Contextualization: Tanzanian Maasai Culture and the Implications for Worship and
Women's Ministry

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Abstract

Maasai religion, music, and cultural customs have a definite impact on the methodology of missions and relations with the people of their tribes, specifically in the areas of worship and women's ministry. Maasai tribes have specific cultural needs that require ministry different from those usually employed in Western methodology. There are theological foundations of worship and women's ministry that must be understood in order to properly execute the process of contextualization as it applies to the Christian gospel. An analysis of the history, religion, rituals, gender roles, and music of Maasai tribes in Tanzania coupled with an understanding of contextualization will aid in the discovery of the implications of culture for ministry within this specific tribal setting.

Tanzanian Maasai Culture and the Implications for Worship and Women's Ministry

Before Jesus Christ of Nazareth ascended into Heaven after His resurrection from the dead, He left a commandment with His disciples to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19, New King James Version). This command was repeated in each of the Synoptic gospels, as well as in Acts chapter 1, each with a promise of God's supernatural power through the Holy Spirit as the help. It is no secret that evangelical Christians have an obligation to follow and ultimately fulfill this great commission. The Matthew account of the Great Commission furthers the command saying, "Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19a). Again, there is no doubt that in His ministry on earth, Jesus Christ taught the glorification of His father, God. In the same way, Christians ought to live a life that worships God and teaches others to do so also. A mandate for both proclaiming the saving work of Christ to the nations and living a life of worship can be found in Psalm 96: 2-3. "Sing to the Lord, bless His name; proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all the peoples". These verses emphasize the need for the proclamation of the saving power of God to those of different cultural backgrounds as well as the need for worship, the declaration of God's love and of His works, by His followers. In light of this, born-again believers of Christ are obligated to the disciplines of worship and evangelism, as well as the discipleship of others to worship the One True God. God has a heart for all the nations of His created world, wishing for them to know and worship Him; believers are the ones

who are to follow His heart.

The book of Romans shows the necessity of a physical presence to preach the gospel in foreign lands describing, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace...So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:15,17). A formidable difficulty lies in wait for those wishing to bring the message of the gospel to these foreign lands. Inevitably, a difference in culture and society will involve adaptation, sacrifice, and understanding on the part of a missionary wishing to relay the gospel. There is an aspect of contextualizing the message of the Gospel involved, in an effort to show the relevancy and need, while not compromising the truth at the heart of the message. This often requires an adjustment to the methodology employed in the Western world, the riddance of ethnocentricity, and an adoption of a foreign culture and new methodology.

Today, there is a need for the gospel among the Maasai tribes in northern Tanzania. According to research done by the U.S. Center for World Mission, approximately only 10% of the 288,000-person Maasai ethnic group found in Tanzania represent professing Evangelical Christians (Joshua Project: Maasai in Tanzania, 2014). For this purpose, *Evangelical* refers to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only source of salvation through faith, the authority of the Bible, personal faith and regeneration through the Holy Spirit, and commitment to evangelism and study of Scripture. The remaining 90% of the Maasai people believe in an alternate form of Christianity--one that does not hold to the tenets of Evangelical Christianity--or in their own traditional religion. The traditional religion of the Maasai is focused on an alternate deity and dictates a large majority of their cultural customs. Today, there is a slow

advancement of the gospel being seen in the Maasai culture. According to the Joshua

Project: Maasai in Tanzania statistics (2014), they rank as a 3.2 on the progress scale,

with more than 5% of the total population professing as believers. However, the GSEC-

Global Status of Evangelical Christianity, paints a dire picture, registering the current

status of the Maasai tribes at a level 2. This is judged based on a combination of the

current statistics of professing evangelical Christians and the known availability of the

Gospel. A level 2 ranking (which means this people group is less than 2% evangelical but

there has been initial or concentrated church planting among them within the past two

years), according to the GSEC, is considered to be an unreached people group

(International Mission Board, 2014). In addition to the Maasai being considered

unreached or, at the very least, in large need of the gospel, the country of Tanzania is

ranked 49th on the list of the top 50 persecuted countries of the world according to the

WorldWatchList.org (Open Doors USA, 2014). Thankfully, this is a decrease since the

year 2013, but it still shows the pressing resistance of Tanzania toward the gospel. With

the statistics listed above, it becomes relatively clear that there is a need for missions and

evangelism in Tanzania, specifically within the Maasai people group, to teach and train

disciples of Jesus Christ. Such an understanding helps to develop an idea of the impact

that traditional Maasai religion, music, and cultural customs have on the methodology of

missions and relations with the people of their tribes, specifically in the areas of worship

and women's ministry.

<div align="center">**Biblical Foundations**</div>

Great Commission and Great Commandment

As mentioned previously, Jesus's final command before ascending into heaven is the very reason that believers in Jesus Christ are left on Earth after their conversion—to go proclaim His gospel of salvation to all the nations. This passage includes three imperative commands to go, baptize, and teach. In addition to the commands, clarity and some basic methodology is given. When the command to *go* is given, it is used as a participle that implies both the action of being in the process of going, *as you are going* and the action of having already gone. In light of this interpretation, evangelism can take place in one's current setting or an alternative cross-cultural setting. One commentary asserted that, upon receiving this command, the disciples had already done the work of crossing cultural boundaries before they began teaching (Keener, 1997). Regardless, the mission is clear and applies to those who are evangelizing as they go or intentionally going elsewhere for the purpose of evangelism. In further examining the text, the Greek word used in this passage for *nations* is θνος, which can be transliterated to ethnos has been most often translated to *gentile* or *nations* (Strong's Talking Greek and Hebrew Dictionary, 2014). In this passage, *nations* has been chosen, and The InterVarsity Press Bible commentary claimed that this word refers to all people groups of the world (2014). This is a common interpretation of this passage that shows the need for worldwide evangelism. In addition to the command to go, there occurs a command to baptize new followers "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). This phrase signifies both a physical baptism by immersion and a consecration and commitment to follow the commands of Jesus (Barnes, 1949). Following the command to baptize is the command to teach. In this command, a curriculum is noticed when Jesus said, "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you"

(Matthew 28:20). Thus, in order to come to a complete understanding of this

commissioning charge, there must be a level of understanding about the commands of

Jesus.

