitted. However, it would be wrong to deny the few contacts which took place between Maasai and missionaries notwithstanding that this kind of communication was prohibited by the British colonizers. R. Waller mentions that the first person working among the Maasai was A.W. McGregor, belonging to the Church Missionary Society settled in a Kikuyu area around Mount Kenya.⁵¹ He made contact with the Maasai *laibon* Olonana in 1909 when working with the Kikuyu. Although there was interest in the Maasai, as they were seen to be the descendants of Ham, one of

⁴⁴ N.W. Sobania, *Culture and Customs of Kenya*, (Westpoort, Greenwood, 2003), p. 46.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 47.

⁴⁶ Ibidem, p. 47.

⁴⁷ P. Muraya, *Missionary work in Kenya and African response: implications for pastoral care with young adults*, p. 4, [http://www.saintleo.edu/media/131007/muraya - missionary work in kenya.pdf](http://www.saintleo.edu/media/131007/muraya_-_missionary_work_in_kenya.pdf), (15-07-2014).

⁴⁸ Morad, *The beginnings of Christianity in Kenya*, p. 255.

⁴⁹ Sobania, *Culture and customs of Kenya*, p. 48

⁵⁰ L. Hughes, *Moving the Maasai. A colonial misadventure*. (Oxford, Palgrave Macmillan, St Anthony's series, 2006) p. 5.

⁵¹ R. Waller, 'They do the dictating & we must submit. The Africa Inland Mission in Maasailand', In: T.T. Spear, I.N. Kimambo (eds.), *East African expressions of Christianity*, (Oxford, Jamer Currey Ltd, 1999), p. 86.

the three sons of Noa, missionary intervention among the Maasai was very limited, proclaims H. Stoks. R. Waller adds that missionary intervention in Maasai life was almost nonexistent, on the grounds that missionaries considered this tribe as dangerous and unreachable, due to transport difficulties and the insurmountable differences between Maasai culture and Christianity.⁵² When missionaries were eventually allowed to enter the reserve, the British colonizers gave only permission to Protestant missionaries to work there. Catholic Italian Fathers set foot in Kenya in 1902.⁵³ Catholic missionaries were dismissed, as the British suspected them of taking the side of the Italians. Various Protestant missionary societies like the Church of Scotland, the Church of England, and the American Inland Mission rushed up into the reserve to spread their Gospel. Missionaries interpreted their own presence in the field as being of good influence on the Kenyans, who needed to be civilized and to be saved from Hell.⁵⁴ The first Maasai school was opened at Kerarapon, in Ngong around 1938 by the Church of Scotland Mission.⁵⁵ However, to the missionaries' regret, the negligible amount of school children used their attained skills to find a job and did not value their acquired Christian knowledge. Besides, the attitude of the Maasai was mostly marked by disdain and indifference. They rejected Christianity since conversion resulted in a life changing event. Converts had to keep to certain Christian rules, like addressing themselves with Christian names, not being active in heathen practices, they had to exchange their traditional clothes for pants and skirts and some Maasai practices, like polygamy and circumcision had to be denounced.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the Maasai realized that the missionaries in the field had no authority. Therefore it was not risky for the Maasai to ignore them.⁵⁷ However, M.K. Waweru explains that for various reasons the Maasai gradually began approaching the mission stations in the hope of improving their lives and to attain

⁵² Waller, 'They do the dictating & we must submit', p. 86.

⁵³ Nthamburi, *The beginning and development of Christianity in Kenya: a survey*.

⁵⁴ J. Heijke, 'Inculturatie', in: J.P. Heijke, (ed.), *In elkaars spiegel. Westers Christendom in Afrika*, (Nijmegen, Katholiek Studiecentrum, 1993), p. 14-15.

⁵⁵ Waller, 'They do the dictating & we must submit', p. 83, 86.

⁵⁶ Sobania, *Culture and customs of Kenya*, p. 53.

Muraya, *Missionary work in Kenya and African response*, p. 5

⁵⁷ Waller, 'They do the dictating & we must submit', p. 95.

education.⁵⁸ In chapter 7 and 8 we will notice that these reasons are still valid today. The first mass conversions started in the 1970s.⁵⁹ In this period the Maasai became more sedentary.⁶⁰

Only in 1957 Catholics set foot in the reserve, represented by the Mill Hill Missionaries from London. The Mill Hill Missionaries immediately opened the Apostolic Vicariate Ngong, which eventually developed in the Diocese of Ngong. Evangelizers were attracted from London but also from the Netherlands and France. Catholic missionaries were welcome and appreciated among the Maasai as, in contrast to the Protestants, these missionaries spoke the Maa language and knew the associated Maasai culture. Another aspect that distinguishes Protestants from Catholics was the ever growing interest of Catholics for the inner parts of the country. The Protestants favored to focus on cities like Oloitokitok, Narok and Kajiado. Despite the lack of interest, a Protestant church was established in Mashuuru, since this place was appointed as an administrative centre. Areas such as Oltepesi and Lenkisim were too far and remote.

The following information about the evangelization process in Oltepesi was told by P.-ole Murero and H. Stoks. The evangelization history of Oltepesi started in the 1980s, when Oltepesi became an outstation of Mashuuru. The first church opening its doors in Mashuuru was the Pentecostal Evangelical Fellowship of Africa (P.E.F.A. Church) in 1968. Even if Mashuuru was a remote area, it was appointed as an administrative centre. Therefore it was noticed by Protestant missionaries. The P.E.F.A. church belonged to a protestant sect from the United States. The P.E.F.A. church was initiated by Mrs. Butler. At that time she worked together with a Pastor from Western Kenya, called Mr. Nelson Oruko. The provision of schooling for Maasai children was the prime strategy of evangelization. A child was only admitted to attend classes if he or she accepted to convert to Christianity. The opening of the Government Primary School indeed delivered the first Protestant converts in the Mashuuru area. The church namely allocated cattle or distributed food to only those families who send their children to school. Soon the idea evolved that education belonged to missionaries and to the white people. Besides, already from the beginning Maasai men considered the church as a place suitable for women, as women had no stressful or time-consuming work to do. Men were dedicated to herd the cattle and to look for food. Few years later, the Catholic missionaries entered the area and established a church in Mashuuru in the mid 1980's. This church shifted from being initially an outstation of the Kajiado Parish to an outstation of Lenkisim, managed by the Guadalupe Fathers of Mexico. Eventually this Catholic Church was changed in a self-pledged

⁵⁸ Waller, 'They do the dictating & we must submit', p. 96.

⁵⁹ Ibidem, p. 112.

⁶⁰ J. Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa. An African Church history*, (Nairobi, Kenya, Paulines, 1994), p. 374.

Parish of its own. In contrast to the P.E.F.A. church, the Catholic missionaries were actively engaged in visiting the inner parts of the reserve, including Oltepesi. Their teachings about Christ and development could not exclusively focus on one area, in this case Mashuuru. Nowadays, the church in Mashuuru and Oltepesi both belong to the Diocese of Ngong, a religious jurisdiction led by a bishop. P-ole Murero thinks that Joshua Limpaso, a young adult Maasai man working for various NGOs in Oltepesi, was responsible in gaining the attention from the Catholic Church. Apparently, Oltepesi was an outstation, organizing the Sunday services under a tree. Later, after the insisting of Joshua, this church under a tree was replaced by a church made of stones. The church of Oltepesi is part of the parish of Mashuuru, with momentarily Father Antonio in charge. Joshua Limpaso was the intermediary between the Maasai community in Oltepesi and Father Mol from Lemek. In 2005 Joshua Limpaso settled the willingness of the Maasai community to offer a piece of land to Father Mol for his project: The Oltepesi Cultural Centre. Probably, the Maasai hoped for new developments and progress, like jobs and water resources. Indeed, the centre brought some progress in the area, but nowadays development is stagnating due to financial problems.

In Oltepesi likewise there is a certain amount of Maasai who are interested in Christianity and regularly visit the church on Sunday. They could choose between the Catholic Church, the P.E.F.A. church and the Dominion Chapel, a protestant church. By looking at the history of development trailed by these churches, it would be possible to trace how Maasai reacted on missionaries and if this attitude will expose certain Maasai features. For various reasons, the Catholic Church was more successful compared to the Protestant Church. One important advantage of the Catholic missionaries was their knowledge of the Maasai language and culture. Evangelizers who desired to work in the Maasai reserve were required by the Catholic Diocese of Ngong to follow a course of Maa language. P-ole Murero, a Catholic himself, stresses that the Protestant Church made the mistake of not inculturating Christianity in Maasai culture. Instead, they pointed at certain cultural issues which had to be rejected since they were incompatible with Christianity. These issues concerned for example taking beer, chewing tobacco, smoking cigarettes, drinking raw blood, eating meat of a strangled goat or sheep etc. Besides, due to lack of knowledge of Maasai culture, the Protestant Church did not recognize the repugnance of Maasai with reference to certain church practices that they considered as insulting, like women standing in front of men and not kneeling down for men to show respect. Moreover, the Protestant Church grants the freedom to women to become Pastors and officiate in religious sacrifices. The Catholic Church instead was more in conformity with Maasai ideas and cultural values, as men dominated the church. Exclusively men were allowed to perform the sacrifices or to be a priest. Catholics approached the Maasai culture and

its liturgy in a favorable manner. Maasai are namely not willing to dismiss their values, language and songs. More on Catholic and Protestant syncretism will be discussed in the following chapter.

These days the Protestant Church in Oltepesi has fewer members compared to the Catholic Church, even if the Protestant Church was established first. P-ole Murero assumes that the Protestant Church was less tolerant concerning Maasai practices and therefore lost many members. Additionally, H. Stoks announced that the Catholic Church was successful in Oltepesi mainly because the Protestant Church neglected its mission. This detail indirectly explains that the Maasai are constantly busy in evaluating the mission stations.⁶¹ From Maasai point of view, all mission stations deliver the same message but they differ in what they have to offer to the members of the church. Do they provide employment, medicines or food? Dependent on the richness of a station, members tend to shift from one station to the other. As a matter of fact, the Catholic Church secured a good name among the Maasai in Oltepesi, by being involved in building schools and health facilities, in distributing food and restocking cows, sheep or goats in times of high mortality. Missions were considered as important economic factors, and people did not recognize the religious value of these stations.⁶²

⁶¹ M.K. Waweru, 'African missionary to cattle people', in: R.T. Parson (ed.), *Windows on Africa*, (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1971), p. 49.

⁶² Baur, *2000 Years of Christianity in Africa*, p. 419.



Cultural exchange according to syncretism and inculturation.

Theoretical approaches and Maasai's negotiations

Chapter 4 ended by stating that the church in Oltepesi was responsible for the delivery of education and medical facilities. Even if the Maasai seemed not to acknowledge the religious value of the mission stations, they negotiated with Christianity and created their own ways in dealing with this new religion. In order to understand the relationship between missionaries and Africans in general, it is necessary to examine the concept of inculturation, focusing on how this idea/concept evolved in Catholic spheres. Further, the concept of syncretism will be brought to light, as this notion is closely linked to the process of inculturation.

The following information is derived from texts mostly written down from religious, Christian perspective and often from a Catholic perspective. According to Muraya, at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century there was already a clear distinction between Catholic and Protestant missionaries.⁶³ The Protestant clergy felt to be responsible in "civilizing" the Africans. The Roman Catholics in contrast were more interested in studying the culture of the people. They dealt with ethnographic studies, by learning African languages, translating the Bible and hymns into local languages. They thought to be familiar with African cultures. However, it was almost an unrealizable task to fully comprehend the "African mind".⁶⁴ Indeed, missionaries kept rejecting African practices and African traditional religions. Traditional dances and rituals were condemned since they opposed Christian faith and morals. Missionaries did not comprehend that many of these rejected practices and institutions were highly significant in African communities. Namely, African traditional religions interacted extensively with the numerous spheres of people's life. It dealt with social, physical and spiritual spheres. The possibility of combining African traditional religions together with Christian elements was not apparent in the early period of evangelization.⁶⁵

⁶³ Muraya, *Missionary work in Kenya and African response*, p. 4.

<https://www.google.nl/#q=muraya+missionary+work+in+kenya+and+african+response> (18-07-2014)

⁶⁴ Ibidem, p. 5.

⁶⁵ Ibidem, p. 7.

In the early stages of missionary work, evangelization was solely based on the effort to win as many “lost African souls” as possible. Entering the church was sufficient for the African salvation, since the church was the Arc of Salvation. Spreading Christianity was therefore neglected.⁶⁶ After the Second World War, missionaries carefully started to adopt new strategies, concerning the adaptation of African languages, vestments and rituals. Nevertheless, the intentions of missionaries remained unchanged, namely to save the “lost African souls”.⁶⁷ This style of conduct became influenced by ideas of adaptation, arising from the nineteenth sixties. The term adaptation came into existence during the Second Vatican Council of 1962 up to 1965.⁶⁸ Christian teachings and liturgical life had to be accustomed to African cultures. The Vatican regulated the process. The strategy of adaptation had a short lifespan and was soon replaced by the concept of incarnation in 1974.⁶⁹ According to African bishops, adaptation did not open up space for an African theology. Instead, Christianity had not to be transplanted in Africa, but Christ had to be incarnated in the African continent. It was essential to position the church as an integral part in African communities, like Christ being an integral part by his incarnation. Simultaneously, in this period, Africans could not easily draw a distinction between missionaries and colonialists, both considered as one unity working together. Slowly, feelings of humiliation arouse among the Africans, who felt more and more alienated from their own cultures. Churches were targets of criticism as well. Since the 1950’s missionaries slowly became aware that the Africanization of the church hierarchy and church life could not be prevented anymore. Moreover, Africans desired to provide their own interpretations of the Bible and to handle spiritual life. It was necessary to create an African theology. A new tendency arouse among people studying the African traditional religions: they developed and learned to accept a new concept, the task of inculturation.⁷⁰ It is not possible to describe the term inculturation in a few words. Actually, one static description of the term could not be offered, since the process of inculturation is not a universal practice. Every theologian will approach inculturation in his or her own manner and missionary societies in turn tend to interpret inculturation differently according to their visions and

⁶⁶ Donovan, *Christianity rediscovered*, p. 42.

⁶⁷ Wijzen, ‘Popular Christianity in East Africa’, p. 42.

