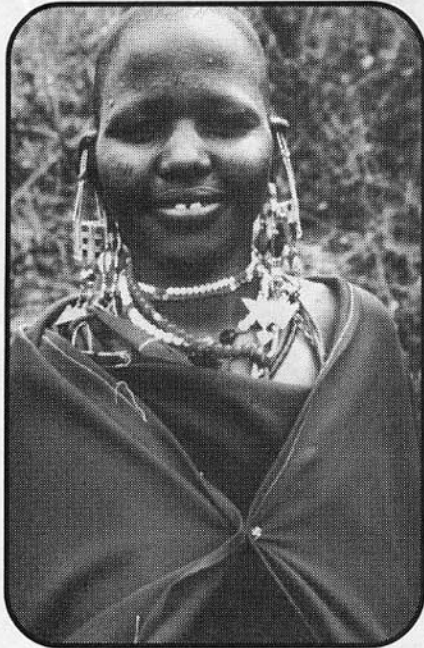


# Many Faces of the Maasai

By Willis Peterson  
Photos by Author



It is their faces, rife with expression and inquisitiveness which comes through each photo that mesmerizes the imagination of the viewer. That, and their bodies clothed in robes of so many unimaginable different shades of red, in contrast to their wattle and dung plastered houses, make their life a photographic smorgasbord of brilliant color and earthy background.

Their wealth lies in their herds of cattle. Unlike our ranchers who raise Herefords for market, the Maasai collect cattle as a matter of prestige. To put it simply, the more cattle, the more wives a man may have, and the resulting more children there will be to guard the cattle. Formally, completely nomadic, the Maasai are more and more pressured to stay in fixed areas. They are the largest tribal population of Kenya and Tanzania and some of the tallest.

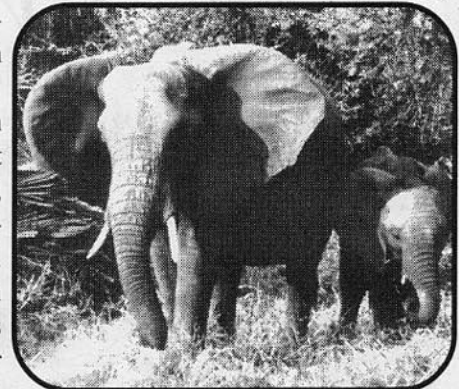
The taking of blood from their cattle as a part of their diet staple is just another facet of life in this strange and fascinating culture. The bow man, who has learned his skill from his father, and father before him, nocks an arrow into the bowstring and shoots it into the neck of the cow. The flight of

the arrow has just enough force to enter the jugular vein, but not enough to exit. The arrow is then pulled out and the blood caught in a gourd. After the blood is drawn, the hole is plugged with dung, mixed with hair plucked from the back of the cow. The paste is then massaged a bit to seal the hole. Then the cow is released. It immediately returns to the other livestock with no ill effects.

The Maasai have resisted Western values, and while some have bought bicycles, and some few have pickups, most live as they have done for hundreds of years. The herdsman still walks with and guards his cattle from predators with iron tipped spears. As visitors circle in turbo-prop planes for landing at a safari camp, the Maasai continue to be an enigma of the bush. It all seems so incongruous. And what

will happen as the native population keeps expanding? Can the Maasai continue to co-exist with wildlife in the future?

Unless special arrangements are made, photographing any Maasai or their activities is strictly forbidden. But the result is certainly worth the effort.



*Enjoy more photos on  
page 20 & 21*