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus gave many commands. However, just a

few chapters before giving the great commission, He gave the twelve disciples what He

explicitly states is the greatest commandment saying, "You shall love the Lord your God

with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). In his

Notes on the New Testament, Albert Barnes (1949) further explained the meaning of the

word *agapaō* used for love here. He said,

> The meaning of this is, thou shalt love him with all thy faculties or
>
> powers… To love him with all the heart is to fix the affections supremely on him,
>
> more strongly than on anything else, and to be willing to give up all that we hold
>
> dear at this moment… This means, to be willing to give up the life to him, and to
>
> devote it all to his service… To submit the intellect to his will… To labour and
>
> toil for his glory, and to make that the great object of all our efforts. (Matt. 22:37)

One could suggest that Barnes' explanation is highly similar to a more concise definition

of worship found in Donald S. Whitney's book *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian*

Life. In it, he defined worship as "focusing on and responding to God" (2014, p. 103).

The history of the word "worship" offers another definition. Originally flowing from the

Saxon word *weorthscype,* later evolving into *worthship*, which has now become *worship*,

the meaning is to ascribe worth. When used in relation to God, worship becomes the

action of ascribing the worth to God that is due to Him, the sole worthy one (Whitney,

2014). Countless definitions and variations of definitions could be found for the word

worship. However, for the purpose of this writing, the use of a definition found in an

ethnodoxology handbook seems appropriate. In writing about the "Biblical Foundations

of Christian Worship," Andrew Hill defined worship as, "the expression of a relationship

with the Triune God – always simple and always complex, both an event and a lifestyle"

(Hill, 2013, p. 2). One must note that each of these definitions assume an existing

relationship with God—which can happen through evangelism and the fulfillment of the

great commission, as mentioned above. Thus, the two commands are obviously

intertwined and evangelism is meant to help make disciples (worshippers) in all nations.

A beautiful glimpse into a picture of the fulfillment of these commands can be found in

Revelation 7:9 where the writer, John, writes about a vision he has of heaven saying,

>After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one
>
>could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the
>
>throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with paly branches in their
>
>hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, "Salvation belongs to our God
>
>who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!"

This is another evidence of the heart of God toward all nations. Ultimately, people

from all tribes and nations will be worshipping and praising God for eternity in heaven.

However, this reality of eternity must be preceded by the work of evangelism and

teaching of worship to all nations by faithful Christians on Earth.

Mandate for Women's Ministry

In addition to the commands for evangelism and worship, there is a clear mandate

in Scripture for women to minister to other women. This is in no way to take away from

Biblical male leadership and headship as indicated explicitly throughout the Scriptures

and seen in God's original design at creation. However, in addition to the commands for

male leadership, there is a clear instruction for women's ministry. Because this writing is

attempting to discuss the implications of Maasai culture on missionary work, specifically

worship and women's ministry, it is important to first examine the Biblical directives

regarding women's ministry. The most direct passage on this topic is Titus 2:3-5. This

passage begins by establishing firm standards for women who will be leading. They must

be "older, reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good

things" (Titus 2:3). Following this list of standards is a list of curricula. Just as in the

passage in Matthew, the Scripture is clear about what should be taught—"to love their

husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to

their own husbands" (Titus 2:4-5). Love is seen, here, as the basis of a woman's ministry

to her home. Each of these commands is centered around the home, not in a binding

manner, but as the center of a woman's ministry and duties. The motive for women's

ministry, however, transcends cultural differences. The methods of ministry must be

checked by the motive written in the Bible, "that the word of God may not be

blasphemed" (Titus 2:5). The Scriptures are true across time, culture, and context and the

foundations for ministry and methodology must be firmly established by the truths found

in the whole counsel of Scripture (Hebrews 4:12-13). It is after these foundations have

been laid that one can begin to build on them with an understanding of contextualization

of the gospel.

Principles of Contextualization

"Music is a universal language" (Harris, 2013, p. 83). This phrase is often stated

to show how music can cross cultural boundaries and be a point of identification for two

completely different cultures. While not wrong in its intent, a simple analysis of the

diverse people groups around the world will show that music of one culture often does

not hold the same meaning, if any meaning, in another. A revised version of that

statement may say, "Music as a phenomenon is universal; its meaning is not" (King,

2013, p. 114). For many years, the driving method of music used in missions was the

translation of Western hymns into indigenous languages to be used for worship (Man,

2013). Unwittingly, this created a fundamental misunderstanding that Christianity is a

Western religion and that those wishing to become Christians must then submit

themselves to Western cultural ideals, specifically the music. As written in an article

about developing music in African Churches, James Krabill described an encounter with

a man in Chad. The man confessed to Krabill, "I want to become a Christian, but… do I

have to learn your music?" (2013, p. 144). Today, men and women in different cultures

long to sing and worship God in a manner that reflects the beauty and redemptive design

for their culture, but they feel as though Christianity demands Western music.

Contextualization is a way to combat this misunderstanding and begin to empower

indigenous musicians to worship in their native tongue, according to their native culture

in a way that is honoring and pleasing to God.

Contextualization Defined

Contextualization can be defined as, "not compromise, not conforming to the

image of the world, but rather allowing the gospel to become incarnate in the existing

culture in faithfulness to the Bible" (Joseph, 2013, p.137). Contextualization, of the

gospel specifically, does not ever set aside the truth of Scripture. Rather, it presents the

truth in a way that can be readily understood and is clear to the hearers. It demonstrates

the heart of God for all nations that He has created and shows the relevancy of the gospel to impact their culture where they are. With respect to the contextualization of music, the goal is to equip indigenous musicians with proficiency and skills necessary to express praise that is aesthetically beautiful according to their cultural standards, exhibits understanding of theology and doctrine, and mirrors their specific needs and concerns (Loh, 2013). When speaking of the challenge of contextualizing church music, I-to Loh said, "Contextualization is an intimate and complicated double wrestling of the 'text –the word of God–with our present 'context'" (Loh, 2013, p.29). A definite balance must be struck between the two (context and Scripture) without compromising the word of God at any given point. The danger of contextualization is that, if executed improperly, it can promote syncretism, the blending of multiple worldviews (Benham, 2013). Proper contextualization, however, can help lead people of various nations to the understanding that they need not change their culture for Christianity, but Christianity can change and redeem their culture by influencing all aspects of their life (Ruiz, 2013). It is a full understanding of the power of worship and the gospel that enable such changes.