⁶⁸ M. Vähäkangas, *In search of foundations for African Catholicism. Charles Nyamiti’s theological methodology*, (Leiden, Koninklijke Brill NV, 1999), p. 28.

⁶⁹ Wijzen, ‘Popular Christianity in East Africa’, p. 44.

⁷⁰ Vähäkangas, *In search of foundations for African Catholicism*, p. 15-17.

notions.⁷¹ In simple words, inculturation is the practice of combining Christian doctrines with African traditional cultural values.⁷² This mixture will accomplish the aim of inculturation, namely to grant Africans the possibility to understand the Gospel in their own worldview. Therefore, the Bible had to be explained in the context of African culture. Missionaries had the duty of studying and comprehending African customs, their beliefs and their social institutions.⁷³

E.P. Antonio enlightens that the term inculturation has been most discussed in circles of Catholic theologians. However, inculturation did not always have a religious Christian approach. The ideas around inculturation arose in the late nineteenth century during the Modernist controversy; at the hand of theologians from various spheres, namely the traditionalists, the progressives and the avant-garde. The subject of discussion in this period was how to adapt theology to the present time. It was needed in order to create a relationship between theology and the culture in which theology was set up. The Modernist approach was based on the assumption that the truth of religion had to be criticized by using "modern thought". The church had to deliver theology through involving in a discourse in respect to culture.⁷⁴

Inculturation succeeded an already existing concept, namely syncretism. The ideas around syncretism emerged during the first years of the twentieth century, by Melvin J. Herskovits. Herskovits was an anthropologist who used the term syncretism to refer to the phenomenon of various cultures being in contact with each other. Culture contacts do take place on various levels, on political, religious, economical and kinship levels.⁷⁵ Indeed, culture mixing has always taken place. However, people have not always been aware of being involved in this activity or they have tried to deny it.⁷⁶ M. Vähäkangas (1999, p. 18-19) adds that even inculturation was already active in the early period of evangelization, yet on a low, unconscious level.⁷⁷ African populations listened to the

⁷¹ P. Antonio, *Inculturation and post-colonial discourse in African theology*, (New York, Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 2006), p. 31.

⁷² L. Magesa, *Anatomy of inculturation. Transforming the church in Africa*, (New York, Orbis Books, 2004), p. 10.

⁷³ Magesa, *Anatomy of inculturation*, p. 10.

⁷⁴ Antonio, *Inculturation and post-colonial discourse in African theology*, p. 30-33.

⁷⁵ S.M. Greenfield, A. Droogers, *Reinventing religions. Syncretism and transformation in Africa and the Americas*, (England, Rowman & Littlefield publishers, Inc., 2001), p. 24-25.

⁷⁶ D. Lindenfeld, M. Richardson, 'Introduction. Beyond conversion and syncretism', in: D. Lindenfeld, M. Richardson (eds.), *Beyond conversion and syncretism. Indigenous encounters with missionary Christianity 1800-2000*, (Berghahan Books, 2011), p. 4.

⁷⁷ Vähäkangas, *In search of foundations for African Catholicism*, p. 18-19.

Christian story and extracted those elements which were considered as valuable.⁷⁸ The message of Christianity altered when it came in contact with various African societies. Syncretism could also be described as the process of mixing elements of traditional religions with elements from different world religions.⁷⁹

Initially, in the seventeenth century Christian theologian's qualified syncretism as a negative process, believing it to be a threat for the true Christian religion. Only in the second half of the nineteenth century the concept lost partially its negative charge, when students commenced using the term syncretism to refer to the process of mixing religious elements deriving from various sources.⁸⁰ As with syncretism, several missionaries did not want to participate in the process of inculturation. However, since syncretism could always be found in Africa, syncretism does actually demand for inculturation. Indeed, a missionary is capable of dismissing African elements in his Gospel, but the African receptor will unconsciously be involved in Africanization when placing Christian elements in his African mind.⁸¹ Eventually, syncretism could be judged by people either as negative or positive. The Afro-Latin populations in Cuba and Brazil tend to adopt a negative attitude towards syncretism in describing their religion. They fear that syncretism will point at impurity and confusion.⁸² Other people support syncretism, but to certain limits. For these adherents, syncretism in Christianity is allowed as long as Christian principles are maintained.⁸³

D. Lindenfeld and M. Richardson (13-15) point out, that in most cases it was not Christianity which allowed syncretism. The first steps were made by the Africans themselves. When missionaries arrived in the field, the power could be found at the side of the natives; meaning that missionaries were allowed to be present in the field thanks to the mercy of their hosts. Additionally, the natives accepted some features of the religion of the missionaries to be incorporated in their traditional religions. In this way, most of their own features and values were kept alive. Hence, there was equality between missionaries and the natives. This affirms that syncretism became part of the

⁷⁸ Kollman, 'Classifying African Christianities', p. 126.

⁷⁹ Indilinga, 'Re-Africanizing the African: indigenization of Christianity on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro', in: *African journal of indigenous knowledge systems*, vol. 4, n. 2, (2005), p. 472.

⁸⁰ Greenfield, Droogers, *Reinventing religions*, p. 28.

⁸¹ Vähäkangas, *In search of foundations for African Catholicism*, p. 20-22.

⁸² Lindenfeld, Richardson, 'Introduction. Beyond conversion and syncretism', p. 5.

⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 6.

process of inculturation. Inculturation was not solely based on Catholic efforts, but also on the achievements of natives.⁸⁴

Referring back to how the Catholic Church dealt with inculturation we see that missionaries have always had the responsibility to interpret and to conform the Gospel with the standards, attitudes and practices of African societies; therefore Africans would be able to assimilate with the ideas and teachings of Christ, for purpose of feeling at home in the church. Further, the feeling of connection to the church may solely be achieved if the Gospel would have been Africanized. Some Christian elements meant for Europeans have no implication or value in the African world, thus have no reason of being maintained. European cultures and African cultures are profoundly/genuinely different from one another and thereupon inculturation is a serious process that has to be exercised. According to recent perspectives of Christian theologians and practitioners, the concept of inculturation should be based on the idea of reciprocal respect: respect towards African religions and respect towards Christianity. Several elements of African traditional religions are positive and could contribute to a superior, valuable global Church, and negative elements of African traditional religions should be expelled as well. In his book, M. Vähäkangas (1999, p. 25-26) refers to the material and the findings of C. Nyamiti. Professor C. Nyamiti holds the idea that changing rites will change the whole religious system. In order to change African religious system and to help the acquisition of Christianity, therefore, most effective would be to Christianize the initiation rites of traditional religions, in order to represent Christian beliefs. To express it more accurately, initiation rites will be converted into sacraments. The deeds and stages of the initiation rites will be preserved, although labeled by Christian meaning and functions. Hence, Christianity will be able to Christianize African traditional religions by starting from the core of the religions and moving outwards. In this process it is essential to teach the people about the new meanings of their rites.⁸⁵ In the 1970's, C. Nyamiti calls up to the use of the term theological adaptation. Ideologically, inculturation meant accepting the whole African traditional culture and enrich it with Christianity from within. Consequently, Christian theology would be interpreted on the basis of an African culture.⁸⁶ It was essential to incorporate it in the culture in which the church found itself at that moment.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Lindenfeld, Richardson, 'Introduction. Beyond conversion and syncretism', p. 13-15.

⁸⁵ Vähäkangas, *In search of foundations for African Catholicism*, p. 25-26.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 30.

⁸⁷ R.J. Gehman, *African traditional religion in Biblical perspective*, (Kampala, East African educational publishers Ltd, 1989), p. 14.

P. Gifford (2008, p. 19) enriches the material of M. Vähäkangas by introducing the term 'theology of culture'. Culture of the people must always be the starting point. It is essential that Africans use Christianity to re-identify themselves as true Africans and subsequently contribute to global Christianity.⁸⁸ Actually, inculturation concerns with confessing the presence of God amongst Africans. According to such an approach, God is present in every culture and in every human being. Denying the presence of God amongst Africans is like harassing God. In addition, integrating elements acquired from other cultures is not a concern as long as it does not affect a person's own perception of himself and the society he lives in.⁸⁹ The church should focus on people, because the people are the ones who produce culture. Besides, culture is not a static matter.⁹⁰

Throughout history several missionaries criticized the development of the concept inculturation.⁹¹ Still today inculturation has not been accepted by all missionaries. Some missionaries hold the opinion that Africans have to dismiss completely their own religions, because the New Testament is offering them something new.⁹² Other missionaries agree that there are limits bounding inculturation. Several rules of the church, like the ones dealing with marriage and baptism, should be universal and not subject to discussion.

As was said before, inculturation, like syncretism, has not only been exerted by missionaries. As a matter of fact, Maasai women did not convert to Christianity because missionaries were agents of inculturation. Actually, Maasai women got involved in inculturation by adapting Christianity to their own worldview after noticing connections between *Enkai* and the Christian God.⁹³ They created a "folk Christianity". Inculturation is not a one-way process, since missionaries and Maasai deal as a whole with inculturation, which we can call a process of "negotiation". Therefore, the statement of P. Kollman (2010, p. 131) is incorrect, who affirms that inculturation is not a self-conscious pastoral strategy, but an implicit process. In fact, inculturation is a self-conscious process precisely because Maasai accepted the entrance of Christianity in their midst and adapted this new set of beliefs to

⁸⁸ P. Gifford, 'Africa's inculturation theology. Observations of an outsider', in: *Hekima review*, n. 38, (2008), p. 21.

⁸⁹ Ibidem, p. 27-28.

⁹⁰ Ibidem, p. 31-32.

⁹¹ Kollman, 'Classifying African Christianities', p. 122.

⁹² Wijzen, 'Popular Christianity in East Africa', p. 45.

⁹³ Kollman, 'Classifying African Christianities', p. 122.

their own needs.⁹⁴ Apart from joint actions towards Christianity, African and Maasai themselves differentiate amongst each other according to their personal experiences. In fact, the majority of Africans create their own personal, synthesis of Christianity, a phenomena which is called “popular Christianity”. In other words, not only Christianity changed, but also the worldview of Africans changed as well. The Sukuma, as described by F. Wijzen (2002, p. 41), nowadays remain to be involved in a continuous process of negotiation, in which they try to deal contemporaneously with Christianity and their own traditional religious system. For example, they focus on other spirits instead of solely the ancestors. The Christian rhythm of life influenced and adapted the African rhythm, by imposing a weekly and an annual schedule, for example fixed market days. Further, certain traditions, such as the ones of the Chagga, are now performed in the period of Christmas. The underlying idea is that people working in the cities will travel home at Christmas, and therefore will be able to perform their own traditional rituals and the Christian rituals at the same moment.⁹⁵ F. Wijzen adds that it is essential to acknowledge that these changes and adaptations did also take place due to the changing world in which African populations are finding themselves in, and not only due to religious influences.⁹⁶

The discussions about how to blend Christianity with the host culture are abundant and do concern various spheres, as indicated in the title of L. Magesa’s study (2004, p. 17-29): the language and mood of worship, the liturgy, the church structure and government, the church rules, and healing and suffering. These spheres of discussion are also valid in Oltepesi. In Oltepesi the Maasai are supported to worship in the Maa language. Additionally, they are offered the opportunity to introduce their beliefs and values in Christian ceremonies, traditional customs concerning burial, naming and marriage practices. Furthermore, traditional rituals, marking the transition from one life stage to the other are accompanied by Christian songs and dancing. Nowadays, Maasai in Oltepesi prize and favor the idea of a marriage ceremony taking place in the church. Once present at a wedding in Mashuuru, the mixture between Christian and Maasai beliefs was clearly recognizable. The bride couple was dressed up in the western wedding clothes; however they were fully ornamented with Maasai bracelets and beads. During the ceremony the language of instruction was Maa and the songs and dances were done in Maasai style. The service was led by a priest and sufficed to all the rules and points of a western marriage service in the church. Another obvious Maasai value added to the ceremony was the obligation of the bride couple to look sad, a sign of

⁹⁴ Kollman, ‘Classifying African Christianities’, p. 132.

⁹⁵ Indilinga, ‘Re-Africanizing the African’, p. 475.

⁹⁶ Wijzen, ‘Popular Christianity in East Africa’, p. 41.

respect towards the parents of the bride couple. Besides, the exchange of the rings was abstained, as rings have no meaning in the Maasai culture. Along with language also liturgy is a point of consideration. In the Protestant and the Catholic Church in Oltepesi the services are accompanied by clapping of the hands, singing, dancing and music instruments. In both churches, nevertheless to a greater degree in the Protestant Church, time was offered for the worshippers to pray in their own words. Otherwise, kneeling was rejected during the services. Maasai interpret kneeling as disgrace, for the reason that kneeling means taking up a submissive and inferior position.

Actually, part of the inculturation process is to study the host culture. After gaining sufficient knowledge, missionaries and churches would be able to point at certain African customs and habits which are opposite to Christian teachings and therefore should be abolished.⁹⁷ The respondents in Oltepesi explained that the church is interested in preserving the good Maasai customs. Bad Maasai customs, like polygamy or female genital mutilation are disallowed. Churches found tactics to excommunicate members who do not keep to their rules. In Oltepesi, the Protestant Church deals with social control; members supervising each other. The Catholic Church will punish members by not supporting them or denying them baptism and others sacraments. Therefore, Maasai are obliged to keep to the orders, but since they do not agree with the sentiments of denouncing their habits, they pretend to be devoted to the rules. In this case the church will accept them and not deny the sacraments. Indeed, against the will of missionaries, many Maasai men are frequently drunk at market days, polygamy is favored, young girls are still circumcised and they are sexually active before marriage, because virginity is rejected in the Maasai culture. Some Maasai, even if baptized they participate in Maasai ceremonies for to be recognized by others and by themselves as fully Maasai.⁹⁸

This chapter addressed two interesting concepts: syncretism and inculturation. When considering the notion inculturation, this process has mainly been placed in a religious discourse. However, to offer a definition of the term inculturation is not acceptable if the term syncretism has not been covered. These two notions do have common qualities, but are drastically different simultaneously. Inculturation and syncretism both consider a process of mixing, in which people from diverse cultures besides exchanging certain cultural values and affairs, like ideas, habits and practices, also intermingle in the mixing of traditional religious elements from different religions. In other words, both concepts are about cultural exchange, a process that could be exercised on a conscious or on an unconscious level. The decisive difference is that inculturation is a process with a clear goal. It is deliberately supported by the church, mainly the Catholic Church. Cultural and

⁹⁷ Magesa, *Anatomy of inculturation*, p. 13-14.

