

Maasai and the Tanzanite Trade: New Facets of Livelihood  
Diversification in Northern Tanzania

by

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Maasai and the Tanzanite Trade: New Facets of Livelihood

Diversification in Northern Tanzania

Thesis directed by Professor J. Terrence McCabe

Beginning in the early 1990s, Maasai in the northern Tanzanian district of Simanjiro have worked in the nearby area of Mererani—the only place in the world where the gemstone tanzanite is found and mined. Here, men work as middlemen, buying and selling tanzanite, and women have small businesses selling milk and beadwork. While the work at Mererani represents one of several forms of livelihood diversification for Maasai in Simanjiro, it is very distinct.

In this dissertation I examine the changes occurring in the context of the tanzanite trade. I reveal both the transformations Maasai themselves perceive to be important and those that I witnessed as an outsider. While I address the economic motivations for and outcomes of working in the tanzanite trade, I also explore how social relations and power structures shape and are impacted by this livelihood strategy. Through this analysis, I conclude that tanzanite trading has unique and widespread implications for households, communities, and society. I also suggest that some of the patterns that emerge through Maasai participation in this new livelihood strategy can influence how we think about livelihood diversification among pastoralists in general. To address these broader implications I ask the following questions: How do various individuals and groups of people take advantage of livelihood diversification strategies, and how do they differentially experience the outcomes? What forms of privilege and exclusion do livelihood diversification strategies perpetuate and produce? Why do tensions surface in the context

of livelihood diversification strategies and how do people attempt to mediate these tensions?

To answer these questions, I situate my case study within the pastoral livelihood diversification literature and apply a livelihood strategies framework of analysis. While several studies exploring livelihood diversification among pastoralists primarily focus on economic and ecological drivers and outcomes of different livelihood strategies, the livelihood strategies framework encompasses economic and ecological processes as well as the wide-ranging social and political structures that constrain and are affected by livelihood diversification. This framework also provides an overarching schema in which to situate the different theoretical and analytical approaches in anthropology that I apply throughout this dissertation.

I dedicate this dissertation to my mom Patti Smith,  
who passed away a week before I began the PhD program  
at CU and who ardently encouraged  
me to pursue my dreams.  
Her spirit lives on.

In special dedication to my husband Jamie  
and my son Silas. May we continue to always enjoy our journey  
together along the exciting roads of life.

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## GLOSSARY OF SWAHILI AND MAA TERMS

<b><i>Swahili Term (sing./pl.)</i></b>	<b><i>English Translation</i></b>
<i>boma</i>	homestead, enclosure
<i>jini (majini)</i>	genie, spirit, demon, or wicked person
<i>laana</i>	curse
<i>mchawi (wachawi)</i>	witch doctor, sorcerer
<i>mganga (waganga)</i>	medical person or doctor
<i>mganga wa kinyejik</i>	traditional healer
<i>msukule (wasukule)</i>	zombie
<i>riziki</i>	God's blessings, God's providence
<i>shuka</i>	traditional Maasai clothing
<i>tajiri</i>	rich or wealthy person, a businessperson (man or woman), and an employer

<b><i>Maa Term (sing./pl.)</i></b>	<b><i>English Translation</i></b>
<i>alasakutoni/ilasakutok</i>	male ritual leader
<i>enkang/inkangitie</i>	homestead, enclosure
<i>enkanyit</i>	respect or obedience
<i>entasat/intasati</i>	older women beyond child-bearing age
<i>entito/intoyie</i>	uncircumcised girl
<i>esiangiki/isiangikin</i>	young married woman
<i>ilmoruak</i>	elders

<i>ilpayiani</i>	elders
<i>inkangitie e kunoolong'i</i>	houses of nowadays (modern houses)
<i>kaya</i>	[a type of greeting] direct translation unknown
<i>koko</i>	older woman
<i>mobu</i>	mob
<i>mwanapolo</i>	miners
<i>olaigwenani/ilaigwenak</i>	male elected leaders of each age-set
<i>olayioni/ilaiyok</i>	uncircumcised boy
<i>olmarei</i>	family
<i>olmurrani/ilmurran</i>	circumcised young man (warrior)
<i>oloiboni/iloibonok</i>	spiritual leader, prophet, medicine man
<i>oloip/iloipi</i>	shaded area
<i>orkasis</i>	success
<i>orpeko</i>	spirit possession
<i>sopa/epa</i>	[a form of greeting]