To help greater understand the balanced relationship between worship and culture, the Lutheran World Federation's Study Team on Worship and Culture met in Nairobi, Kenya in 1996 to formulate and formally release the "Nairobi Statement on Worship and Culture." Having studied for three years with members from five different continents, their statement is highly respected. In this release, they noted four prominent ways that worship interacts with culture. The following can be found in their statement:

1. Worship as Transcultural—the same substance for everyone everywhere, beyond culture.

2. Worship as Contextual-- varying according to the local situation (both nature and culture)

3. Worship as Counter-Cultural—challenging what is contrary to the Gospel in a given culture

4. Worship as Cross-Cultural—making possible sharing between different local cultures (Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, 2014, para. 1).

Understanding this balance between worship and culture greatly influences the methods chosen for contextualization. There are various writings on the subject, however, a fundamental principle and guideline of proper contextualization is that the values and meaning of Christianity and local culture are accurately respected and expressed (Calvin Institute of Christian Worship, 2014).

Methods of Contextualization

  Music contextualization. Although there are multiple methodologies written pertaining to contextualization, it is uncontested that the first step is beginning a critical analysis of the music culture of the people. Ethnomusicology is rooted in anthropology and studies music, not only on its own, but as it relates to the lives of a people group (King, 2013). As mentioned before, music contains vast amounts of culturally conditioned meaning. Thus, the appearance of music in a culture carries multiple connotations with it. This can apply to the lyrics/text/verbage of the music, the chordal structures, the form of the music, musical system itself (tuning, common instruments, etc.), or the performers themselves. Each of these aspects carries a meaning that requires careful, discerning analysis (Harris, 2013). This process could be called, "exegeting music-cultures" (King, 2013, p. 114); It can only deeply be accomplished through

personal involvement within that culture and studying features such as the performers of the music, the culture surrounding the music, the music as the culture, and the context of life (King, 2013). Additionally, the opportunity of personal involvement is an opportunity to affirm aspects of the music culture that can be redeemed for use in worship. Perhaps one of the most important reminders in the foundational stages of study for contextualization is the fact that, "music as sound cannot be studied 'isolated from the human behavior that produced it'" (King, 2013, p. 115). To begin to gain an understanding of the music culture for analysis, steps such as personal interviews and observation of rituals and music can be exceedingly helpful.

According to lectures given by Dr. John Benham, an ethnomusicology professor at Liberty University, there are three general responses in this stage of analysis. The first is the response of the non-contextualist. The non-contextualist accepts nothing of the indigenous culture, labels it all as heathen, and seeks to impose Westernized standards on those in a cross-cultural context. This is the method most used in the old system of missions. However, this behavior is ethnocentric and leaves no room for the indigenous people to create their own songs to God as a form of worship. The second response is the uncritical contextualist. The uncritical contextualist determines that the culture is neutral and that there is nothing to be changed. The problem with this response is the beginning of syncretism and often leaves the people with no knowledge of the theological principles of music. The third response is that of the critical contextualist. The critical contextualist begins discipling the new indigenous believers and works with them to determine what areas of their culture might be appropriate to bring into the church (Benham, 2013).

Based on previous pagan practices, there is some music that may need to be left out due to unwanted cultural connotations. This is the preferred response.

   Gospel contextualization. Following this stage of careful analysis with discernment can be the beginning of teaching the gospel and theology. Similar to the way that music carries lots of culturally conditioned responses, Western understanding of the gospel story can be vastly different from those who have never heard of a Bible, the gospel, and live in a predominantly oral culture (Maasai culture is predominantly oral). A successful disciple- maker will work to ensure that the gospel, the most important message for all of humanity, is communicated in a way that the hearers understand (Benham, 2013). One of the foundational principles of oral cultures is the value of interpersonal communication and face-to-face communications. Additionally, story-telling is popular and understandable within predominantly oral cultures. They value "living within the story" and, because of this, context is very important (Chiang, 2013, 179). Thus, the sharing of the Gospel is best done in a way that communicates the character of God and the gospel through sharing Scripture in its entire context. It is to be noted that, determining the best way to communicate the gospel using discernment, and the response of unbelievers to the gospel will both be guided by the Holy Spirit (Benham, 2013). In the midst of methodology and process, it is easy to forget that nothing is possible without the power and authority of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. All plans and processes must be submitted, through prayer, to His authority. When people begin to be saved by Christ, becoming disciples and learners of the gospel, it is important that basic theology is taught. It is in this understanding of theology that passionate, organic, true doxology is birthed. Worship is preceded by revelation of God that naturally

elicits a response to the truth about Him (Man, 2013). When theology is taught, worship

will be grounded in the truth and the Holy Spirit will lead the worship response; and, this

beautiful display of indigenous worship will be in accordance with the command in John

4:24 when Jesus said, "God is Spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit

and truth".

       In this process of contextualizing the gospel, the most important resource is the

Holy Spirit. However, some helpful methodologies would be, again, personal interaction

and interviews with the people of that culture. Additionally, a comprehensive

understanding of their cultural communication style, worldview, and religion is

imperative (Benham, 2013). After this, though, the processes can begin to be abandoned

for personal, individualized, Spirit-led ministry and discipleship with those who come to

know Christ. Ultimately, this would help these disciples begin to worship in their heart

language to a God who has created and cares for all nations.

Analysis of Maasai Culture

       The information above forms some important groundwork for beginning to

analyze a culture and determine a strategy for how to critically and contextually begin

making disciples within that nation. The following information is a description of the

culture of Maasai tribes in Tanzania, Africa. The Maasai are a pastoralist, nomadic

people group found across Northern Tanzania, in the Rift Valley and NgoroNgoro

Conservation Area, and Kenya (Coast, 2002). They are, perhaps, one of the most easily

recognizable faces of African tribal life. For years, the pictures of men wearing red and

carrying a long spear and women dressed in ornately beaded jewelry have littered

advertisements for African tourism (Tarayia, 2004). However, as mentioned in the

statistics above, 90% of the Maasai in Tanzania are currently not professing Evangelical

Christians (Joshua Project: Maasai in Tanzania, 2014). There is a need for critically

contextualized ministry within the Maasai tribes that, Lord willing, might begin to see

worshipping disciples being made and women being ministered to. The following

information is essential in determining how to contextualize ministry to this specific

tribe.

History of Maasai

The term "Maasai" is used to describe Maa-speaking agro-pastoralists in East

Africa. They are historically known for their fierce tribal rituals and warrior mentality

(Elman, 2000). However, the term "Maasai" was just beginning to describe this tribe and

their geographical location in the late nineteenth century (Hodgson, 2005). Over the

course of their tribal history, the Maasai have been present for multiple changes in

African leadership and have experienced much hardship (Coast, 2002). A basic

understanding of their people's history is necessary for an understanding of their culture.