⁹⁸ Hodgson, *The church of women*, p. 155.

religious exchange will continue to take place, however it is essential for the church that the ones interchanged in this process of mixing eventually will appropriate the Christian teaching. For this reason, inculturation has mainly been placed in religious discourses. Cultural exchange should take place, however, with the condition that African populations will take over and acquire the core of Christianity. In other words, from such a perspective, God has to be made present among the African populations by adapting the Gospel to the African mind. Syncretism is a general concept and is not necessarily aimed at leaving a Christian mark. Syncretism is simply the process of mixing cultural elements. The terms inculturation and syncretism are complex concepts. A single definition to describe these concepts is lacking and impossible to be developed. People with various backgrounds, like anthropologists or missionaries tend to describe the concepts differently, according to their own views. Even among missionaries there are discussions and collisions when the topic inculturation is questioned. Indeed, some missionaries ascribe a negative feeling to inculturation. Therefore, in this chapter, I was merely interested in shedding light on this negotiation between the notions syncretism and inculturation.



Oltepesi: the meeting point of missionaries and the Maasai

Similar to inculturation and syncretism being complex concepts without one static definition, also conversion is puzzling. Conversion is namely not a uniform experience. To discover in which category the Maasai could be placed is an intriguing issue. However, before being able to do this, it is essential to regard how missionaries and the Maasai community got intermingled in a relationship and which factors influenced this drive. Therefore, this chapter will focus on the work of missionaries and on Oltepesi, as the place where missionaries and Maasai convened.

THE REALM OF DEVELOPMENT

From the times of early missionary work in Kenya up to this day, mission stations have not changed drastically in appearance. Commonly, even today a mission station comprises a large church bordering several quarters, dedicated to the priest, the nuns and the workers. Most stations are enriched by a primary school, a working garage or a medical centre. All the buildings are grouped together, with a fence surrounding the area.⁹⁹ Notwithstanding that missionaries have been living with the local Kenyan population for a long period, N.W. Sobania (2003) is of the opinion that still today missionaries seem not to be familiar with the local populations, with their habits and their culture. For example, Kenyan populations are pastoralist, even though, veterinary clinics or programs focusing on pastoral production are lacking.¹⁰⁰

In repetition, at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century the Roman Catholics were interested in ethnographic studies and the Protestants dealt more with the civilizing mission.¹⁰¹ However, Protestants and Catholics had some characteristics in common. F. Wijssen (2002, p. 44) indicated that missionaries exploited several strategies, with the well thought-out intention of luring the Africans to mission stations and to keep them from leaving. These strategies went along with the core of Christianity, namely the devotion of Christians to care for the needy, and for people who live in backward situations. Becoming active in the evangelizing

⁹⁹ Sobania, *Culture and customs of Kenya*, p. 54.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 56.

¹⁰¹ Muraya, *Missionary work in Kenya and African response: implications for pastoral care with young adults*, p. 4.

mission in Africa resulted automatically in enlighten the population. The duty of fostering the intellect and the spirit was used to justify missionary activities, aiming to spread Christianity and to attract Africans to mission stations.¹⁰² Indeed, missionaries in Kenya understood that in order to gain the trust of the African population they would have to support the indigenous population to cope with the intense difficulties and experiences faced under the colonizers' regime. The British colonizers namely initiated the growth of an economy along with the setting out of a monetization system. The new economy forced the indigenous population to pay taxes and to find ways to attain money. To attract the local population, Catholic and Protestant missionaries both deliberately erected schools; a tactic that developed itself to be extremely effective. By using the method of education they hoped to convert the locals, since access to education was solely granted to those who accepted Christianity. Until 1920 almost all schools in Kenya were mission schools.¹⁰³ The actual underlying intention of schools was to train young people how to work for colonial masters.¹⁰⁴ Initially only boys were encouraged to follow classes. By attending, the pupils would learn to read and to adopt the Western culture. In fact, these 'fresh' Christians were labeled by the others as 'those who read', even if most of these converts were still illiterate.¹⁰⁵ Thereupon, with the acquired knowledge, Africans hoped to stand a better chance in the changing world around them. Soon, the non converted locals recognized that belonging to the group of 'those who read' could be advantageous and prosperous. The delivery of education was flourishing among the tribes in Kenya, but the least with the Maasai. Maasai were less affected by the colonizers as they initially owned abundant cattle to pay the taxes and they deliberately ignored the white men. The Kikuyu in contrast lost their agricultural lands and were restricted to find new ways of survival in the economy of the *mzungu*, the white person. Some sources mention that only with the famine and epidemics of 1960-61 large numbers of Maasai approached the mission stations to ask for help and to profit from the distribution of food.¹⁰⁶ As in the early period of evangelization, the first converts were marginal people. D.L. Hodgson (2005, p. 133) states that these converts were refugees, ex-slaves and outcasts who approached the stations to find security, provision of food, physical and psychological

¹⁰² Magesa, *Anatomy of inculturation*, p. 29-31.

¹⁰³ Baur, *2000 years of Christianity in Africa*, p. 413.

¹⁰⁴ Magesa, *Anatomy of inculturation*, p. 17. Hodgson, *The church of women*, p. 117-118.

¹⁰⁵ Muraya, *Missionary work in Kenya and African response: implications for pastoral care with young adults*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ Waweru, 'African missionary to cattle people', p. 44.

sustenance. After the famine, most Maasai regained their forces to fall back again in their previous lifestyle as pastoralists. Others remained attached to the stations. Over the years, the Maasai community became overwhelmed by numerous processes, which developed in the period of colonization and seem to prevail in the present. The Maasai became afflicted by land expropriation, agricultural expansion, market integration and residence priorities. These issues are problematic for the Maasai, as they counteract mobility.¹⁰⁷ In my vision, mobility is a key component in the survival of the tribe. In explanation, if mobility ceases to be feasible, the Maasai would lose their cattle. Cattle is however their primary source of food and most importantly, cattle can be seen as a "storage of money". This storage of money assures the Maasai the ability to be active in the economy based on money transactions. Without mobility, pastoralists will be constrained to find permanent places of residence and new ways to earn capital. Moreover, I expect the acts of consumption and commodization to have left a mark on the Maasai community. Missionaries and colonial officials deliberately introduced their material world with the intention of converting Africans in consumers of foreign goods.¹⁰⁸ In Oltepesi, the exchangeable value of goods and services could not be overlooked. It was a common feature for African tribes to ascribe special value to rare clothing and ornamentation. Persons owning these rare objects were rewarded by attaining status in their community.¹⁰⁹ With this knowledge, missionaries deliberately moved around and distributed sugar, mirrors, blankets, plates and other valuable products. Hereby missionaries hoped to attract attention from Africans. The Maasai in Oltepesi showed in a similar manner strong interest and affection for radios, televisions and laptops. After leaving the mission, converted Africans would unconsciously or consciously bring along Christianity and the European material culture.¹¹⁰

Influenced by a changing world, from colonizers to missionaries, reduction of mobility, the presence of a money economy and Western products, Maasai gradually established their own views regarding the presence of missionaries and white people. They noticed that white people built roads, schools, possessed rare objects, had knowledge about medicine and knew mystic ways of curing the

¹⁰⁷ A. Talle, *Women at a loss. Changes in Maasai pastoralism and their effects on gender relations*, (Stockholm Studies in social anthropology, Nalkas Förlag, 1988), p. 54.

¹⁰⁸ B.A. Moss, 'To determine the scale and wants of the community: gender and African consumption', in: M. Grosz-Ngate, O.H. Kokole (eds.), *Gendered encounters. Challenging cultural boundaries and social hierarchies in Africa*, (New York, London, Routledge, 1997), p. 94.

¹⁰⁹ T. Clack, 'Re-Africanizing the African: indigenization of Christianity on the slopes of Mount Kilimanjaro', in: *Indilinga – African journal of indigenous knowledge systems*, vol. 4, n. 2, (2005), p. 475.

¹¹⁰ Moss, 'To determine the scale and wants of the community', p. 100.

sick persons.¹¹¹ In my understanding some Maasai caught the insight that they would eventually prosper when becoming involved in a relationship with missionaries. D.L. Hodgson treats a letter written around 1950 by Edward Mbarnoti, a male convert at the station of Father Hillman. In his letter, dedicated to the US, he pleads for more missionaries, because they brought progress to his land. He said that the Arusha mission did a lot for his people, but still a lot has to be done. By pleading for more missionaries Edward Mbarnoti indirectly affirms his conviction that progress could only be reached with the presence of church people.¹¹² Only at the end of his letter he dedicates some lines to mention the stagnated development of Christianity in Maasai land. Even V.J. Donovan (2003, p. 12-13), a priest who worked in Tanzania, remarks in a letter written at the Loliondo mission in 1966 that Maasai did not approach the station with genuine interest in Christianity. At his mission station missionaries were successful in establishing friendly relationships with the Maasai, based on material help. V.J. Donovan (2003, p.190) emphasizes that Christianity in Africa agitated the arrival of money, schools and medicines. Factually, at the locations where missionaries erected their stations, the place was enriched by various buildings. The church of the Ngong Parish, raised by the Scotland missionaries in 1963 served as a place for Christian worship, as a literacy center and a nursery school simultaneously. In the vicinity of the church they build a primary school and a dispensary. Besides the visible buildings, missionaries initiated some projects with the Maasai like crop breeding, and sustaining them to improve agricultural activities in the relevant area.¹¹³

OLTEPESI

Essential is now to focus on the place Oltepesi, as the findings of my research are exclusively relevant for this area.

It is several times indicated that Maasai lived through and experienced the transformations in Kenya, stirred up by colonists and missionaries, differently compared to other tribes like the Kikuyu. H. Stoks gave a distinct explanation about this phenomenon. Ideologically, many Maasai do not need the support of the church. This has to do with the unique aspect of their lifestyle, namely their independent status. The Maasai in Kenya are nomadic, a pastoralist tribe depending on their cattle. With their cattle and other belongings they used to migrate from place to place. To own cattle is similar to secure money on a bank account. Therefore having a job or an education is not a necessity to survive. The aspect of owning cattle and being independent determines their view and

¹¹¹ Moss, 'To determine the scale and wants of the community', p. 474.

¹¹² Hodgson, *The church of women*, p. 189-190.

¹¹³ Waweru, 'African missionary to cattle people', p. 43, 48-49.

attitude towards the church. They were not in need of help from the church to survive. As long as they possess their cattle, they remain independent. Only cattle is sufficient to survive, as it delivers food, milk, clothes of cow skin and most important, it could be used in trading activities.¹¹⁴ More goods or privileges are not needed.

The choice for a relevant place of residence is constantly influenced by the necessity of fertile grazing lands and water accessibility for cattle and humans. Therefore, if an environment does not meet to these conditions it is essential for the Maasai to migrate further. The Maasai would label Oltepesi as a not convenient place to life, according to the explanation of H. Stoks. During the severe months of drought the land is not suitable for grazing and natural water resources are lacking. The population could not easily get involved in agriculture since the land is poor in quality and too dry. According to the Maasai customs, the best solution would be and probably was in the past, to reside in Oltepesi during the rainy season and to move forward with the coming of the dry season. However, on a certain moment in history this process of migration and the ideological status of independency partially vanished. In spite of the bad living conditions, probably from the time that the Catholic Church appointed Oltepesi as an outstation, families were not willing to leave the area anymore. As I mentioned before, the Maasai ideologically are independent people who do not need modern goods, but instead, a group of Maasai that eventually came to live in Oltepesi permanently, longed for these goods and became aware that white people could improve their lives. Although Maasai in general are described as people who are not involved in modernization, M.K. Waweru (1971, p. 49) argues that Maasai are interested in innovations. By looking back at his work among the Maasai, M.K. Waweru noticed that these people want to change their lives as well. They also dream about modern things, better roads, hospitals, schools for their children, healthy and fat animals etc. By noticing that the Catholic Church was entering the area, Maasai rather preferred to focus their attention on this institution, with the hope of making life in Oltepesi possible, states H. Stoks. Additionally he announced that this hope was not irrational. Some villages indeed only progressed because initially a church was build in that relevant area, resulting in the construction of several other buildings. Local people will settle around the church, open up shops and start with trading activities. Consequently, an unknown place could evolve into an urban village, like Kitengela. H. Stoks has leads about cases in which Maasai approached the missionaries personally, to plead them in opening a church in their area. Nowadays, the Maasai in Oltepesi do depend on the church. Oltepesi like in the past is not a convenient place to life. Unconsciously, this triggers the Maasai to stay connected. As long as the church is present in the area, Maasai, especially women, hope to be able to

¹¹⁴ Donovan, *Christianity rediscovered*, p. 17.

survive in the area. Even if the church build a school or a water tank, women hope to see more progress. Actually, they hope for the church to constantly bring new solutions to make life in Oltepesi possible. I mentioned women, because women longed to stay in Oltepesi and most men in contrast prefer to migrate to another area.

Hence, the inner feelings of 'to want' and the type of environment defines the attitude of the Maasai towards the church, seen by the existing differences between Matapato and Oltepesi. Matapato is an area bordering Oltepesi at the north. The two places are divided by a dried up river bed. Matapato has different characteristics, as the area is not densely populated, there is enough grazing land, the soil is not dry and there is no water scarcity. Here, the Maasai show less interest in Catholicism, Protestantism has not reached the place, the Sunday masses held under the tree are not abundant attended and there are no plans for building a church. The Maasai are self-sufficient and are therefore not interested in the church.

Nowadays Oltepesi has changed of appearance. Most developments have been initiated and controlled by the Catholic Church¹¹⁵; it build The Oltepesi Cultural Institute, a primary school and a water borehole. These developments led to the considering that Oltepesi had become a suitable place for living. However, the Maasai seem to underestimate the problems. The initial complications have not disappeared and more problematic issues are evolving, like overgrazing since families are settling permanently causing overpopulation of cattle and people. The trees are disappearing due to barbering for chuckholes, resulting in land erosion. For the time being, Maasai are losing their nomad character and could not survive anymore by depending exclusively on their cattle. Therefore, they even depend more on the church, as long as they are not willing to leave the area.