## **MONETARY EXCHANGE EQUIVALENTS**

	<b>Tanzanian Shillings</b>	<b>US Dollars</b>
January 2008	1	0.00087
July 2008	1	0.00085
December 2008	1	0.00078

## CHAPTER ONE

### NEW FRONTIERS OF PASTORAL LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION

“According to the Bible, Jesus changed rocks into bread. Maybe God [*Engai*] did this for us—changed the rocks to be food, so the prophecy has been fulfilled.”

–Kato, Simanjiro, Tanzania November 10, 2008

“A livelihood is more than just income. . .”

–Frank Ellis<sup>1</sup> 1998: 4

In 1967, in the shadows of Mt. Kilimanjaro in northern Tanzania, the gemstone tanzanite was discovered. Declared “the gemstone of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,” (ICA<sup>2</sup> 2010-2011) due to its seductive blue-violet hues and rare status, tanzanite quickly rose to popularity and now ranks as one of the top-selling gemstones in the USA (Olson 2008). However, beneath the lustrous veneer that dazzles jewelers and connoisseurs alike lies an understated and more intriguing facet of tanzanite—one that links tanzanite, Maasai, power, and money.

Beginning in the early 1990s, Maasai in the northern Tanzanian district of Simanjiro have worked in the nearby area of Mererani—the only place in the world where tanzanite is found and mined (Figures 1.1 and 1.2). Here, approximately 100 km by road from their home villages, men work as middlemen, buying and selling tanzanite, and women have

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<sup>1</sup> School of Development Studies, East Anglia, Norwich, UK.

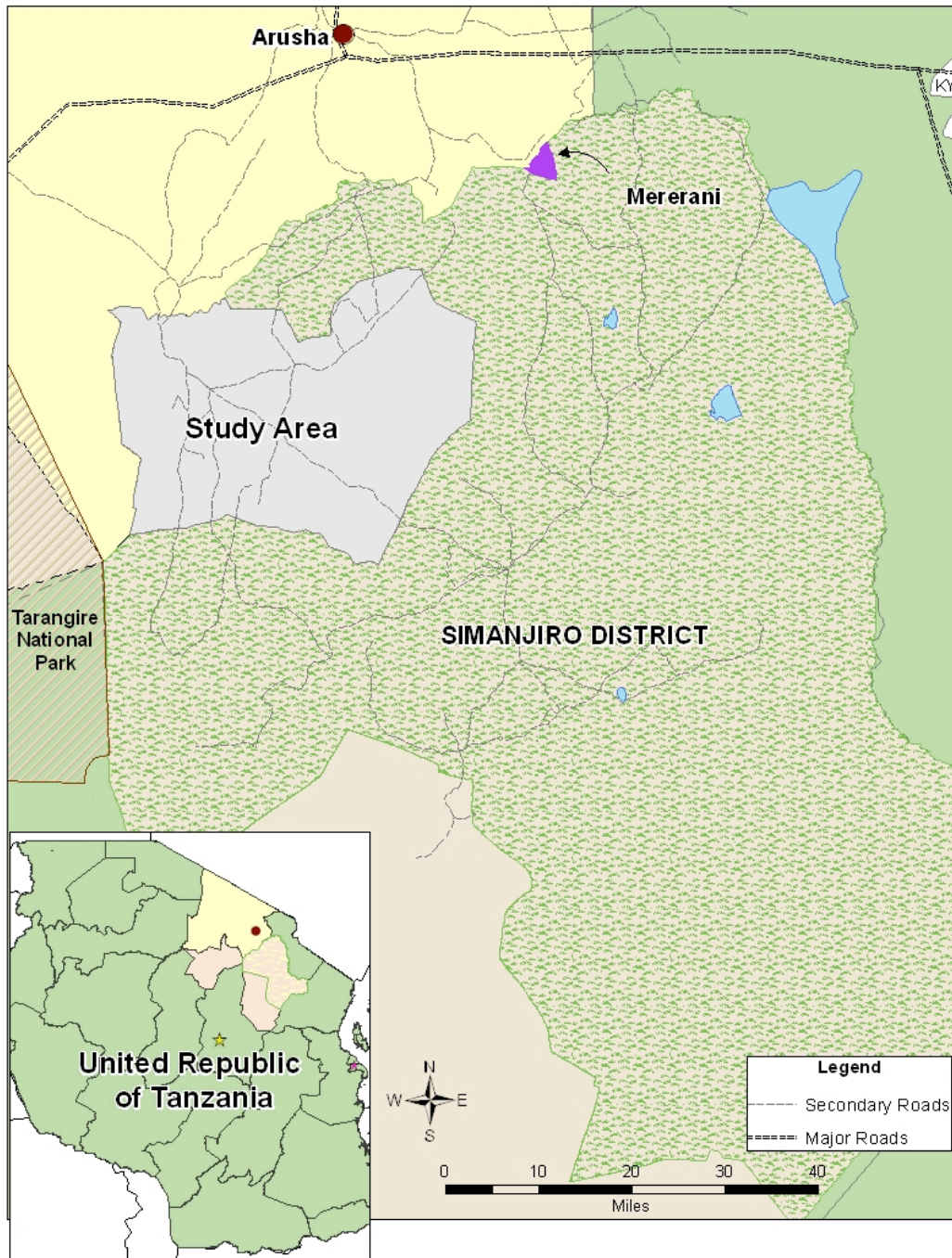
<sup>2</sup> The International Colored Gemstone Association is a nonprofit arm of the international colored gemstone industry and has over 500 members worldwide.