Historically, Maasai have been known for their breeding of cattle and small

livestock (Hodgson, 2005). This is one of the trademarks of their tribal lifestyle and it

stems from their religious beliefs. They are a highly communal people, with many

networked tribes across Northern Tanzania and Kenya (Nicholson, 2005). Gender and

age-sets play a very large role in their tribal community organization. This is seen in the

gender differentiations of their language and rooted in their religion. They have held

tightly to their culture despite many hardships. The late nineteenth century saw the

beginning of various cultural upsets in the life of the Maasai. In 1883, Bovine

pleuropneumonia swept through the cattle crops and in 1891 rinderpest struck. Because

their lifestyle relies heavily on livestock, this took a devastating toll on their livelihood.

This was followed by an outbreak of smallpox in 1892 (Hodgson, 2005). Soon after this

smallpox outbreak was over, Germany signed the Anglo German agreement which turned

Tanzania, then called Tanganyika, into a German colony (Hodgson, 2005; Kubik, n.d.).

This new agreement separated the Maasai in Tanganyika from those in Kenya and began

to move them into European style settlements (Hodgson, 2005). Tanganyika remained

under German rule until after World War I, when it became a British trust territory in

1919 (Hodgson, 2005; Kubik, n.d.). When the British took over Tanzania in the 1920s,

they began to force all the Maa-speaking pastoralists into reserves (Hodgson, 2005). This

required the Maasai to abandon their land and move into what is now the NgoroNgoro

Conservation Area. The British enforced this resettlement using, "threats of political

disenfranchisement, loss of land rights, and restrictions on livestock movement"

(Hodgson, 2005, p. 5). Finally, in 1961, Tanzania gained its independence, but still

operates under a socialist government (Coast, 2002; Kubik, n.d.). The Maasai are also

still concentrated in the upper Rift Valley and NgoroNgoro Conservation Area. Each of

these disease outbreaks and dynamic changes in leadership have forced cultural,

socioeconomic, and gender relationship changes within the Maasai tribes (Hodgson,

2005).

Maasai Religion

Maasai believe in a dualistic, predominantly feminine deity called "Eng'ai".

Although some of the small details (such as names or setting) may vary, most tribes have

similar beliefs about human origins. They believe that a demi-god, *Naiterukop* gave birth

to humans, who gave birth to Maasai. They believe that the first woman "appeared at

God's command from the bowels of the earth" (Hodgson, 2005, p. 24) with Maitumbe,,

the first man. Maitumbe is said to have been sent down to earth by Eng'ai via a rope that

connects Eng'ai to earth. Maa, the first person—notably female – and Maitumbe then

gave birth to the Maasai race (Hodgson, 2005). This encompasses the Maasai belief of

origins.

In a story equally as important as their belief of origins, the Maasai tell of how

they acquired all of their cattle. Details may vary among tribes, but the essence of the

myth stays the same (Hodgson, 2005).

Long ago, the sky and earth, Eng'ai and humans, lived closely together in

harmony. Eng'ai offered cattle to OlMaasindat (for some, the first Maasai man);

in another version, Eng'ai offered cattle to a Dorobo man (hunter gatherers related

to the Maasai) and OlMaasindat overheard. Eng'ai dropped a cord (or leather

thong) fro the sky to the earth and the cattle descended to OlMaasindat. The

Dorobo man was jealous and unhappy and shot (or cut) the cord. Not only did

Eng'ai end the flow of cattle, but She also moved further away from the earth and

humans (Hodgson, 2005, p. 22-23)

Apart from these origin stories and myths, there is a third story that humans were created

by Eng'ai from a leg or knee and then dropped to the ground from the sky. However, this

theory is not quite as popular. Again, Eng'ai is named with a female prefix, denoting a

predominantly feminine personality. She is seen as the creator, sustainer, and nurturer of

life on earth. However, she is dualistic in nature. Eng'ai has both a black personality,

which is kind compassionate and helpful, and a red personality, which is harmful and

vengeful. According to their religion, Eng'ai continues to sustain the life of cattle that she

has bestowed upon the Maasai tribes. Because of this supposed benevolent bestowal, all

things associated with cattle hold identity and sacred significance to Maasai livelihood.

Grass, cattle, blood, and milk are all sacred tokens used for various rituals. In addition to

those four tokens, there are other meaningful colors, numbers, and shapes that hold

special importance. Perhaps the most important and most widely known significant color

is red. Red symbolizes kinship, life, and vitality and "is a distinctive marker of Maasai

ethnic identity" (Hodgson, 2005, p. 33-34). Maasai tribes wear the color red at most times

due to its cultural significance and symbolic meaning.

Maasai tribal members honor Eng'ai through various rituals, daily meditation and

prayer. Interestingly women are the ones primarily responsible for spiritual life in the

household. Most women entreat Eng'ai for fertility and blessing for their family, often

praying as they go about daily tasks.

Within the Maasai religion, there is no concept of an afterlife. Although there is

belief that some important men may come back in the form of black pythons, there is no

generalized conclusion about life after death for others (Hodgson, 2005). However, there

is a preeminent ruler within the religion that is said to communicate with spirits and

possess prophetic gifts and supernatural powers. The *Iloibonok* or *Oloiboni*, which can be

translated prophet, holds a position of respect as the spiritual leader within the Maasai

(Hodgson, 2005; Maasai Association, n.d.). He is the ritual leader and official spiritual

authority (Maasai Association, n.d.).

Maasai Rituals

The majority of Maasai rituals are centered on the gender and age-set divisions of

the community. These age-sets are generally 14-year periods that determine the lifestyle

and responsibilities of male Maasai (Nicholson, 2005). Generally, only the males are

defined by their age-set. Women are usually recognized, after marriage, by the age-set of

her husband (Maasai Association, n.d.). These age-sets and the various rituals are

inextricably intertwined. The most revered age-set among Maasai is the *warrior* or

morran/ilmurran age-set (Maasai Associateion, n.d.). All the rituals seem to be

contingent on the time frames of moving in and out of the warrior age-set. In the early

life, the rituals involving males and females are relatively similar. However, as the two

grow older, the rituals become more gender specific (Maasai Associacion, n.d.; Floyd,

2001).