¹¹⁵ Donovan, *Christianity rediscovered*, p. 17.



Men and women and their own distinct agendas

In the previous chapter on the subject of Oltepesi and its quality of being an inconvenient place to live it was mentioned that women longed to stick around in the area and men preferred to leave, reactions determined by their sensitivity and attitude towards the church. F. Wijzen (2002, p. 40-41, 45-49) demonstrates that the African populations have not been inactive and exclusively observant when it comes to their relationship with the religion of the *mzungu*. It was quite the opposite. Africans have been active in dealing with Christianity and establishing their relationship and attitude towards this new set of beliefs. Why Maasai men and women do differ on the case of the church in Oltepesi and how this distinction did evolve through time, are two questions to which this chapter will try to find the answers.

DISTANCE BETWEEN MAASAI MEN AND THE CHURCH

In all probability, enthusiasm for the church would never raise at the side of men, as the church grew out to be the domain of women. P-ole Murero and Father Karl both explained that men and women do not easily sit together in the same room. According to Maasai customs, genders live separated in divisions, without intermingling. Since women and children began to form the majority of the church members, men will automatically exclude themselves. In the following paragraph I will explain how the church evolved to be a domain for women. If men do however want to attend the services, they will always sit aside, with the women at their left. Attempts to organize mass services intended exclusively for men did not triumph either. Interesting is the article of F. van Driel (1993, p. 118) about the Tswana in Botswana, stating that the majority of the church members are women. His arguments to explain this phenomenon could also be applied to the Maasai. Male identity is not connected to church activities, but is typified by the image of making war or herding cattle. Furthermore, lack of time and lack of a permanent place of residence, due to migrations, prevents senior men from attending the church.¹¹⁶ To spend time in church was considered as not beneficial and a waste of time. As a point of fact, usually women return home with empty hands. However, as

¹¹⁶ F. van Driel, 'Goitsemodimo. Christeljk kerken, ongehuwd moederschap and vrouwelijke gezinshoofden in Botswana', in: J.P. Heijke (ed.), *In elkaar spiegel. Westers Christendom in Afrika*, (Nijmegen, Katholiek Studiecentrum, 1993), p. 118.

soon as concrete, material things could be attained, men would change their attitude and join the services without hesitation.

V.J. Donovan (2003, p. 48-49) was once addressed by a Maasai, who explained about theories of kindness, goodness, holiness, divine presence and salvation. His people never set about to look for the Christian God and the penetration of missionaries in their lives has never been wanted, because *Enkai* already stumbled on the Maasai.¹¹⁷ Therefore, men were not inspired to change and adapt their beliefs and lifestyles. Most men share the opinion that the church is not significant and actually the Maasai culture is at risk as long as Christianity is present.¹¹⁸ Indeed, men fiercely continue disproving certain church rules, which for example prohibit polygamy.¹¹⁹ In the past, the fear of losing their Maasai culture resulted in anger towards converted Maasai men. D.L. Hodgson treats this aggressive response. Customarily, in the past, women were allowed to be in connection with the church, but men were scolded by the community when being interested in Christianity. Warriors for example felt pressure when they were mocked by their companions and called *ormeek*, meaning stranger or enemy. Originally, this term used to refer to people who were Africans but not Maasai. Later, with the debarkation of Christianity and missionaries, *ormeek* was also applied to target converted Maasai men, taking into account that a person could not be a Maasai and a Christian contemporaneously. Converting to a new faith required adapting to a new lifestyle and thoughts.¹²⁰ Besides labeling converted men as strangers, Maasai shuddered at the idea that Christianity was considered superior to their culture and ritual practices. Maasai are proud about their culture, and do fear that it will be washed out due to outside pressures. If members of the society are devoted to follow the laws of the church, which amongst other things prohibit polygamy, Maasai culture would perish. This fear was already felt in 1937, when elders did not allow their sons to attend classes at the Native Authority School. At school, children will change and forget their identities, turning out to be *ormeek*.¹²¹ Opposing education and Christianity was a necessary struggle at the side of elders to preserve their Maasai identity. On the contrary, women were never judged as being *ormeek*, because women enjoyed religious authority and church regulations did not affect women their lives

¹¹⁷ Donovan, *Christianity rediscovered*, p. 48-49.

¹¹⁸ Kollman, 'Classifying African Christianities', p. 129.

¹¹⁹ van Driel, 'Goitsemodimo', p. 118.

¹²⁰ D.L. Hodgson, 'Being Maasai men: modernity and the production of Maasai masculinities', in: L.A. Lindsey and S.F. Miescher (eds.), *Men and masculinities in modern Africa*, (Westport CT, Heinemann, 2003), p. 220.

¹²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 219.

drastically.¹²² Christianity has no influence on the culture of the tribe through women. Besides, the active trading with Christianity was not interpreted as the willingness of women to fight or condemn their subjectivity.¹²³

Noticeable in Oltepesi during the mass on Sunday is that Maasai men could not be spotted in the strip around the church. Some of them could be seen at the borehole, busy with watering their cattle. In the past, to avoid the church laymen, men excused themselves with pretexts of ceremonial obligations, conflicting engagements or sudden travel plans etc. Nowadays, excuses are not necessary, now that missionaries are familiar with the reactions of men. Nevertheless, through the years some men adopted certain positive perceptions. H. Stoks, who has been living with the Maasai for many years and could easily let Maasai men talk to him, refers to the feeling of a kind of relief felt at the side of men. The church is useful since the priest and other church laymen deal with women and keep them busy. At the end, from the men's perspective, women are similar to children. With the presence of the church, husbands do not need to take care of their wives and could be busy with more important things, like finding water supplies for their cattle. Not to forget, men were satisfied when once in a while women did attain help and material assistance from organizations belonging to the church as ADDO and Caritas. Bad influence deriving from Christianity was not always recognized. For this reason not all men impeded women in participating at church services. Elisabeth Inchapasha, a woman who visited the institute for 2 days, explained that her husband, who was not a Christian, even allows missionaries to visit her homestead in order to pray and to teach the message of Jesus. Sometimes husbands do intermingle in their wife's their interest in the church, even if they themselves never want to discuss Christianity. They namely decide to which church or denomination their wives are allowed to go. Although women fill up the church in abundant numbers, it would be wrong to ignore the small collection of men who entered the church and became reliable members.

THE CHURCH OF WOMEN

Essential in the process of being active with Christianity and in establishing a relationship and attitude towards this new set of beliefs, is the concept of pride, as reported by T. Clack (2005, p. 474). He speaks about "host people", referring to the group of people, in this case the Maasai, who are targeted by missionaries to adapt Christianity.

¹²² van Driel, 'Goitsemodimo', p. 118.

¹²³ van Driel, 'Goitsemodimo', p 221.

Host people need to be proud about their culture, for being able to recognize the greatest values and standards ruling in the society. Only in this matter the host people will feel a connection with the mixture of coalescing Christianity with values of the host culture. Therefore, for its own profit, Christianity has to accept and support local customs and practices when being transplanted in the host culture. The feeling of pride is identifiable among the Maasai, who are proud about being Maasai and about their practices. However, this feeling commits men and women to perform differently. Men are proud, they fear to lose their culture and therefore take a distant position. Maasai women were proud as well, and thereupon they discovered a manner to preserve their identity and to have connections with Christianity simultaneously.

Women became aware that Christianity could result in progress and development, since it was brought by the *mzungu*, the white person. After regularly observing the *mzungu's*, Maasai came to the conclusion that the terms *Kikristo* and *Kizungu* meaning Christendom and foreign languages/not African languages symbolized wealth, respect and money.¹²⁴ Earlier I mentioned that missionaries habitually were willing to support those African populations who adhered to Christianity. However, Maasai women were proud about their culture and, equivalent to men, did not want to lose it. This resulted in Maasai women answering missionaries and their own community by adapting Christian teachings to their own worldview.

Initially, the first missionaries in the 1950s were exclusively interested in male converts. Women were deliberately ignored, considering that all the positions of authority in the church system are attributed to men. When applying the method of offering education, missionaries their main goal was to send boys to schools instead of girls. On the other side, Maasai elders were gratified with this lack of interest in girls, because girls and women were not supposed to leave the homestead. Education was fruitful among tribes like the Kikuyu, but not among the Maasai. The Maasai were not interested in education and their nomadic lifestyle prevented boys from joining classes. Nevertheless, missionaries were not willing to resign their mission. V.J. Donovan designed a new method called the *boma* approach, namely to visit the Maasai and to teach them about Christianity in their own homesteads. From the 1970s the *boma* approach became the standard method of usage to evangelize the Maasai in Kenya as well. The concept instructed to approach the male elders and appeal for their permission to tutor the members of the concerned homestead. Male elders were of interest, because, as I mentioned before, the identity of the Maasai is linked to the identity of a man. A person is a Maasai when he owns cattle. Therefore, the Maasai community is represented by the elders. When missionaries desired to draw near and spread Christianity in the

¹²⁴ Clack, 'Re-Africanizing the African', p. 474.

Maasai community they had to be accepted by the elders. However, with the attempts to evangelize the Maasai, missionaries were encountered by women against their own expectations and the ones of Maasai men themselves. At the *boma* instruction meetings the presence of men was mandatory in contrast to the presence of women which was not taken into account. Once again missionaries were disappointed when Maasai men neglected the meetings by deliberately being absent. Both Maasai men and evangelists did not foresee that this new method offered the opportunity to women to pursue with Christianity. Men could not counteract this situation, because precisely due to their absence they lost control over their wives and daughters. Besides, the meetings of missionaries took place in the homestead, the domain of women. Women had no reasons for being absent and actually appreciated to gather, to listen to the Christian message and to sing Christian songs.¹²⁵ Adhering to Christianity did not imply any difficulty, since changing of lifestyles and attitude was not required for women. Already before the presence of missionaries, Maasai meditated with their divinity *Enkai*, as explained in chapter 3. Actually, women had the responsibility to worship *Enkai* daily, to earn protection for her family and livestock. When noticing the comparisons between the female divinity *Enkai* and the God of the missionaries, women found it easy to involve in Christianity and to reshape their relationship with *Enkai* contemporaneously.¹²⁶ Additionally, the Christian message was not a complicated story to understand, due to common aspects. *Enkai* and the Christian God for example both resided in the sky and do punish or reward a person, dependent on his or her behavior. Chapter 8 will shed light on how Maasai women dealt with Christianity without losing their culture and identity.

After my own observations I think that that the church offers the Maasai a social enrichment. In Oltepesi, people these days work and survive individually. As a result, visits to church form one of the main moments of social interaction. Mama Saitoti, a mother of eleven children living ten minutes walk from The Oltepesi Cultural Institute, told me that she felt very lonely now that her children left for school. During the day she worked hard but scarcely met any person. Most women in Oltepesi are at home alone or with their youngest children. It was clearly noticeable that visiting the church on Sunday was a desired way to break with the loneliness and silence of Oltepesi. Women enjoyed the social character of the services, resulting in meeting together, chatting, exchanging the news, singing and praying together. These days, the Sunday Mass is extended by shifting the gathering to a homestead, where women prepare food and drink *shaai*, the Maasai tea. The social meetings or gatherings are also suitable for Maasai women to talk about and resolve domestic issues, to support

¹²⁵ Hodgson, *The church of women*, p. 129.

¹²⁶ Kollman, 'Classifying African Christianities', p. 122-123.

each other, to speak about problems and find suitable solutions. Indeed, B.A. Moss addressed Christian African women in Rhodesia who established a Methodist women's prayer union. Women are welcome in this union to share experiences, rethink new survival strategies and pray together. The church provides practical and psychological relief.¹²⁷

Another argument concerning the interest of women was given by Memusi, the catechist from Imaroro, an outstation belonging to Mashuuru. Regularly he was present in Mashuuru and Oltepesi to attend ceremonies and various meetings. He proclaimed that Maasai men are not easily influenced, because men do not feel, but they think. Women in contrast use their feelings to deal with situations. If the actions of women are more influenced by their feelings, I assume that women would certainly deal daily with feelings of anxiety, worries or contentment when dealing with the survival of their families. Everyday women are responsible in finding water resources and water has to be carried to the homestead. Water is essential for cooking, for preparing tea, for washing clothes and cleaning the cooking utensils. Every day women have the task to prepare three meals to feed their families. Constantly they are busy in taking care of their children, to dress them, to send them to school with all the necessary school materials like pencils, notebooks and school uniforms. If children attend boarding schools, girls need sanitary napkins, soap etc. With the daily stress of surviving and taking care of her family, women have been looking for survival strategies. If the homestead and children are part of the domain of women, men probably would not daily be confronted with the necessity of having money and having the fear of not being able to take care of their families. With this lack of feeling, men would most likely have difficulties in understanding why women place their hopes on the church. Elements of this idea reflected on by Memusi could further be recognized in the chapter of B.A. Moss, *To determine the scale of wants of the community: gender and African consumption* (1997, p. 85-109). Missionaries were responsible for introducing Christian morals in African villages which prescribed women to be the 'housekeepers' and men to be the 'breadwinners'. This idea retained women to work in the fields, as they were required to focus their attention exclusively on their children and their houses. Men in contrast were granted the opportunity to lose their feeling of responsibility over domestic affairs. Therefore, they rather spend their money on attaining luxury articles instead of buying necessary goods for the domestic sphere. Women who needed money and food for the household became frustrated. At this point, when their husbands were ignoring their demands, women were constrained to invent new survival strategies. The church became their resolution. With their common struggle to maintain their families alive, women joined the church to come together, to exchange ideas concerning survival strategies and to

¹²⁷ Moss, 'To determine the scale and wants of the community', p. 103.

support each other mentally.¹²⁸ Likewise, D.L. Hodgson has interleaved ideas with those of Memusi.¹²⁹ Besides being labeled as 'housekeepers', losing their economic and political rights, women also suffered from the fear of losing their identity of being mothers. For African women, their most valuable task was to get pregnant and in particular to donate sons for their husbands. Due to outside influences agitated during the colonial and postcolonial period, women fear to lose their reproductive powers. Subsequently, their fear and discontentment will be expressed by the presence of '*orpeko*', a spirit possession. In other words, because of their fear they will lose control over their bodies when *orpeko*, the devil will take possession. Exclusively women are the victims of spirit possession. To explain, *orpeko* is a foreign cult in the same way as colonial and post-colonial influences, which are foreign forces, influence the Maasai community, with special consequences for women. When a woman is being possessed, other women will bring her to church, which is the only place where possessed women could be healed. In other words, in the church women will feel a sense of relief in their fears and despair, causing *orpeko* to leave the possessed body.¹³⁰ The Maasai in Oltepesi do not deal with spirit possession. However, I have noted and therefore convinced that Maasai women in Oltepesi are not alien to fears regarding their reproduction powers, agitated by outside influences.