small businesses selling milk and beadwork. While the work at Mererani represents one of several forms of livelihood diversification for Maasai in Simanjiro, it is very distinct.



**Figure 1.1:** Location of the Simanjiro District in northern Tanzania.





The boundaries of the study area as shown are not completely accurate. For example, one of the villages I worked in borders Tarangire National Park. This discrepancy is due to the fact that the most recent GPS coordinates for regional, district, and village boundaries are imprecise.

**Figure 1.2:** Location of my study area and its proximity to Arusha and Mererani.

When I first heard from my advisor that Maasai in areas of northern Tanzania were trading tanzanite, I was shocked. Maasai? Trading gemstones? This practice seemed completely antithetical to the way of life I had observed in Tanzania in 1998 when I was conducting research for my master's degree, as well as what I had learned about Maasai livelihoods through several rigorous years of academic study. I was well aware of the various diversification strategies Maasai employed to make a living; however, I was surprised to hear that Maasai were trading gemstones. This surprise piqued my curiosity, and planted the initial seed for this project. Admittedly, I was captivated by perhaps two of the most provocative images from Tanzania, Maasai and tanzanite, coalescing into one.

Subsequent conversations revealed that indeed tanzanite trading had become a fairly common livelihood strategy for Maasai living in areas of northern Tanzania, in particular, for those in the Simanjiro district. Most of the stories I heard detailed peoples' use of the profits and new patterns of consumption. Maasai were observed driving expensive cars and SUVs, building "modern" houses, and increasing their livestock numbers and farm sizes.<sup>3</sup> While my research confirmed these accounts, it also revealed other unexpected and nuanced ways this new livelihood strategy was playing out. As one Maasai elder reflected on the influence of the tanzanite trade, "Now we are Maasai in name, but in habit we have changed."

In this dissertation I examine the changes occurring among Maasai in Simanjiro in the context of the tanzanite trade. I reveal both the transformations Maasai themselves perceive to be important and those that I witnessed as an outsider. While I address the

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<sup>3</sup> *Inkangitie e kunoolong'i* (Maa) or literally, "houses of nowadays" is how Maasai refer to homes crafted from bricks, cement, and plaster and having a tin roof. These are in contrast to the traditional Maasai houses built by packing dung and mud within and around a stick frame.

economic motivations for and outcomes of working in the tanzanite trade, I also explore how social relations and power structures shape and are impacted by this livelihood strategy. Through this analysis, I conclude that tanzanite trading has unique and widespread implications for households, communities, and society. I also suggest that some of the patterns that emerge through Maasai participation in this new livelihood strategy can influence how we think about livelihood diversification among pastoralists in general. To address these broader implications I ask the following questions: How do various individuals and groups of people take advantage of livelihood diversification strategies, and how do they differentially experience the outcomes? What forms of privilege and exclusion do livelihood diversification strategies perpetuate and produce? Why do tensions surface in the context of livelihood diversification strategies and how do people attempt to mediate these tensions?