      Within Maasai, life, there are many rituals for each of the life stages. The first

ceremony of note is the celebration of birth. At the celebration of birth, the women

initially observe with ululation to rejoice over a new life and thank Eng'ai for the gift of

fertility. This celebration is continued with a gender reveal ritual cow slaughter. The sex

of the cow is based on the sex of the new baby. The blood from the cow is then fed to the

mother as a way to replenish the nourishment that she may have lost during birth

(Tarayia, 2004). Following the birth celebration is the *orkiteng' lentomono* or *the bull of*

the child. In this ceremony, the child is named by its mother and given its first set of

beaded jewelry. After the formal naming ceremony, the community celebrates by leaving

the homestead to dance, drink, and sing prayers to Eng'ai for the remainder of the night

(Hodgson, 2005). This is the first celebration, and one of the only celebration rituals that

is not distinctly male or female in its orientation (Tarayia, 2004; Hodgson, 2005). The

rest of the traditional Maasai rituals are dependent on age-set and are more gender

exclusive.

Male gender-specific rituals. The first major, celebrated ritual in a male's life, apart from birth, takes place around the age of 14-16 years old. This is the *Enkipaata*, or pre-circumcision, age-set. During this time, the members of the age-set are chosen by the senior elders, and the boys then parade throughout the land announcing and preparing for their coming circumcision. During this age-set, an *Oloiboni* is chosen to represent the age-set. However, this is not a desirable position due to the weight of responsibility that it carries with it (Maasai Association, n.d.). For the actual *Enkipaata* ceremony, after the boys have traveled around the land, they sleep in the forest outside of the camp. When the morning begins to dawn, they run back to the *enkang*, the homestead, with a warrior raider attitude and proceed to dress in loose clothing and dance throughout the day without stopping (Maasai Association, n.d.). This ceremony, like most African ceremonies, includes music and dancing (Stone, 2008) and, like most Maasai rituals, signals the coming of the next age-set.

The next ritual in the development of age-sets could be considered of the utmost importance within the Maasai tribal culture. The ritual of circumcision, *Emuratare*, carries vast amounts of cultural tradition and significance and, for men especially, determines the level of respect he will gain through his time as a warrior (Maasai Association, n.d.; Hodgson, 2005). This rite of passage shows the movement of boys and girls into the realm of adult men and women. This ceremony, like the other ceremonies, is celebrated by music and dance. There is a progression of the different types of music used specifically leading up to the circumcision ceremonies (Floyd, 2001). For boys, this ceremony signifies the beginning of the next age-set, the *ilmurran* or "warrior" age-set.

Prior to the circumcision ceremony, itself, the young warriors must prove themselves to be worthy of manhood by carrying larger spears and herding a large herd of cattle. After the seven days of cattle herding, the boys prepare for the circumcision by taking a cold shower shortly before sunrise (Maasai Association, n.d.). On his way to the operation, male friends and family members shout threats and sing abusive songs at the candidate (Floyd, 2001; Maasai Association, n.d). When he has passed through these threats and the singing, a qualified and very experienced man then circumcises him without anesthesia. If he flinches, shudders, or even blinks an eye in pain, this would bring shame upon his family. However, exhibitions of bravery will earn him respect (Maasai Association, n.d.). After the ceremony, the boy is dressed in black cloths made by his mother, which he wears for the entirety of his healing time, and his face is decorated with white paint to signify blessing and peace (Hodgson, 2005; Maasai Association, n.d.). When the healing time is over, the boy has oficially been initiated into manhood and is now a part of the warrior age-set. For the seven years following the ceremony, the new man is sent to a *menyatta*, a camp only for warriors, and tasked with taking care of livestock (Crilly, 2004). He is also allowed to roam from village to village and have romantic relationships with any uncircumcised girl he would like. He is now a member of the most envied age-set because of the large amounts of freedom given to the warriors (Elman, 2000; Floyd, 2001). For example, the warriors are the only members of the tribe allowed to grow their hair out long and dress provocatively (Elman, 2000). Traditionally, the young man would be required to kill a lion in order to return to the main *enkang* and move into the next age-set. But, in recent years this practice has subsided due to the scarcity of lions and game hunting regulations (Nicholson, 2005).

Again, the murran may spend somewhere between seven and ten years in the *menyatta* before returning to join the rest of the camp and be initiated into the next age-set.

The next significant age-set ritual is the transition of the warriors to the position of senior warriors in the *eunoto* ceremony. It is in this transitional stage that men are allowed to marry (Maasai Association, n.d.). However, this new age-set is more restricting than that of the former warrior age-set. The men must surrender their rights to roam the plains and travel from village to village. At this point, they can settle down and begin a family. This loss of rights is not without mourning, however. One writer described the scene at the *eunoto* ceremony, "They get hysterical when they have to give it up. They go into that ceremony, they faint and they cry and they scream. They're so overtaken with emotion" (Elman, 2000, p. 2). This is one of the few times that the male Maasai is seen to be exhibiting any emotion. Two important festivals that take place during this time are called the "milk ceremony" and the "meat ceremony" (Maasai Association, n.d.).

The final age-set transition is that from senior warrior to junior elder in the *orngesherr* ceremony. During this final initiation, the men are each given an elder's chair and has his head shaved by his wife (the older wife's responsibility if there are multiple). After this ceremony, the man is now around age 35, considered a full elder, and assumes full responsibility for his new family and is allowed to move from his father's homestead to begin his own (Maasai Association, n.d.). These age-sets are an integral portion of Maasai culture and greatly affect the music culture of the Maasai tribe.

Female gender-specific rituals. There are far less female gender-specific rituals than those for males; however, most of the female rituals hold more religious significance

within the tribe. While women will usually be present at male rituals, they operate in

background roles during those ceremonies. There are three specifically female rituals,

though, that women usually play a more important role in. These are the fertility

ceremony at the *Oreteti* tree, the *Ng ai ol adjo* festival of prayer, and female circumcision

ceremonies (Hodgson, 2005; Tarayia, 2004).

