

The maasai people essay sample

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In America, the typical rituals that we do everyday seem normal to other Americans. However, in other obscure cultures they may not think so. They may not even know what underwear is, or how a toilet looks. For example, here in America, everyone goes grocery shopping for their food, but in other places they might go picking or hunting for theirs. Most of the world thinks it is risqué to wear minimal clothing, while others wear none at all. For example, the average American height for women is 5'4, while in the Maasai culture's average height is around 6 feet tall.

The Maasai people have no recorded history, but an oral history, that they pass down from generation to generation. It is said that they originated from the Lower Nile Valley. It wasn't until the fifteenth century that they started migrating south. Finally, in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, they settled in what is now known as Northern Kenya and Central Tanzania. In the mid-nineteenth century, they covered almost all of the Great Rift Valley and lands from Northern Mount Marsabit to Southern Dodoma. In 1852, 800 Maasai warriors were reported on the move to present-day Kenya.

In 1911, the British evicted the Maasai of sixty percent of their land in replace for settlers' ranches. Maasai people named the British explores "iloridaa enjekat" (those who confine their farts), in account to their trousers that they displayed. The British were appalled at the audacity to their behavior, especially their nude displays, and the fact that they leave their deceased in the wild for animals to eat. They attempted to colonize them, but obviously failed. With the British arrival, they also brought with them diseases that caused epidemic throughout the Maasai tribe. They suffered from famine, cholera, drought and smallpox, which caused the population to

severely drop from five hundred-thousand to forty thousand. With their declining population, they were soon weakened enough for the British to overtake and rule them.

In 1857, warriors threatened the Mombosa on the Kenyan coast, after severely depleting the Wakuafi Wilderness. After Tanzania and Kenya gained their independence, it caused a socialist plan of colonization, which in return caused the Maasaian people to resettle into a circular set of homes called “bomas”. It also caused the Maasai to lose more of their land to agriculturists. This caused them to go into poverty and social disorganization. Up until 1976, the government gifted the Maasai three acres of land each to farm in Monduli. This entitled each family to own their own plot of land. They started cultivating beans and maize and raised large herds of livestock. For years the Tanzanian and Kenyan government attempted settle them, but since the Maasai refused to give their traditions and culture, they gave up and disregarded them.

One of their customs is their belief in polygamy. Women are the ones who build their houses, which are made of sticks, grass and finally covered with a mixture of cow feces and mud. Also, in their spare time women bead their own necklaces, dresses, headdresses, and gourds. A game popular with Maasai children, is when they place a rock on a sleeping rhinoceros. To win the game, they must be the one to place a rock on it before it wakes up.

Women and children often have shaved heads. Men are the only ones to have hair that is often fastened into a thin braid. A popular desert is custard, from the blood of a cow, though it is mixed with milk and is curdled. Both

female and male pierce their ears and stretch their earlobes to wear large metallic hoops on the top of their ears. This is used as a form of beauty, and cuts on their faces. They are monotheistic. Their god is called Enkai. Women are considered elders once they conceive four children. The language of the Maasai is called “ Maa”.

Without livestock, Maasai men face many challenges that include lack of money to buy grains, inability to build a house, and a lack of food, and if he is single he may not attract a wife. The rites of passages that the adolescence has to endure are a bit strange. In their culture, both boys and girls get circumcised to enter into the world of adulthood and be eligible to become an elder. Although, now in the twenty-first century women no longer undergo circumcision. At the age of fourteen and sixteen all the boys in that age range gather from all the villages to perform all night, dancing ceremony called “ enkipaata”. The night before the procedure, they must sleep outside in the cold and receive a cold shower to cleanse them. Then they travel throughout the village and receive nasty and deadly glares from family members (silent warnings to not back out of the surgery, or else death or disown). For men to become warriors, they must also kill a lion without any guidance.

Maasai culture and traditions have survived for thousands of years and nothing will change it. They struggled through hardships, discrimination, and avoiding colonization from several sources. “ It takes one day to destroy a house; to build a new house will take months and perhaps years. If we abandon our way of life to construct a new one, it will take thousands of years”.

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