To answer these questions, I situate my case study within the pastoral livelihood diversification literature and apply a livelihood strategies framework of analysis. I use Peter Little and his colleagues' definition of pastoral livelihood diversification as "the pursuit of any non-pastoral income-earning activity, whether in rural or urban areas" (Little et al. 2001: 403). Little's definition includes activities such as selling milk, animals, beadwork, or other products, wage employment, retail shop activities, rental property ownership and sales, gathering and selling wild products such as firewood, and farming (ibid.). It does not include selling milk or livestock at the "herd-gate,"<sup>4</sup> nor does it include herd diversification strategies (Little et al. 2001: 403). Several studies exploring livelihood diversification among pastoralists have primarily focused on economic and ecological

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<sup>4</sup> The "herd-gate" refers to sales that take place from home.

drivers and outcomes of different livelihood strategies. The livelihood strategies framework provides a mechanism that encompasses economic and ecological processes as well as the wide-ranging social and political structures that constrain and are affected by livelihood diversification.

This framework also provides an overarching schema in which to situate the different theoretical and analytical approaches in anthropology that I apply in each chapter. As such, the chapters of this dissertation are broadly linked through an exploration of livelihood diversification; however, each chapter stands alone in its theoretical relevance. For example, in Chapter 1, I address the theory of articulation and examine how economic, social, and political institutions are articulated to ensure men's customary rights to productive resources. In Chapter 2, I use Bourdieu's application of capital to show how different forms of capital are integral to men's success at the tanzanite trade. In Chapter 3, I explore how gendered subjectivities are contested and reified in the context of women's work outside of the home, and in Chapter 4, I look to the newly emergent witchcraft narrative as a form of discourse that brings out the tensions inherent to this new livelihood strategy. However, before I discuss the over-arching livelihood strategies framework, it is important to understand how pastoral livelihood diversification has been discussed in the literature. A review of this body of literature reveals why a livelihood strategies framework is necessary and relevant.

### **Livelihood Diversification and East African Pastoralists**

Livelihood diversification is standard practice for rural populations as very few people receive income from only one source, keep their wealth in only one asset, or use their

assets in one single activity (Barrett et al 2001: 315). In fact, livelihood diversification strategies in rural Africa account for up to forty-five percent of the average household income (Barrett et al. 2001, Bryceson and Jamal 1997, Little et al. 2001). Although pastoralists still largely depend on livestock production, they are increasingly diversifying their livelihoods. Some of the modes of diversification mentioned in the literature include agriculture, petty trade, livestock marketing, renting or leasing land for commercial agriculture, involvement with tourism and conservation, guard work, selling milk, and prostitution. Most studies on livelihood diversification among pastoralists focus on the reasons why people diversify, how diversification varies among households according to wealth, and the economic benefits of diversification (for references see below).

It is generally accepted that diversification is an attempt to buffer the growing constraints on livestock herds. These constraints include, but are not limited to, declining access to rangeland from conservation and protected areas (Brockington 2001, Davis 2011, Goldman 2003, Homewood and Brockington 1999, Igwe 2004, McCabe 2003), changes in land tenure (BurnSilver 2007, BurnSilver et al. 2008, Igwe and Brockington 1999, Mwangi 2006), decreasing livestock numbers due to disease, drought, and other influences of climate change (Galvin et al. 2001, O'Malley 2003), and increasing human populations coupled with stable or decreasing livestock populations (Galvin et al. 2004, McCabe 2003, McCabe et al. 2010). As livestock herds become vulnerable, cash is required for purchasing food and livestock medicine, paying hospital bills and school fees, and buying household goods and other commodities (Homewood 2009). In lieu of these constraints, pastoralists are often seen as having no choice but to diversify their livelihoods. This is especially the

case for poor households that diversify because of poverty (Brockington 2001, Homewood 2009, Homewood et al. 2006, Lesorogol 2008, Little 1985, 1992, Little et al. 2001).