      The ceremony that takes place earlier in the life of a Maasai woman is a

circumcision ceremony. This custom dates back to the early days of Maasai history and

comes from a story of folklore and, over time, female circumcision has become an

important ritual in female rights of passage. Prior to her circumcision, a young woman

would be able to roam about and have romantic relationships with any of the young

warriors. In fact, experiencing *free love* with the warriors is highly encouraged. However,

pregnancy prior to circumcision is extremely frowned upon and considered taboo. When

the time does come for a girl to be initiated into womanhood through circumcision, the

parents decide the timing, and the girl is usually not consulted (Tarayia, 2004). As this

ceremony takes place, only women are in attendance for the actual event. Unlike with

males, the girls are allowed to express pain in whatever manner necessary (Hodgson,

2005). After given some time to heal, feasting, song, and dance celebrate her entrance

into womanhood and she is then considered to be eligible for marriage (Tarayia, 2004).

      An additional customary ritual that is important in the life of a Maasai woman is

the *Ng ai ol adjo* which, when translated, means, "May God hear the word" (Hodgson,

2005, p. 37-38). In this festival of prayer, the married women of the *enkang* sing and

dance around a witchdoctor for the entire day praying to Eng'ai for children. Their

prayers are specifically for women who are barren, or have been unfruitful until that point (Hodgson, 2005).

In addition to the festival of prayer mentioned above, married women will also go to an *Oreteti* tree, generally recognized as a holy place where one could be close to Eng'ai. A musical dance ceremony is held around the *Oreteti* tree for women who are married and young enough to bear children. The women, clothed in nothing but their ornaments, dance and chant in a circle before the tree while holding two gourds stopped with twisted grass. One of these gourds is filled with milk, and the other contains honey. When the dance is over, and at a given signal, the women then pour out the contents of the gourd toward the tree. The Maasai believe that, if they are innocent, the contents will spew out in the direction of the tree. However, if they are witches, then the liquids will not leave the gourds even when unstopped (Hodgson, 2005).

It is to be noted that most female Maasai rituals are for religious purposes. Women are very much the spiritual leaders within the indigenous Maasai religion. They pray to Eng'ai often in songs and dances, with their primary requests being fertility and blessing (Hodgson, 2005).

Gender Roles

Gender roles within the Maasai tribe saw a significant change during the late nineteenth century. This was due to multiple factors including the livestock diseases in 1883 and 1891 and an outbreak of smallpox in 1892 and cholera later on (Martinez & Waldron, 2006). The most influential factor in the gender role shift was the German colonization of what was then called Tanganyika in 1890, which then led to the transfer to British rule after World War 1 in 1920. The forced marginalization of the Maasai tribes

greatly affected the tribal culture and livelihood and, by extension, gender roles. The

colonization and British rule seem to form a dividing line in gender roles seen within the

Maasai tribe (Hodgson, 2005).

Prior to the colonization, the responsibilities of household affairs were equally

divided between men and women. Women were in control of the production and

distribution of milk, one of the tribe's greatest resources, as well as livestock. Their

duties throughout the day included collecting firewood and water, cooking, and

household chores. The women were usually assisted by the young girls in completing

these duties. Generally women would also help support their family financially by trading

vegetables and household goods in the community. In the days before the colonial rule,

women were very involved in the economic standing of the household and were allowed

a large, influential part in family decisions. Their opinion was valued by the elder men in

managing the life of the entire homestead (Hodgson, 2005). However, after colonization

this role began to shift.

The shifting of gender roles did not occur immediately after governmental rule

changed. Most major changes didn't take place until the 1950s. However, as Hodgson

(2005) described, "These colonial interventions [British rule and marginalization] into the

political, economic, and social life of Maasai had produced significant changes in Maasai

gender relations… Elder men used the deliberations and rulings of the MNA as

opportunities to expand and strengthen their control over *ilmurran* and women" (p. 12).

After colonization, men within the tribe began to become more domineering in

leadership, resulting in the loss of freedom and rights within the household that women

had so freely shared before. Women were no longer free to travel to neighbors and trade

the milk and vegetables as they had done previously. Instead, they were forced to submit

to the new male-dominated cash transactions. The marginalization of the tribes and

relocation to reservations caused a lack of natural resources that caused difficulty in

women's completion of daily chores. Additionally, women no longer had the freedom to

travel and congregate and were relegated solely to the domestic sphere. This new idea of

living beneath a domineering man began to change their gender roles and relations and,

thus, the culture of the tribe. Hodgson explained the results of these changes well saying,

"As a result, the former relationships of mutual respect and autonomy between men and

women were replaced by recriminations, complaints, and ridicule as men and women

responded to these gendered dislocations" (p. 13). Even today, these roles still remain.

The lives of women center around their homestead and family; They will typically rise

early and work day-to-day to complete the mundane tasks such as firewood retrieval,

cooking meals, and fetching water that help the household run well. Despite their service

in duties, they are still domineered and considered to be subservient to the males

(Martinez & Waldron, 2006).

In addition to their duties and role within the household, women have important

roles as wives and mothers. Maasai have a polygamous view of marriage and it is

common for men to have two or three wives (Hodgson, 2005). Typically, marriages are

arranged by the parents of the bride and groom, and the woman has no choice in who her

husband may be. When a woman is married, she then becomes subservient to her

husband's leadership and needs. In Maasai culture the idea of love, even within marriage,

is primary physical (Tarayia, 2004). Love and sexual relations between a man and his

wife are seen solely as a means for procreation (Martinez & Waldron, 2006; Tarayia,

2004). When women do become pregnant and bear children, they continue to carry the weight of the responsibilities of the homestead coupled with raising the children (Martinez & Waldron, 2006).

Maasai Music

Although the Maasai are located in East Africa, not many of their musical traits intersect with those usually found in East Africa. However, the influences of their various governments as well as ancient trading systems can be seen in the music today. Historically, the music of East Africa was influenced by its trade systems with South East Asia in the 1st millennium (Kubik, n.d.). For the Maasai, though, their music culture began to originate in 1830 when the Maasai from Kenya began to enter Tanzania. When they came, they brought the "red-ochred dance decoration (*ng'husi*) and hair-style (*ngoti*)" (Kubik, n.d., p.3). Usually interconnected with various dance and ritual, Maasai music is primarily vocal. As a nomadic, nilotic people, instruments would be more of an encumbrance than an helpful support for their music system (Stone, 2008). Like most of Africa, music is employed constantly in the midst of daily life. As Stone (2008, p. 301) stated, "[music is] providing an essential ingredient in most rituals and ceremonies and accompanying the daily tasks of men and women". Another one of the greatest uses of music in Africa is for community formation. Music is prominent in social events and group special occasions or regular activities (Barz, 2004). However, while music is mostly a community event, individual creativity is also highly valued and expected within the context of the group music (Floyd, 2001).