F. Wijzen adds that Africans do depend on the church materially and ideologically. An African Christianity would only arise after economic, religious, cultural and political liberation.¹³¹ D.L. Hodgson would not agree with the assumption that women generated interest specifically in the Christians side of progress and development. According to her, women were driven by spiritual needs and not material interest. Actually they wanted to regain spiritual authority which was lost due to social changes and pre-colonial pressure. When they noticed comparisons between their divinity *Enkai* and the God of the missionaries, it was an easy step to appropriate certain Christian teachings to their own worldview.¹³² Similar to *Enkai*, the Christian God also resided in the sky and could reward or punish a person. Nevertheless, H. Stoks reports that women still expect the church to be their salvation. They call the church '*bwana wangu*', meaning 'my husband'. Maasai women depend

¹²⁸ Moss, 'To determine the scale and wants of the community', p. 101-104.

¹²⁹ D.L. Hodgson, 'Embodying the contradictions of modernity: gender and spirit possession among Maasai in Tanzania', in: M. Grosz-Ngate, O.H. Kokole (eds.), *Gendered encounters. Challenging cultural boundaries and social hierarchies in Africa*, (New York, London, Routledge, 1997), p. 117.

¹³⁰ Ibidem, p. 118.

¹³¹ Wijzen, 'Popular Christianity in East Africa', p. 44.

¹³² Ibidem, p.122.

on men, as they need their husbands to take care of them. However, since the church provides for women, women started to regard the church as their second husband. Therefore, they believe that keeping a good relationship with their second husband is essential. In other words, by investing time and interest in the church, it will sustain you. A church will indeed not easily offer help to people who reject the church. This idea is connected to the presence of favoritism in the religious spheres. A priest or a nun tends to be more helpful towards people who join their denomination. Favoritism is even strongly felt in the schools. If children attend classes at a Catholic school they are expected to be present at the Sunday services. If this is not the case, the priest or a sister will hurriedly visit the parents of the children and ask them for an explanation. In the case of Oltepesi, if women do not attend the church services, the Catholic Church would not have seen any reason for building for example the water borehole. Looking at the various developments in Oltepesi concerning the areas of education, provision of employment and medical sustenance we can observe the following.

A. Education

Along with the establishment of The Oltepesi Cultural Institute, Father Mol invested money in building a primary school next to the institute, called the Guadalupe Primary School. In most cases, the school is the first building emerging next to a church, as education is considered as the most essential aspect in sustaining human development. Maasai probably are more concerned in attaining access to the modern world through education. In the past education was actually considered as useless. Ideologically, the Maasai enjoyed an independent status, sustaining themselves by migrating from place to place with their cattle. However, these days this independent status is crumbling off and Maasai need to find new ways of surviving. In Oltepesi, education is now assumed to be composed out of the knowledge and skills of the *mzungu*, rewarding a student with more success and opportunities in the world. Santiago, a young Mexican catechist in Mashuuru, told me that these days Maasai evaluate education as the most valuable gift from the church. Even development organizations argue that education for children is essential to sustain the development of a tribe.¹³³ The primary school of Oltepesi was financed by the Catholic Church. Children joining this school lived in Oltepesi or in the vicinity and frequently visited the Catholic Church on Sunday. The older children in Oltepesi attend classes at the Mashuuru Secondary School, a boarding school in Mashuuru. This school counted approximately 340 students, including 38 girls. One of the investors is the Methodist Church of Kenya. Recently the Catholic Church in Mashuuru opened a girl school, the Eselenkei Supat Girls Hostel. This institution is led by the Catholic Fathers of Guadalupe and the sisters of St. Ann.

¹³³ <http://www.maasai-association.org/highschool.html> (15-02-2014)

Few of these pupils are from Oltepesi, who during the school holidays continued to attend the Sunday services at the Catholic Church of Oltepesi.

Problematic with schools are the costs. Joshua Limpaso informs that parents experience difficulties in paying the schools fees. Most students depend on bursaries and benefactors and therefore, to gain this sustenance mothers make contact with the church. The church could decide to directly sponsor a child's education or it will search for other well wishers. Mama Virginia, a Maasai widow in Oltepesi, and P-ole Murero regularly discussed how to find a bursary for her son Tyson. Nowadays he is studying at the University in Eldoret, with his education being paid for by Father Martin, a priest from Poland who followed the Maa language course at Oltepesi. In spite of being late at every Mass, Mama Virginia never missed the Sunday services at the Catholic Church. Tyson instead attended the services in Oltepesi, but refused to go to church in Eldoret. When Father Karl, the former priest of The Oltepesi Cultural Centre was leaving Oltepesi in 2013 to be stationed at another mission in Kisumu, Emelly Chepchumka, the maid of the institute, did not want him to leave because he was financing the education of her son.

Again, there is a two-way relationship. The church and Maasai mothers show interest in each other, instigated by their own needs. By investing in this relationship they both benefit. Mothers struggle to send their children to school, because education is the entrée ticket to the modern world. Memusi, the catechist from Imaroro, affirmed that his father in the past traveled to a mission station only because he wanted an education. He has never been interested in Christianity. Churches in turn strive to own schools to indirectly spread Christianity and hold on Catholic or Protestant members. H. Stoks noted that the Kenyan state plans to seize schools and shift them to be state properties instead of church institutions. These plans are fiercely opposed by the church, because they realize that they will lose most of their church members, as soon as they lose ownership of schools. Without being responsible for education, the tactic of favoritism would namely lose its utility.

B. Provision of employment

As mentioned in chapter 4, Joshua Limpaso convinced Father Mol to establish the institute in Oltepesi, because he and the Maasai community hoped for the provision of employment. Even if the amount of offered jobs has been disappointing, some people were fortunate. The priest of the Catholic Church is not able to exercise all his duties by himself. Therefore he is supported by a catechist, Alex Kombe in Oltepesi and Memusi in Imaroro. Both Maasai men are paid for their services. However, according to Memusi it is a poor salary and Alex Kombe preferred moving around with his motorbike to Lenkisim, a town north of Oltepesi, instead of exercising his duty of helping the priest. Also the Protestant Church made use of a catechist. Maasai, in contrast to many other

Kenyans, are not willing to become priests, because priesthood means renouncing marriage. Besides assigning catechists, the cultural institute employed some Maasai women, Emelly Chepchumka, Emely, Agnes and Kuresoi, to work as housemaids. They never skipped a Sunday Mass. Furthermore, there were several jobs on the compound like working on the computers, a task exercised by Kuresoi and Mary, the daughter of Mama Saitoti. Last year there was a young Maasai man at the centre doing different types of chores like cutting the grass and watering the trees. He is always present in church. Nowadays, the church and the institute offer fewer jobs compared with the past, for the reason that money sent by churches from Europe is diminishing.

C. Medical sustenance

The Catholic Church tends to offer medical sustenance to families. Father John, the former priest of the Mashuuru parish, visited the mother of Joshua Limpaso weekly to apply medical crème in her infected eyes. One evening when Agnes, the daughter of Mama Saitoti, had a severe asthma attack, Father Martin drove her to the hospital. Furthermore, the church is investing a lot of time in helping the sons of Emmanuel, the brother of Joshua Limpaso. Emmanuel is living with his wife Elisabeth near the institute. His sons are handicapped and need medical treatment regularly. Initially, the church supported them in their hospital visits. Nowadays they found an NGO, specialized in supporting financially the development of handicapped children.



Maasainess versus modernity

These days in Africa are not solely marked by Christianity. Africans are not exclusively surrounded by mystical powers, spirits and the belief in the Supreme Being. They are now also surrounded by Western technology, materialistic attractions, secularism, and Western style of education, Western philosophies and ideologies.¹³⁴ In this chapter the Maasai in Oltepesi will not be addressed as a group anymore. Here we will now uncover the existing personal relationship between some of the Maasai respondents and the church. This will result in attaining a clear image about the intentions of the Maasai in dealing with Christianity and how they evaluate their own precious society and its associated culture.

DIVIDING THE MAASAI IN CATEGORIES

At first sight, for a stranger it would be difficult to determine the origin of the people living in Oltepesi. The majority of the persons spotted in the area substituted their Maasai clothes by western clothes, with pants and skirts. The group of people who still present themselves in their traditional Maasai attires lived in particular in the northern part of Oltepesi, towards Lenkisim, more distant from Mashuuru. The youth probably has been influenced during their school years, as not one single boy or girl wearing Maasai dressing could be encountered. Most elders, in contrast to the youth, distaste to wear pants or skirts. Remarkable was the conversion of feelings during church or Maasai ceremonies. At these moments, no matter what age, most people were proud to dress properly in accordance with Maasai clothing. Furthermore, besides clothing, a stranger would notice that Oltepesi is occupied by houses made of stone. In fact, most men and women dislike living in the Maasai round mud house. They rather invest money in building a stone house, interpreted as a sign of modernity. A *mzungu* does not live in a hut as well. There are four families in Oltepesi who still lived in the traditional Maasai houses. One of these families conveyed the impression to live more in accordance with the Maasai traditions, as the husband, the head of the homestead, had two wives. The other three families had lower incomes than the other families in the area. In most cases, a second aside standing room was build next to the stone house, functionalizing as the kitchen. Some families, like the ones of Mama Virginia, Mama Saitoti and Joshua Limpaso could afford to build this second room with bricks or iron plates. Other families build the kitchen with mud and cow dung.

¹³⁴ Gehman, *African traditional religion in Biblical perspective*, p. 4.

This variation is probably strongly related to financial distinctions between families. As a point of fact, there are families in Oltepesi who, regarding their finances, seem to have fewer difficulties in meeting to the high costs of the world of today. On the other side there are families experiencing more financial pressure.

Mama Saitoti, Mama Virginia, Joshua Limpaso, Ruth Sautet and the husband of Emely Eduard are the head of families which have been quite successful in financial terms. They have been able to struggle up to engage in several lucrative careers and businesses. Mama Saitoti worked at a dispensary. After saving sufficient money she build four simple houses of two rooms in Mashuuru to rent out. Nowadays she is not working at the dispensary anymore, but she is of course still attaining money from the rented out houses. Mama Virginia started as a teacher at the secondary school in Mashuuru and achieved to attain an administrative job in the education sector. Ruth Sautet is married to the Protestant Pastor of the Dominion Chapel in Oltepesi and together they own a restaurant in Mashuuru. The Pastor namely opened up a restaurant before becoming a Protestant Pastor. Even though these families had a salary, they also owned cattle. Besides, they kept stressing their future plans of enlarging their homesteads, building new rooms, to set a vegetable garden or cultivating some crops. Striking was the fact that these successful women were educated. They had sufficient knowledge and skills which made them independent. They could namely use their own powers to find and exercise a job or a business and earn money. They were not entirely dependent on their husbands. Moreover, precisely their home situation with regard to these husbands was advantageous. Mama Saitoti was divorced and Mama Virginia lived alone after the death of her husband. Without a husband they were head of their families, making their own decisions. Ruth Sautet in contrast had a husband who had an education like herself. This was profitable for Ruth Sautet, since an educated man prefers an educated woman and he would accept the active participation of his wife in earning money and in progressing. Independent of their marital status, these educated mothers knew exactly how they wanted to invest their money. These mothers could take care of themselves and did not need to call the church '*bwana wangu*', 'my husband'. They were not entirely dependent on the church in their struggle for survival. However, as long as the church is present in the area there was no reason for ignoring it. It still could be an adequate medium, in that it could make life more comfortable. The church namely assisted these families in certain circumstances. The church organization CARITAS placed a water tank at the homestead of Joshua Limpaso and Mama Saitoti. The homestead of this last person and the one of Ruth Sautet were connected to the water well of the church through pipelines. Two years ago CARITAS established a borehole, now used by all families to water their cattle. Mama Saitoti was addressed and asked to herd the cattle of the institute. Besides, regularly the institute bought milk from Mama Virginia.

Probably most important was the church's connection to education. Actually, the presence of the church was the cause of the financial success of families. It namely invested money and assistance in the education of these people, who subsequently found a job. For this reason there is a ruling vicious circle; educated parents yearn to grant their children an education as well, even though they are aware that education expenses are too high; eventually, if parents want to send their children to school they will knock at the church doors to ask again for sustenance. In other words, education will develop adults into independent people, but will demand their dependency as soon as their children are ready to become independent themselves through an education. Instead of only looking at Maasai women we also need to look at the Maasai men as there are also a few men in Oltepesi who, when considering their incomes, are more prosperous than other men. Two of them, after attaining an education sponsored by the church, maintained their connection with the church for their own advancements. In this case, the church provides their sustenance. Joshua Limpaso was appointed by the Mill Hill Missionaries in Mashuuru to become a catechist. Nowadays, he has not a permanent position but he keeps working for various development projects, like the Puaan e Maa initiative group. He tries to bring Oltepesi under the attention of development projects, by being the mediator between the church, the Maasai community and various NGOs. His income was sufficient to build a stone house with a separate kitchen. He received a water tank, has abundant cattle and he tries to cultivate some vegetables, unfortunately without much success. Additionally, also the husband of Ruth Sautet had connections to the church. He is the Pastor of the Dominion Chapel in Oltepesi. He attends courses to improve in his task of being a Pastor, he owns a car, a television, a generator for electricity, a big homestead and he cultivates maize. His children all opened up businesses in Mashuuru. Joshua Limpaso and the Pastor both had an education which was focused on the intention of earning money by working for the church. For this reason they probably never dismissed the church in their lives. The husband of Emely Eduard, in contrast to Joshua and the Pastor is a Protestant teacher in Mashuuru. Emely Eduard however send her two children to join the services at the Catholic Church. The following year, these two boys will also join the Guadalupe Primary School in Oltepesi.