There are a few qualities of Maasai music specific to the tribe. The first is the form, or layout of music. Generally, the music is characterized by a call- and- response

form with the call led by a soloist and a choral response following (Floyd, 2001; Stone,

2008). Stone elaborated more on this form saying, "among pastoralists, the choral

response tends to be longer than the call and sometimes overlaps the soloists' parts to

produce simple part singing, or includes ostinato, creating harmonies of fourths and

fifths" (Stone, 2008, p. 307). This vocal music is accompanied by rhythmic hand

clapping, stomping of feet, ankle bells, other various bodily adornments, or an occasional

drum. Another musical characteristic of the Maasai is the tendency to have melodies

placed within the pentatonic scale with long phrases and long-held tones. Finally, their

music has been traditionally written with themes of historical tradition, war, and cattle

(Stone, 2008). As one native Maasai stated, "To me Music is highly for keeping culture

around us. Music sung in praise of old historical memory… Traditional Music is our

cultural memory, and to us… losing or forgetting your culture is slavery" (Floyd, 2001, p.

23). Additionally, similar to most of Maasai life, the music is also marked by the

influence of gender roles and age-set divisions.

Within the Maasai music culture, there are different repertoires for infants,

warriors, and women. During infancy (which is classified until sometime between age 5-

7) there is no separation of gender, and older women lead the music. Again, these songs

are usually written in call-and-response form and even contain riddles for the education

of young children. For the boys, although not separated from the girls when singing, this

time is used as preparation for warriorhood (Floyd, 2001).

The warrior repertoire, or *ilmurran* repertoire, is solely for the boys as they get

older and approach circumcision. This new stage of music marks the beginning of the

courting process between the warriors and the young, uncircumcised girls. This repertoire

incorporates new songs learned specifically for circumcision ceremonies. These songs are often harsh and abusive, recounting the bravery of past warriors, in order to inspire the young men to be brave for circumcision. Because the circumcision ceremony and warriorhood are the pinnacle of a man's life within the Maasai, these songs are among the most important to be sung. Being able to take part in them shows that a boy is ready to be circumcised. As one Maasai tribe member describes it, "They [circumcision songs] are sung all night and during the ceremony… You have to learn the abusive songs so that you can join in, and show that you don't care about the knife" (Floyd, 2001, p. 20). After the ceremony is over, all of the new *ilmurran* join together to sing songs applauding the bravery of their age-set. When the *ilmurran* age ends and the men become junior elders and, their singing comes to an end. They may occasionally sing with the younger warriors when permission is granted, but they no longer sing on their own (Floyd, 2001).

The repertoire for women contains a wider variance in themes than those songs sung by warriors. It additionally encompasses far more age-sets than those of the men. As mentioned previously, women and older girls often lead the music for those in infancy. As the girls grow into women, they also have songs of their own. Older girls nearing circumcision will often begin learning ceremonial songs passed down from the older women. And, when women get married, they gain a whole new repertoire exclusive for themselves. The songs for married women span across two main genres: prayers and praises for things (mainly for children) and songs sung to praise warriors while mocking their husbands. This is because women's husbands are usually much older than them, making the young warriors almost the same age as the wives. These songs often praising the physical appearance of warriors, the most highly revered age-set, are a small act of

rebellion on the part of the women. The songs sung as prayers and praises are called

Laomon and are highly religious in nature. These songs might be used most often in

fertility ceremonies and in daily prayers. Songs praising warriors' accomplishments and

physicality are called *Kagisha* (Floyd, 2001). Overall, the women's songs are far more

religious in nature because of their greater role than men in the spiritual domain

(Hodgson, 2005). Maasai music of both men and women carries cultural significance,

ideals, and connotations that would be important to keep in mind when developing

missions strategy.

Implications for Missions

The ultimate hope for any Christian mission is to make disciples who then make

more disciples. As mentioned previously, effectiveness in cross-contextual missions often

requires an adjustment of the traditional or typical Western methods. These changes in

methods are often preceded by an adjustment of philosophy. One of the more effective

philosophies seen in missions today is clearly articulated by Marcus Dean (2013). His

article, *Mutuality and Missions: The Western Christian in Global Ministry,* presented a

philosophy and methodology for Christians in cross-contextual ministry. He draws from

various political and interpersonal relationship theories to formulate a definition of

mutuality and apply it to Biblical ministry. Mutuality is defined as "contributing what the

other cannot, as we move towards a common goal" (Dean, 2013, p. 276). The article

encourages a movement away from the ethnocentric, more traditional philosophies of

missions where the Western church controls the indigenous ministry and toward a notion

of authentically equal partnership. Dean asserted the interdependency of the body of

Christ as the model for missionary work and describes the many positive effects of

mutuality. Such a philosophy holds the *missio Dei*, the whole mission and work of God,

in high regard and promotes discipleship. This moves the understanding of Christianity

from a localized, individualistic view to a globalized community perspective of what God

is doing across the world, which aids in promoting unity across the body of Christ.

Historically, one of the charges against Christian ministry in cross-contextual settings is

that it is solely a western religion (Dean, 2013, p.280). This is because previous

missionary efforts often involved forcing indigenous tribes to conform to Western models

of the church upon their conversion. As one author describes the effect of this method on

the Maasai tribes specifically,

> The Christian Gospel was being presented to African peoples as though they had
>
> not cultures of their own. They had only to memorize the catechism and keep all
>
> the rules made by the dead, white European males, while cultivating all the post-
>
> Reformation animosities of separated Western Christians (Hodgson, 2005, p.88).

When the philosophy is mutuality is applied, though, Dean describes its beneficial effects

in relation to this charge.

> In reality, it might be a greater witness to the world if what we were to achieve
>
> were not 'self-sufficiency among the poor, but a way of partnering across cultural
>
> and economic differences that affirms Christian solidarity, the interdependency of
>
> the Body of Christ' (Sanneh and Carpenter, 2005:74). Achieving this goal as the
>
> Body of Christ might also reduce the charge that Christianity is a Western religion
>
> (Dean, 2013, p. 280).

The development of a methodology involving mutuality involves vulnerability, faithful

service, and love on both sides. As an implication for missions, developing mutuality also

requires a missionary to spend time intentionally studying the culture and building

relationships with the people in their mission field. This is similar study to that necessary

for contextualization, as mentioned previously. While the time and effort required for

mutuality can be hefty, such an investment shows value for the culture and increases the

opportunity for discipleship. Discipleship can then lead to the completion of the goal of

mutuality in missions: authentically equal partnership, kingdom growth, and freely

created culturally appropriate and aesthetically pleasing expressions of worship.

     In developing a strategy of missions involving the concept of mutuality and

contextualization, there are a few areas of Maasai culture that would have some rather

large implications. While this is not an exhaustive list by any means, the areas of culture

to be addressed below are cultural practices and beliefs that would be necessary to

address in any sort of Christian mission work seeking to evangelize and make disciples.

     Perhaps the greatest area of missions that would be impacted by Maasai cultural

beliefs is the understanding of God. Eng'ai, the highest Maasai deity (of the many deities

they serve), is a female god considered to be highly temperamental and unpredictable.

The Maasai respect and fear Eng'ai but try not to have any sort of relationship with her

because of her arbitrary nature (Hodgson, 2005). This contrasts, clearly, with the

Christian God portrayed in the Scriptures. The triune, un-gendered deity described in the

Bible possesses a loving, faithful, constant and unchanging nature (Lamentations 3:22-

24). Further, He is named as the One true God and demands to be worshipped as such

(Exodus 20:3). This stark contrast must be taken into consideration when interacting and

evangelizing Maasai tribal members that acknowledges the traditional role of Eng'ai as

female. Careful explanation, definition, and description would be necessary when using

the term *God.*

One of the other great challenges facing missions to Maasai is tribal illiteracy and

a strong nature of orality within the culture. While some Maasai children are educated

and literate today, most communication within the tribe takes place through narratives or

verbal communication. Because of this, reading is challenging and often

incomprehensible by older generations (Hodgson, 2005). This makes Bible translation a

less effective means of evangelism due to high rates of illiteracy. Missionaries, then, must

become familiar with the varying degrees of literacy within a particular tribe and adapt

their methods to clearly communicate the gospel in a manner to be received and

understood. At the forefront of modern strategies in ministry to oral cultures is

Chronological Bible Storying (Fanning, 2009). This method, defined, is "selected

Biblical stories designed to contradict the worldview of the oral people group so as to lay

the foundations to bring people to genuine 'faith in Christ, mature discipleship and

fruitful Christian service.'" (Fanning, 2009, p.3). An emphasis is placed on the

chronology because most oral cultures understand truths or facts more fully when they

presented within the context of a story rather than just individually and abstractly.

Chronological Bible Storying uses stories accurately interpreted from the Old and New

Testaments to teach the necessary principles leading up to the gospels and coming of

Christ. A trained missionary or storyteller will relay the stories to the people and follow

the story with a time of Socratic style discussion. This aids the listeners in seeing the

relevance of the stories to their life and pushes them to begin thinking about the gospel as

it applies to them. Chronological Bible Storying is useful in the beginning stages of

ministering to a people group and can continue with Bible translation and literacy

programs. When coupled with these other methods it can be considered, "the most

comprehensive strategy for communicating the word of God in their heart language"

(Fanning, 2009, p.9).

An additional aspect of Maasai culture to be understood and mindful of in

ministry is the prominent role of women in the spiritual realm. As mentioned in the

cultural analysis, women often dominate in spiritual matters as evidenced in both the

music and daily life of Maasai A study of Biblical roles, however, points to male

headship (encompassing the spiritual realm) as explicitly stated in 1 Corinthians 11:3. A

strategy for addressing this inconsistency between traditional Maasai and Christian

doctrine might be to emphasize the importance that women have in Christ as well as the

commands to submit to male leadership. One might teach about the value of servanthood

and how Jesus was a servant during his life and death on Earth. Additionally, the strict

gender roles found in Maasai tribal life have a structure that facilitates mentorship and

discipleship, helping to make such teaching and learning possible. While it may be

deemed inappropriate for a female missionary to seek to minister to a male Maasai, the

gender role system allows women to minister to other women with ease. Additionally,

because women are largely responsible for raising children of both genders in the early,

formative years (Floyd, 2001), teaching the women of one generation could inspire

change in the next.

The idea of encouraging and facilitating culturally appropriate worship in light of

the previous missionary work has been mentioned previously, but is another area of

strategy awareness. There is a sensitivity that must be exercised toward both the

indigenous culture and work already done when seeking to transition to more culturally authentic expressions of praise and worship. Missions should facilitate and environment that nurtures culture and critically contextualizes to aid in developing worship that speaks to the heart of the indigenous culture while aligning with the truth of Scripture.

One final area of concern regarding a missions strategy is the lack of Maasai belief in an afterlife (Hodgson, 2005) and a question concerning the existence of a concept of repentance. According to research done by Nigel Nicholson (2005), there is no word for "sorry" in *Maa*, the Maasai language. This author suggests the Maasai understanding of sin as a topic for further study. Also, Maasai disbelief in the afterlife directly contradicts Scripture's teaching about life after death (John 3:16) and eternal life. However, this is an area that could be addressed in missionary strategy through personal conversations and in chronological Bible storying.

Conclusion

There is a very clear mandate for disciple making in Scripture. However, the methods used to make disciples can and should vary depending on the culture intersected with. The Maasai tribes in Tanzania have a rich culture full of various rituals, religious beliefs, gender roles, and a music system. Their culture places a significant role on women as it pertains to religion, yet they are dominated by men in nearly every other area of life. Maasai worship is rich in musical texture, yet it expresses only fruitless pleas to an erratic god. There is no hope for an afterlife, so they seek to live for the day only. Current statistics place the Maasai at only 10% Evangelical Christian. There is a very apparent need for the gospel in the Maasai tribes. An analysis of their culture shows the headship and importance of women solely within the religious system. This spiritual

importance of women coupled with the strict gender role structure makes a way for

woman-to-woman mentorship. Additionally, their predominantly oral culture and love for

music could be an opportunity for evangelism and creative use of the arts in worship after

conversion. However, reaching the Maasai with the gospel will come at the cost of time

and effort, but with an incalculable reward. Developing a strategy of mutuality involves

sacrificing an ethnocentric mindset and adopting a new culture. This is one of the greatest

influences of contextualization on a missions strategy. Operating under such a strategy,

missionaries must consider a few key beliefs of the Maasai as contextualization takes

place. Formulating a strategy that upholds the truth of the gospel, demonstrates cultural

relevance, and addresses cultural needs has the potential to influence the Maasai for the

kingdom of Christ, for all of eternity.

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