Opposite to families which have their financial situation in order, there are families who have been less successful in finding a lucrative job or start up businesses. These families are strongly related to the church in their maintenance. Emely the mother of Lucy, Kuresoi and Emelly Chepchumka worked at the institute or at the Catholic Parish in Mashuuru as maids and were paid at the end of every month. Kuresoi informed that she really had difficulties in sustaining her family when her salary was paid out with delay. Regularly the institute inquired the cooperation of Lucy, when many visitors resided at the centre. These maids lived in houses made of mud and cow dung,

except for Emelly Chepchumka, who lived in a small, stone house belonging to the institute. She was a Kalenjin, originally coming from Kajiado and therefore she had no house in Oltepesi. As mentioned before, the church is further of help concerning the medical sphere. It initially helped the handicapped children of Elisabeth and Emmanuel in their hospital visits and during various medical examinations. The church provided the transportation to the hospital in Kajiado and paid the visits. Nowadays, the institute addressed an NGO specialized in sponsoring the education and medical treatments of handicapped children. Moreover, the institute set ground to the establishment of the Puaan e Maa initiative group, an organization which buys the Maasai bracelets and ornaments to subsequently sell them in Europe. A couple of years ago the institute was of interest for the youth. Young men like Samuel the son of Mama Saitoti, Gideon the son of Emely, Lenny, Albertus, William Olososio and Sammy Rayiani could earn some pocket money by cutting the grass, building new constructions or watering the trees. Several times Mary, the daughter of Mama Saitoti was present in the classroom to overwrite various texts of books digitally on the computer.

Today, the youth together with the chores have disappeared. This case explains that young men are interested in the church at moments when money is coming instantly. At these moments they will present themselves as loyal visitors during Sunday masses. As soon as a job disappears and money could not be earned, these young men move away to find other means to survive. William Olososio migrated to an urban area, Albertus is now herding his cattle and Gideon is working in butchery in Mashuuru. Due to lack of finances the institute prefers to employ one single man. This man and Alex Kombe the catechist are the only adult men who are strongly connected with the church for their maintenance, since they both receive a salary. Except for Alex Kombe and the worker, there were two other young men attending the services. The other adult men in Oltepesi accept the presence of the church in the area, do have friendly relationships with Father Karl and Pole Murero but are not willing to attend the services or to accept jobs. They rather prefer to get involved in a certain business in Mashuuru or fall back in their traditional roles of herding and selling cattle. Nevertheless, when food will be distributed in periods of persistent drought and famine, men will go to the church to collect their share. This phenomenon is comparable to moments of the past, when men also tended to worship *Enkai* in times of disaster, war or famine. Emelly Chepchumka has an own perspective on the Maasai as an outsider, since she belongs to the Kalenjin. She described the Maasai to be lazy people. According to her, even if they would work several hours in a butchery or they herd their cattle, they are not interested in having a permanent job with set times. They do not want to become tired. There is the ruling idea that people expect The Oltepesi Cultural Institute to offer work to the Maasai. However, according to Emelly Chepchumka the majority is not interested in permanent jobs. Maasai would pay a visit to the Institute looking for people to

exchange the news, to have a conversation with and maybe they could cut the grass and earn some pocket money. This is sufficient for them.

Based on the preceded information it is clear that the Maasai society could be divided in two categories. On one side there is the category of families which reached the point of being financially outstanding by developing their own knowledge and skills. On the other side there are families which did not develop in being financially prosperous. In the first category, Maasai men and women tend to act identically. Both are willing to use their knowledge and skills to progress. They invest a reasonable amount of effort in establishing a relationship with the church. This institute could be useful in making life more comfortable, as it for example established a water well intended for all cattle. However, when a profession is linked directly to the church, this is the case for Joshua Limpaso and the husband of Ruth Sautet, church services will not be neglected. In other words, prosperous families do not daily need the church to earn bread on their table. In the other category, regarding non financial prosperous families, there is a distinction between the two genders. Women who attain support from the church at this exact time with reference to the spheres of education, medical treatment and job provision will not skip even one mass, like Elisabeth. Other women, in the same way as prosperous women, who do not obtain instant help will nevertheless not ignore the church. These women try to take into account that they possibly would need the church in the future and therefore they will attend the Sunday services regularly and invest efforts in establishing a friendship relation with the church members. The other days these women prefer to stay at home and being busy with their household chores. They do not see any need for leaving their work behind and attend the services each Sunday. Men belonging to the category of less prosperous families react differently from women, but could also be subsequently divided in two groups. Young men are namely willing to work for the church if the work is paid out directly by cash. Elders are not interested at any time and rather prefer to keep distance. An exception to this attitude will be exposed during periods of severe drought and famine.

The two categories do have something in common considering the attitude of women. When not profiting from the church at the time itself, women nevertheless continue investing and focusing their hopes on church members because they could offer help on the longer term or in the future. For example, one day Agnes, the daughter of Mama Saitoti, had a severe asthma attack. Eventually Father Martin brought her to the hospital in Kajiado with his car. It is never certain when the church is needed. This attitude reflects that the Maasai in Oltepesi changed. In the past they were not focused on the future. They were concerned with their survival in the present. Nowadays they also

consider their future.¹³⁵ This could be explained by the fact that Maasai namely do not depend fully on themselves anymore. They could not easily migrate to other areas or live exclusively on their cattle, due to amongst other things land reduction and expansion of agriculture. They are aware that they need to collaborate with the people surrounding them. Besides, when they take action in for example finding a job, there is the underlying idea that in the future, when they earned money they will be able to buy goods. Hence, they have dreams which focus on the future. Another shared feature between the two categories, comprising both men and women, is their common interest in western material goods. I repeat, most Maasai prefer to wear western clothes and favor a stone house instead of the traditional Maasai mud house. As reported by H. Stoks there is a worship of goods in the area. People yearn to call with mobile phones, to wear a watch on their wrists, to write on a laptop, to listen to the radio, to have televisions, a car, latrines or electricity. They do not have knowledge about how to properly use these goods, but they do not mind. Broken objects will certainly be exchanged by new ones, when another benefactor has been found. B.A. Moss explains that the African society emerged to glorify consumer items due to European influence but moreover certainly due to own African desires.¹³⁶ When an African was able to attain new consumer goods, he will be warmed up by a feeling of satisfaction and an increased self-esteem.¹³⁷ Further, with these goods, Africans could adhere to a new style of living. The process was stirred up by missionaries and colonial officials by converting African housewives in agents of consumption. They expected women to demand for consumer goods, which man had to deliver by becoming active into wage labor. Together with these phenomena of consumption, cultural transformations in the African society could not be impeded.¹³⁸ With the emergence of the church Maasai hoped for the distribution of modern goods, but also the creation of education facilities and job availability. When earning money with a job, they would be able to buy things. Hence, they are interested in the aspect of owning rare, expensive goods which express a changing lifestyle. Most adult men however prefer to earn money and buy these goods by other means instead of asking for help at the church its doors. Maasai believe that they will be able to make a step in realizing their dreams as long as the church is present in their lives. Additionally, they are interested in salvation from calamities in the present day, as explained in chapter 3. Hence, the church could improve their lives here and now. However, Joshua

¹³⁵ Mungazi, *Gathering under the mango tree*, p. 191.

¹³⁶ Moss, 'To determine the scale of wants of the community', p. 87.

¹³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 87.

¹³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 86.

Limpaso informed about a growing anger felt at the side of the Maasai towards The Oltepesi Cultural Institute. They namely acknowledge that they, as a community are not profiting from the institute and there is no provision of employment. If the institute will close its doors, the Maasai will lose their hopes for development. After several observations, I expect that this anger deals with the concept of the two-way relationship between giver and receiver, explained in chapter 3. If the Maasai are welcoming the church and do attend the Sunday services, the church has the duty to reward them. In the past they would pray to *Enkai* and receive rain, flourishing in grass and cattle. Nowadays they would pray in the church to the Christian God and they expect to receive education, jobs, medicines but also directly food, mobile phones, televisions etc.

Although this thesis seems to indicate that the Maasai are not experiencing the Christian belief the way the western Christian churches would like to think, we have to recognize the possibility that Maasai could actually be truly religious.

MAASAINESS versus MODERNITY

The respondents were asked how we can still recognize them as being Maasai. They all responded by saying that their Maasai characteristics are the Maa language, their Maasai bracelets and ornaments and their kind of lifestyle based on cattle. They claimed to be involved in a process of preserving the good Maasai customs and rejecting bad practices. To describe this process the Catholic Church would speak about inculturation. Inculturation means amongst many other definitions, that the church supports the Maasai to reject bad Maasai customs which are in contraction with the teachings of Christianity. The essential goal of inculturation is to adapt the Gospel to the Maasai mind. During church services the church laymen remind the Maasai that amongst other things circumcision and polygamy should be abolished. Church members who are not able to hold on these rules will feel the condemnation from the church when they are excluded from baptism and other sacraments. For the Maasai, being excluded from baptism is a severe punishment. H. Stoks explained to me that the Maasai believe the baptism certificate to be a passport which grants access to all international schools in the world. Christ has to be transplanted in the African mind, but the culture of the indigenous people should not be destroyed. In fact, in Oltepesi we recognized that the Maasai are still loyal to many Maasai customs, values and ideas, even if these could be against the teachings of the church. This was also valid to the group of men and women who were successful in their enterprises. Mama Saitoti is loyal to the Maasai value of sharing. In chapter 3 it is illustrated that sharing is required when life involves the survival of the community instead of the individual. Mama Saitoti will never dissent when hearing the pleas of family members and friends. Furthermore she will always entrust the slaughtering of a cow, a goat or a sheep to a man. A woman is only allowed to

slaughter a chicken. Before milking the cows she will sprinkle some milk, a sign of respect and gratitude towards *Enkai*. Mama Virginia recognized the Maasai value of respect. Therefore, she prefers to arrange an appointment even if she dislikes the idea, instead of refusing. Ruth Sautet is aware about the places exclusively accessible for men and therefore she will, for example, remain at her restaurant and never set a foot at the cattle market in Mashuuru.

Independent of their financial status, families are proud about their culture. The Maasai in Oltepesi admire the *mzungu*, its knowledge, power and modern goods. However, they are not concerned with his customs, habits and lifestyle. During the stay at the institute, they usually responded with distaste and disbelief when talking and informing them about life in the Netherlands. The Maasai actually dislike the *mzungu* kind of behavior, not based on respect. A *mzungu* for example will not greet every person he meets on his journey. Moreover, as it is already mentioned in chapter 3, D.A. Mungazi (1996, p. 180) enunciated that the Maasai believe to have a valuable relationship with *Enkai* and to be her chosen people. This unique quality offered them a unique culture which could not be exceeded by others. Already in the past they proved that they glorified their own culture. They namely did not use military skills to destroy other tribes, but to protect themselves, resulting in the preservation of their traditions, values and ceremonies. Today, many practices and values have not been forgotten. Even *Enkai* did not disappear to the background. Still today, Maasai traditional religion interferes with social, physical and spiritual spheres. Judith, a teacher at the Guadalupe Primary School, told that during periods of persistent drought Maasai will appoint someone to slaughter a sheep or a goat to ask for the blessing of *Enkai*. To sacrifice an animal is to communicate with the supernatural power.¹³⁹ A newborn child will be covered by a *shuka* or a kanga (a piece of cloth) to protect it against the evil eye. Four years ago, the generation of Joshua Limpaso gave permission to initiate another period of 15 years, intended to circumcise a new generation. A man is not allowed to marry a woman from his clan, because they are family members with shared blood.

The pride of the Maasai also concerns the relationship between genders. The two genders do not discuss and do not seem to be concerned with possible equality between genders or abolishing gender domains. Actually, in the West it is frequently assumed that women in other parts of the world are inferior to men and are not treated equally. However, D.A Mungazi (1996, p. 32) argues that women in African cultures had their own goals and knew exactly what was right and good for themselves.¹⁴⁰ According to A. Talle (1988, p. 9) women in nomadic societies do have more power in

¹³⁹ D. Priest Jr., *Doing theology with the Maasai*, (Pasadena, California, William Carrey Library, 1990), p. 111.

¹⁴⁰ Mungazi, *Gathering under the mango tree*, p. 32.

contrast to what male ethnographers usually write. Indeed, women are aware that their decisions, made in the sphere of the homestead, have direct influence on the world outside. In her chapter *Embodying the contradictions of modernity: gender and spirit possession among the Maasai in Tanzania* (1997, p. 111-129), D.L. Hodgson agrees that women have own powerful rights and roles in the society. On the other hand, she explains that these roles and rights were strongly questioned during the colonial and post-colonial period and women today do definitely show their concerns about this transition.¹⁴¹ Gender relations and ideologies are not fixed in time. They do transform on the basis of various interactions which take place on cultural, social and material level. These interactions are in turn used by Maasai men and women to renegotiate or reinforce the existing gender relations. Maasai women experienced a lost in their rights over economic resources; they felt political marginalization and were excluded from education and income generation.¹⁴² The possibility for women to punish men with economic sanctions in domestic and public spheres was seized when men were enriched by a new status of independency by working and trading with European firms.¹⁴³ More severe for women was the feeling of losing their Maasai identity. Opposite from these transitions, male patriarchy was reinforced.¹⁴⁴ These changes arouse when British administrators and later Tanzanian governments approached Maasai men, with the wrong assumption that solely men represented the Maasai tribe and established the Maasai identity. Men were persuaded by British administrators to become active in the cash economy instead of relying on a barter economy. As Maasai men were appointed to be the tax payers, the decision makers, the livestock owners and the political actors, they increased their interest and control over livestock. Women in contrast lost their rights over livestock. In addition to men becoming the sole sellers and buyers of livestock, men imposed their control over domestic affairs since they were addressed as the intermediaries between the British government and the Maasai tribe.¹⁴⁵ Challenges for women also arouse when colonial officials introduced the customary law. This law was based on the European understanding of traditional law. However, these ideas were exchanged by having conversation with Maasai men and not women. This resulted in women being placed under the authority and control of their

¹⁴¹ Hodgson, 'Embodying the contradictions of modernity', p. 111.

¹⁴² Ibidem, p. 111.

¹⁴³ I. Amadiume, *Male daughters, female husbands. Gender and sex in African society*, (London, The Bath Press, 1987), p. 141.

¹⁴⁴ Hodgson, 'Embodying the contradictions of modernity', p. 111.

¹⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 114.

husbands.¹⁴⁶ Besides all these transitions, as was mentioned before, the work of women increased during the years. They had to find new ways of earning money and therefore expanded their work to include agricultural activities. Contemporaneously, trading activities with neighboring villages ceased. Additionally, women felt a legitimate fear concerning their identity, which slowly seemed to disappear. Maasai men have always been considered as those who characterize the real traditional Maasai. In spite of losing their rights, roles and identity, women do not have economic and political power to oppose the system. More concerning is their lack of knowledge of whom to oppose or whom to blame.¹⁴⁷ One way of expressing their discontentment and concerns towards the loss of female rights, women use the strategy of *orpeko*, a spirit possession, which I mentioned earlier in this Master thesis. Possessed women complain about various symptoms, as headaches, pain in their wombs, fever and the unwillingness to speak. By being possessed by *orpeko*, women willingly place themselves in a position of marginalization, isolation and suffocation in accordance with their status in the society. Like the transitions initiated during the colonial period by British administrators, *orpeko* is a force deriving from outside the Maasai society. Husbands would prefer to send their possessed wives to medicinal healers; however this will reinforce man dominance. Women will support each other in these moments and convince possessed women to attend church services on a regular basis. Only the church has the strength to drive out *orpeko*. Even if the church grows out to be the domain of women and does not deal with male domination, in contrast to government and development agencies, the church is not able to resolve women their problems. Indeed, their loss of political and economic power due to men interference could not be reversed. Male authority is not challenged. Actually, even the church maintains male hierarchies and teaches Maasai about proper gender roles.¹⁴⁸ The church taught Christian African women to be dependent housewives by dividing men as the 'breadwinners' and women as the 'housekeepers'. B.A. Moss reports that this idea of the church was not realizable and against the tradition.¹⁴⁹ Besides, the Christian morals led to new tensions in the villages. Men were the 'breadwinners' and therefore had not domestic responsibility. They preferred to spend their wages on luxury products instead of using the money for domestic materials which were needed by their wives. Educated men refused to help women in the fields, to supply them with money and food or carrying water. Since women ended up with more work, they

¹⁴⁶ Moss, 'To determine the scale of wants of the community', p. 87, 89.

¹⁴⁷ Hodgson, 'Embodying the contradictions of modernity', p. 115.

¹⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 125.

¹⁴⁹ Moss, 'To determine the scale of wants of the community', p. 101.

reacted on these church gender morals differently. Some women ignored the church and continued working in the fields and on Sunday, the Christian rest day. Other women recognized good business in producing local beer. Still others ignored completely the idea of women being the 'housekeepers'.¹⁵⁰

To repeat, D.L. Hodgson observed that Maasai women had concerns since they lost their rights and powers, which have influence on their social, biological and reproductive systems. Their concerns and fear are strongly enough to turn on the use of the strategy of *orpeko*. *Orpeko* resulted in the creation of new relationships between women, who support each other in overcoming feelings of isolation and despair. Besides, *orpeko* enabled women in creating a female community in the church, removed from the control of men. Problematic is that women do not know to whom they should direct their fears and anger and whom to blame for their loss of female powers. However, the Nnobi women in Igbo land knew exactly who to blame. They did not attack the white men directly but they attacked his courts, his symbols of power and oppression, his factories, the warrant chiefs and the foreign goods in markets.¹⁵¹

I. Amadiume announces an interesting principle belonging to motherhood, namely self-sacrifice and their concern of peace and order.¹⁵² Women have to work hard for the best interest of their children and the church. This principle could explain why men and women in Oltepesi hold on their gender segregated role patterns in the Maasai community. Women are more concerned in maintaining peace in the environment, in order to take care of their families. I hold the opinion that gender roles have not been changed, despite of the warm welcoming of the church, the introduction of schools with western influences and the Maasai longing for jobs and western goods. As in the past, a woman is called *enkerai*, hence considered as a child belonging and in need of a man, in this case a husband, to take care of her. Before being married off a girl has to be circumcised. Her duty is to deliver children as many as possible for her husband. A daughter will leave her parents house and move to live with her family in law. She will spend most of her time in the kitchen, her domain. Part of the household duties are fetching water, looking for firewood, washing clothes, cleaning the house and cooking meals. She will buy food at the market and milk the cows and goats in the evening and morning. Most important is to show respect to the elders. Men herd the cattle, build the kraal or fences to protect the homestead, they will sell or buy cattle at the market, they will slaughter animals, share the meat and discuss important issues.

¹⁵⁰ Moss, 'To determine the scale of wants of the community', p. 101, 102.

¹⁵¹ Amadiume, *Male daughters, female husbands*, p. 142.

¹⁵² *Ibidem*, p.162, 166.

Women realize that men will never change their attitude and will never involve in female tasks. If the wife of a man is not present in the house his daughters are expected to take over their mother's duties. Mama Virginia has a busy life with her job in Mashuuru. When her children are at home, her daughters will automatically spend time on washing cloths and cooking meals. In the meanwhile, her sons will rest. Their support or help would never be expected or even requested. Men are expected to help when fences need to be repaired or the cattle have to be brought back home. Mama Saitoti explained that men in reality are able to cook or to wash their clothes by themselves. However, she knew that her son Samuel will always refuse to help her with these chores. A mother is aware of what she could request from her children. On the other hand, simultaneously, children grow up by learning about the concept of family hierarchy. The familial patriarch is the supreme judge over all matters pertaining the family's well being.¹⁵³ Kayok, the son of Mama Virginia, and his fiancée entrusted their parents in organizing their wedding, because the elders are expected to have more knowledge and wisdom. Children acknowledge the expectation to take care of their parents and realize that their oldest siblings do have more authority.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, the youngest children of the family have to respect the older siblings by listening to their orders. These few examples clarify that Maasai expectations and regulations, concerning how people relate to each other according to age and sex are deeply rooted in the society. Women indeed consider themselves as being responsible amongst many other things for the household chores. Even if they recognize harm in the gender segregated roles patters, they do not show it to the outside. As I. Amadiume said, probably Maasai women rather choose self-sacrifice in order to maintain order and peace. In other words, women, children and men are aware that they have certain fixed obligations towards each other. Everyone recognizes his personal status, his function and his responsibilities. This knowledge results in harmony between human beings and with *Enkai*.¹⁵⁵ P.J. Paris (1995, p. 87) explained: "There is not injustice as long as trust exists among those who interact with one another and as long as all share a common dedication to the paramount value of maintaining harmony within the community". In chapter 3 it was described that Maasai do not believe in equality but in complementarity. Both genders, with their own tasks and responsibilities are needed to create life. For this reason, *Enkai* is female and male simultaneously.¹⁵⁶ Hence, Maasai women in Oltepesi share

¹⁵³ P.J. Paris, *The spirituality of African peoples. The search for a common moral discourse*, (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1995), p. 83.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 81-82.

¹⁵⁵ Paris, *The spirituality of African peoples*, p. 85.

¹⁵⁶ Stoks, *Hemelen dauwt*, p. 88. Hodgson, *The church of women*, p. 36.

the same perceptions with men, regarding their role patterns. I assume that inequality between the two genders does not exist, precisely because it is not recognized by the members of the society.

At the other side, women are aware about the consequences they will experience when moving against the directions of their community. Men in general do namely not mind when women work together with the church and attain financial, medical or educational help. Support for women is accepted as long as women keep to their tasks. When a woman expresses her unwillingness to do the household chores or even the unwillingness to accept circumcision she will be warned by her father and husband. To move against the directions of the community is unwanted because life in the Maasai tribe is arranged on the basis of the community. Moreover, injustice has to be avoided because it could have negative influences on the mood of *Enkai*. The life purpose and the highest good for each member is to preserve and promote the well-being of the Maasai community.¹⁵⁷ D.A. Mungazi (1996, p. 184) adds that a person has to sacrifice himself for the good of others, for the good of the community and to satisfy *Enkai*. Therefore, every member has to act according to his responsibilities connected to his status, because the individual thinking and behavior of one member does indirectly represent the community. Absence of knowledge about individual and collective values and inappropriate behavior are strongly unwanted and rejected.¹⁵⁸ Moreover, women who are not willing to act in the interest of the group, but prefer to act in the best interest of themselves, could be threatened by the fear of being excluded from the community. Exclusion is a drastic consequence since life in the Maasai tribe is based on communal work. Besides, when being excluded from the entire life of the society, a person will be detached from his roots, his foundation and from security.¹⁵⁹ In Oltepesi it was noticed that community expectations do pressure women to show their knowledge about Maasai values. When I visited Emely Eduard she was accompanied by another Maasai woman, who wore the traditional Maasai clothes. This woman jumped up from her seat to cover herself, when a man was standing at the entrance of the house. She was namely not wearing an underskirt under her *shuka*. Emely Eduard stated that she would never wear jeans or pants in Oltepesi, out of fear to be scolded by other Maasai. Likewise, Judith said that other Maasai did not approve her behavior and therefore she felt a clash between herself and other Maasai.

In repetition, when considering inculturation from a church perspective, it does take place in Oltepesi, although on a limited scale. The Maasai who join the church will sing Christian songs, read and interpret the Bible and adore the Christian sacraments. When having formal conversations

¹⁵⁷ Paris, *The spirituality of African peoples*, p. 131.

¹⁵⁸ Mungazi, *Gathering under the mango tree*, p. 205.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 51.

everyone justified their Christian faith by explaining that Jesus sacrificed himself to save the human beings from their sins. On these grounds they are Christian and do reject bad Maasai customs, which contradict the word of God. In reality they do not. Actually, Maasai customs are all good, said Mama Virginia. The Maasai speak about bad customs, but they just repeat the words of the church. In fact, many Africans who embraced Christianity or Islam, keep holding on their traditional religions simultaneously. Actually, converts to Christianity keep thinking by extracting knowledge and being influenced by Christianity as their traditional culture as well. Indeed, adherents to African traditional religions are not disappearing. The tangible expression of these religions is disappearing but not the worldview connected to it.¹⁶⁰ They themselves do not judge Maasai customs as having bad qualities and do not erase them out of their lives. If the surrounding world permits them to hold on their culture, they will hold on every part and aspect of it. Indeed, Mama Saitoti affirmed that Maasai culture did not change and the people do not live up to the rules of the church. A Maasai man marries a woman in the church and will marry a second wife a few years later. Mama Saitoti unveiled that Maasai are present in the church with their bodies, but not with their souls. On Sunday they will go to church and pretend to be Christians. When traveling back home they are Maasai again, an aspect truly sensed in their souls. During the week they are equipped with their own values, ideas and worldview. Their constructed Maasai world is satisfactory and not in need of adaptation. Besides, clarity is ruling in the society since every person is aware about his duties and responsibilities. To this set of duties a new obligation was introduced when Maasai established their understanding of *mzungu's* and church laymen. This duty prescribes Maasai to take over a Christian identity in order to satisfy the church. However, the real intention of this deed is not to satisfy the church but is done out of self-interest. When attending the Sunday services the Maasai expect the church to reward them, in this case with distributing food, material goods or provide employment and education. The Maasai world is satisfactory, but to possess items belonging to the world of the *mzungu* is quite interesting, more interesting than the Christian faith. Indeed, Mwalimu John from the Diocese of Ngong once explained that many Maasai claim to be Christians but they are hypocrites. They purchase the Christian identity although they are not believing the faith. He added that some priests serve as the wrong example. They preach on Sunday but do the opposite from what they preached, and fall back to be fully Maasai during the other days of the week.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to exclude any transformation in Maasai life. On the other hand, the Maasai are also constrained to find a way of living between their culture, Christianity and the ever changing world surrounding them. From the moment that missionaries and white people

¹⁶⁰ Gehman, *African traditional religion in Biblical perspective*, p. 6.

came into field and when Maasai had to deal with mobility reduction, land expropriation and the economics of consumption and commodization, the Maasai have been active in the process of cultural exchange, meaning culture contact on political, religious, economical and kinship level.¹⁶¹ They got involved in syncretism. Changes did occur as well. The Maasai are not fixed in time without changing and adapting to the world around them. A part of Maasai practices which are disappearing are initiated by developments and transformation deriving from outside the community. Nowadays, young boys will be titled warriors after their circumcision but do not leave their village to move around in the country with their companions in the same age. In Oltepesi boys have to attend school or have to find a job. Circumcision of a girl will be done in secret, without a feast, because it has been prohibited by law. Maasai do not visit the *Iloibonok*, the religious leaders, simply because they are not present in the area anymore. Polygamy is disappearing but not because of church pressure. Men support polygamy but to marry two wives is not realizable due to financial difficulties.¹⁶² Other practices are decreasing due to personal interest. Children's two, lower middle teeth's are not taken out anymore. A man is not expected to walk with a herding stick when herding the cattle. The body of a dying person will not be laid under a tree, to be eaten by wild animals, but the corpse will be buried. Moreover, educated families with financial success seem to be more open minded and do adjudge more freedom and rights to themselves and to their children. Indeed, Judith explained that people have different habits because they are learned and not because of Christianity. Mama Saitoti saw good and promising skills in her daughters. Therefore she was concerned with the education of her children regardless of gender. The daughters of Mama Virginia and Mama Saitoti were not forced to wear Maasai skirts. They were the only girls in Oltepesi wearing pants and jeans. Besje and Agnes have their own life said Mama Saitoti. For this reason they should make their own decisions and choices, even if they prefer the Catholic Church instead of the Anglican community of their mother. Kayok chose a woman instead of his parents appointing a partner. His sister Dorothy had a boyfriend. Sheila, the daughter of Mama Saitoti, divorced five years ago and moved back to live in her mother's house with two children. The wife of Joshua Limpaso regularly travelled to Nairobi to follow a teacher's education course. Ruth Sautet knows precisely how she wants to run the restaurant. Educated women and women in financial prosperous families seem to have higher freedom to express their opinions and desires. Families belonging to the second category, as mentioned before, tend to hold more fiercely on Maasai customs because they fear to lose respect and dignity. Lucy, the daughter of Emely did not select her husband. Elisabeth should never counteract pregnancy, despite

¹⁶¹ Greenfield, Droogers, *Reinventing religions*, p. 24-25.

¹⁶² Clack, 'Re-Africanizing the African' p. 474.

that her sons will all suffer from physical deviations due to a mistake in the inherited genes of Emmanuel. The young man working at the institute was married off to a girl of age 16. The sister of Sammy Rayiani, daughter of Naomi a mother who wears the Maasai traditional clothes, will soon leave her parental house to be married off. Most probably Mama Virginia and Mama Saitoti were able to grant themselves and their children more freedom exactly because they had no husband and therefore less pressure from the Maasai culture.

In conclusion, although Maasai adopted certain western ways of life, they did not assimilate with it entirely.¹⁶³ Considering their inner self, their moral values, they are still Maasai.

¹⁶³ Mungazi, *Gathering under the mango tree*, p. 240



Summary and conclusions

The Maasai culture is composed out of rich ceremonies, rituals, military skills and knowledge. In the past, this tribe looked down on other populations. They exclusively acted for the best interest of their own community and in this hustle they hoped for protection of their divinity *Enkai*. *Enkai* is a unity, containing the two genders male and female simultaneously. However, since *Enkai* is connected to the concept of fertility, this divinity is addressed with the female gender. The Maasai had no doubts that they were the chosen people of *Enkai* and therefore they enjoyed the right to entitle all the cattle in the world. This certainty points out to the expectation that this valuable relationship is based on a two-way relationship. Maasai attained the responsibility to protect and nurture life on earth. This collaboration will stimulate *Enkai* to bless the human beings with abundant rain. Hence, Maasai do believe in salvation, based on redemption from present calamities, instead of eternal life. In their tasks on earth, individual competition is strongly rejected. Since women were daily confronted with nurturing and protecting life in their homesteads, they emerged to be responsible in 'talking to *Enkai*' more frequently compared to men.

The first contacts between Kenyan populations and Christianity did already emerge before the disembarkation of missionaries, when sailors visited the African coasts. Even before this, Christianity expanded in Egypt in the middle of the 1st century. The first missionary activities are traced back in the year 1846, at the East African Coast, led by Ludwig Krapf. However, in these early missionary years, missionary work was mostly ignored by Africans. Missionaries were solely successful in converting fugitives, outcasts or ex-slaves, who approached the mission stations in search of psychological and physical help. For a long time the Maasai were left in peace with their beliefs and their culture, since the British colonizers did not want intruders and missionaries to enter the Maasai Reserve. After long bargaining, the Protestant missionaries were granted permission and became active in various areas, including Mashuuru. The Catholics followed years later in 1957 and established a church in Oltepesi around 1980. Even the Maasai were willing to address the mission stations only when they were hit by various epidemics. After these troublesome periods, most Maasai restored their previous pastoral lives and ignored the mission stations once again. From the 1970's when Maasai actually became more sedentary, slowly they developed some interest for the evangelizers. When missionaries, like V.J. Donovan, started to adapt the *boma* approach, women were the ones who developed interest for Christianity, against the expectations and the aspirations

of both Maasai men and missionaries. These *boma* meetings were held at the homestead, the domain of women. Men used several excuses to avoid the meetings, but women in contrast enjoyed the social gathering, adored the Christian songs and appreciated these moments when men, with their absence, lost the control over their wives. Maasai women also uncovered comparisons between their own divinity *Enkai* and the Christian God. Both resided in the sky and could punish or reward the human beings. Actually, Maasai women became aware that missionaries and white people brought progress and development. Indeed, missionaries had the task of taking care of the needy and to support people in backward situations. This idea in turn was very advantageous and profitable for them. To help the African populations they provided education and offered luxury goods. If Africans wanted to profit from education or attain these luxury goods they first had to convert to Christianity. Missionaries were aware that Africans would glorify consumer items due to own African desires. When attaining these European consumer goods, Africans will be rewarded by feelings of self-satisfaction. By owning consumers goods Africans longed to expressed their new style of living.

Missionaries and Maasai tried to benefit from each other. Maasai at the same time got affected by various developments, like land expropriation, agricultural expansion and market integration. All these developments counteracted mobility. Even if mobility reduced, when living in a not convenient place without fertile grazing land or water accessibility, the Maasai would pick up their belongings and move further. However, the Maasai in Oltepesi on the contrary did not leave but entrusted their hopes on the church. Mainly women did not want to leave Oltepesi when the rumor spread about the plans of the establishment of the Catholic Church. By investing in a good relationship with the church they expected progress and development. Women started to call the church 'their husband', as the church like their husbands provided in their sustenance. The two-way relationship with *Enkai* became extended to include a two-way relationship with the church. To explain, if the Maasai would attend the services and prove to be Christians, the church was expected to help them in return, amongst others in developing the Oltepesi area. Moreover, the Maasai women realized that the church was only willing to help and support people who were members of the house of God. Favoritism influenced the preference of the church concerning their willingness over whom to support. Again, investing in a two-way relationship with the church would result in salvation from present calamities, because a church will deliver the supplement of schools, dispensaries, medical treatment, financial support, water resources and the creation of jobs. With the establishment of The Oltepesi Cultural Institute, progress in the area did take place. Father Mol invested in the construction of the Guadalupe Primary School, they excavated a water well and later they installed a water borehole. In the past they regularly employed some Maasai, who earned cash in return. Women glorified education, the greatest gift of Christianity, because at school their

children enrich themselves with the powerful knowledge of the white people. This knowledge will facilitate their search for a job. The Maasai however do not realize that the initial complications in the area are not disappearing and are actually evolving in being more problematic, with new issues like overgrazing and overpopulation. Besides, the Maasai in Oltepesi are losing their nomadic character step by step and therefore dispossessing their unique aspect of independency. It is not peculiar that Maasai men these days still prefer to leave. Maasai men never developed as much interest in Christianity as Maasai women. Firstly, during the *boma* approach, the church evolved to be a domain for women. For this reason men will take distance and never intermingle. Men and women live in separated domains. Secondly, Maasai men are proud about their culture and traditions and consider Christianity as a treat. Christianity namely requires the Maasai to reject polygamy, circumcision and other Maasai habits. Women at the other side were allowed to visit the church because Christianity has no influence on the culture of the tribe through women. Actually, women did not want to lose their culture as well. Comparable to men they were proud about Maasai culture, but they felt the necessity to adapt to Christianity in order to be supported by the church. Therefore, they became active in establishing a relationship with Christianity in such a way that they occurred to be Christians who did not lose their own traditional culture. For this scenario, the Catholic Church would mention the concept inculturation. Inculturation succeeded the already existing notion syncretism. Syncretism and inculturation both consider the process of cultural exchange. There has always been culture contact whereby populations interchange ideas, values, habits, customs and traditions. However, in 1990 during missionary work, mainly the Catholic Church established the term inculturation. Inculturation concerns cultural exchange with an underlying goal, namely the integration of the Gospel in the African mind. In other words, cultural exchange is a natural process which will continue to exist. From the perspective of the church, however, it is essential that cultural contact will leave a Christian mark on the African populations. When addressing the Maasai and their attempts to establish a relationship with Christianity without losing their own identity I do not chose to use one of the two, inculturation or syncretism. I am solely interested in shedding light on the numerous discussions concerning these two concepts.

In Oltepesi we noted differences in the kind of connections Maasai established with the church. The first group includes families which, based on their finances, have been able to meet to the high costs of the modern world. The other group regards families who experience financially more pressure and difficulties. In the first group, men and women, the head of the families, had an education or sufficient knowledge and skills suitable for exercising a job and attaining a good salary. They do not need the church directly in their survival. However, they still prefer to invest in a friendship relationship with church leaders and laymen because this investment could make life

more comfortable and be of necessity in the future. For the other group the church is actually more needed straightaway. Emely and Kuresoi earn a living by working as maids for the institute and the children of Elisabeth have been supported financially in their hospital visits. Among the members of this second group there is a difference between the attitude of men and women. Women are willing to join the church services because they attain instant help or they keep an eye on the future. As long as the church is present in Oltepesi it is wise to invest in a good connection with this institute which could be helpful in the forthcoming days, months or even years. Young men are interested as long as money could be earned directly. Elders are not impressed at all, unless at times of persistent drought and famine. In contrast to the past, the Maasai are now concerned with the future, due to their dreams. They attempt to find a job and earn money, to eventually buy modern goods. However, this enthusiasm does not include interest in the lifestyle, habits or thoughts of the *mzungu*.

The following question was posed at the beginning of this paper: to what extent do Maasai men and women in Oltepesi have contrasting attitudes towards the church and how far does this relate to gender specific attitudes towards *Maasainess* in its totality? Maasai women and men do have contrasting attitudes towards the church, which is related and linked to the gender roles in their community. A woman is considered as a person who makes connection to people, which are needed in her maintenance, like her father and later her husband, to take care of her. When she understood that also the church could take care of her, she started to address this institute as *bwana wangu*, meaning 'my husband'. Besides, a woman is more directly responsible for the survival of her family and for nurturing life. Therefore she cooperated daily with *Enkai* and later addressed the opportunity to gain extra changes by focusing on a two-way relationship with the church as well. Only in times of disaster it is wise for women and men to assemble in order to attain more attention from *Enkai* and the church. People are stronger when standing together. Together they also stand in sharing their pride about their identity and worldview. Maasai women and men are both proud about their culture. They always have been afraid of losing it, seeing that their warriors in the past fought intruders to protect their culture. Significant in the Maasai worldview is the existence of the community. Life is based on the interest of the community, for the reason that only a community is strong enough to keep a culture alive. Therefore, every person has to handle for the good of the commonwealth by knowing his or her status and its associated function. As long as everyone maintains his obligations towards each other and the community, there is no injustice. In the West there is the tendency to describe the role of women in other parts of the world as submissive and inferior. However, from an early age, Maasai women and men have been learning about their expectations and role in the community. In other words, the obligations of women are not experienced as submissive. Nevertheless, during the colonial and post-colonial period, women were affected by political

marginalization, they lost many economic rights and they were excluded from the education sector. Women were placed directly under the control of men. Men in contrast lost their feeling of being responsible for domestic affairs. They namely were appointed by the colonial officials as the tax payers, the owners of cattle and de political/decision makers. Women became frustrated. They had to find new ways of survival, as men ignored to support them financially and they could not come around like they did in the past with their rights over cattle. Besides, more severe was the fear of women to lose their reproduction powers. The above mentioned outside pressures could have a negative influence on their reproduction. Their savior became the church. Even if the church does not question male authority, the church is a place where women pull back, where they rethink new survival strategies and where they support each other to overcome feelings of despair and frustration. For women it is difficult to oppose or to show discontentment regarding their changed position in the society, as they do not clearly know who to oppose or whom to blame. Besides, one aspect of motherhood is their desire of keeping order and peace. Therefore they would rather choose for self-sacrifice. They are aware that at the end, men and women are both needed, with their own different tasks, to create life. This could be the reason why discussions concerning gender roles in the Maasai community are lacking. On the other hand, women realize that moving against the directions of the community could be dangerous, on the grounds that it could result in permanent exclusion.

However, transformations, although slowly, are taking place as well. Educated women tend to offer more freedom to their daughters. Some practices are disappearing due to outside pressures. An example is the disappearing warrior lifestyle. Young boys after their circumcision are sent to school instead of living in distinct warrior villages with their companions of age. Some young girls wear pants instead of skirts.

Even though some families tend to be more open minded, Maasainess is not disappearing. The Maasai are still living in their culture. Men and women do have contrasting conducts connected to the church, although they both fear to lose their culture. Actually, they are not interested in the Christian faith. Like Mama Saitoti said: people are present in the church with their bodies but not with their souls. Besides, the orders of the church, focused on rejecting bad Maasai customs, are not followed. The Maasai do not share the idea with the church that some of their customs are bad. For this reason, the culture of the Maasai in Oltepesi has not been destroyed, even if people wear western clothes and live in stone houses. As was said before, women got involved in inculturation, but actually only on Sunday. The church did not mind, as long as Maasai were present during church services and claimed to be Christians. The deepest values which make a person to be Maasai are still alive, like the concept of respect, the concept of sharing, communal life, consuming the news,

greetings forms, family hierarchy, storytelling, their worldview based on *Enkai* and their remarkable feeling of pride. The Maasai in Oltepesi do have another noticeable aspect. Men and women are both interested in attaining modern goods which symbolize the wealthy life of the *mzungu*. Even if both genders deal with different activities in attaining these goods they both want to live in stone houses, want to call with a mobile phone or want to have a motorcycle. Concluding that their yearning for modernity could be interpreted as a sign of weakness which will eventually corrode the Maasai pride and culture would be very questionable as has been founded in this thesis.

Appendix

What is your name? Where are you from?

What is your religion?

To which church do you belong?

Are you baptized? Why yes or why not?

Where are your parents from? How did they live? Did they make contact with white people?

Were your parents Christians?

How did you grow up? Did you go to school? If yes, which school?

Why did you go to school?

Who were your teachers?

What did you learn at school?

How and where did you learn about Christianity? Was it difficult?

Who is *Enkai*? What do you know about *Enkai*? What did your parents teach you about *Enkai*?

What do you teach your children?

Who or what is God? Why do you believe in him?

Could God also be *Enkai*? Why is he different/the same?

Why do you want him to be present in your life?

Do you think *Enkai* is disappearing?

How do you notice that he is disappearing? What kind of things are/are not disappearing?

Do you want *Enkai* to disappear or do you want him to stay? And why?

What do you hope for?

Do you read the Bible? When?

What makes you to be Christian?

How is your daily life affected by Christianity?

What are the advantages of being a Christian?

What do you teach your children about Christianity?

Would you speak about Maasai Christianity?

What does marriage mean to you? And having a family?

Do you think that your life as a Christian is different from a non Christian Maasai?

How do I recognize you as a Maasai?

Is the church helping you? In what kind of way?

What are the problems of the church?

If there was no church how would Oltepesi have looked like? Will you then be able to live here?

What would you do to make life in Oltepesi possible?

There is competition between various denominations. How do they attract people?

What do you want to see/find in a church?

Why did you choose this denomination?

What is the difference between the Protestant and the Catholic Church?

Is the church interested in aspects of your daily life? (Misfortunes, bareness, practical problems)

How does the church help you with these matters?

If the church is not willing to help you, what would you do?

Which things you believe in could not be found in the church?

How did the church managed to be accepted/liked by the Maasai?

Is your husband religious?

Does he go to church? Do you speak about Christianity at home?

Why do men not like going to church?

Do men believe in *Enkai*?

How do they show to you that they believe in *Enkai* as well?

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