It has also been suggested that pastoralists diversify their livelihoods to avoid risk (Coast 2002, Homewood et al. 2006, Little et al. 2001, McCabe 2003, O'Malley 2003, Sachedina 2006). Here risk is defined as “uncertain consequences, and in particular exposure to potentially unfavorable circumstances” (Smith et al. 1999: 4). Risk provides a way to think about livelihood diversification not only as a need, but also as a choice which helps explain why poor households are not the only ones to diversify. Some studies show that all segments of the population diversify (Homewood et al. 2009, Sachedina and Trench 2009), while others show just the very poor and very wealthy diversify (Ensminger 1992, Little et al. 2001). While wealthy herders might not need to diversify per se, diversification can serve as a strategy of accumulation or an investment to avoid future risk (Little 2001). In some cases, it has been proposed that pastoralists opportunistically diversify to take advantage of growing prospects in the market economy (Ensminger 1992, Little 2003). Still other scenarios indicate that diversification may be more strategic and socially or politically motivated (McCabe et al. 2010, Nelson 2005). Regardless of this growing attention to social factors, the literature has largely focused on the economic context of livelihood diversification.

The outcomes of livelihood diversification have also been looked at primarily in economic terms through analyses that discuss how different livelihood strategies contribute to household income. (Serneels et al. 2009, see BurnSilver 2007, Nkedianye et al. 2009). The conclusions are inconsistent. Little and his colleagues (2001: 421) show that diversification strategies outside of livestock keeping do not make significant contributions

and therefore may increase risk by drawing labor away from livestock herding. In contrast, Hassan Sachedina and Pippa Trench (2009: 282) show how in one village in Simanjiro, about half of the household incomes are acquired from diversification strategies. They conclude that diversification activities make necessary contributions to household economics.

Although the studies on livelihood diversification among pastoralists are valuable, they are also somewhat limited. Undeniably, household economics are important indicators for understanding livelihood diversification, and as such, I address them accordingly. However, I also aim to add depth to the literature on pastoral livelihood diversification by exploring the *social*, *cultural*, and *political* drivers and outcomes of livelihood diversification. I explore these processes at not only the individual and household levels but also at the community and societal levels. This broad approach to understanding a rather specific livelihood strategy taking place at Mererani serves to enrich our knowledge about livelihood diversification among pastoralists throughout East Africa.

In the following discussion I explore how the specific forms of diversification, including the livestock trade, cultivation, involvement in tourism and conservation, and guard work, have been understood and analyzed in the literature. Although multiple other forms of diversification exist, I am primarily interested in those that are most prevalent among Maasai in Tanzania. This discussion allows me to situate the tanzanite trade within the literature on livelihood diversification and provides a basis for understanding the uniqueness of this livelihood strategy. While I mainly speak to how diversification strategies have been addressed in the literature on Maasai, I draw from research with other groups elsewhere in East Africa when it is relevant.

## ***The Livestock Trade***

Participation in the regional, domestic livestock trade is the oldest known form of livelihood diversification practiced among pastoralists.<sup>5</sup> Going back centuries, the livestock trade originated as part of a barter system where men exchanged livestock for agricultural products (Spear 1997). This practice eventually became monetized, as men sold livestock with the goal of increasing their herds or obtaining cash profits for the purchase of household goods (Zaal and Dietz 1999). In addition, in some areas, the commercialization of beef, milk, and other livestock products has resulted in greater involvement of pastoralists with livestock markets.

Studies of pastoral integration to livestock markets in East Africa largely focus on the economic factors that characterize market integration, such as household wealth and market returns. Many of these studies also explore the ecological drivers and outcomes of market involvement. For example, drought is generally cited as a reason why people diversify their livelihoods, and livelihood strategies are often shown to influence land use (Coppock 1994, Sandford and Scoones 2006). Kenya has been a focal point of much of this research due to the long and contentious history of compulsory policies and initiatives aimed at state benefits from pastoral market integration (Zaal and Dietz 1999: 165).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> This does not include generalized pastoralism, which goes back to the beginnings of livestock herding livelihoods, and includes other livelihood strategies such as hunting and gathering (Marshall and Hildebrand 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Some of these activities included compulsory marketing and forced destocking in the second half of the 1930s, the use of ecological arguments to force higher off-take rates in the 1950s, and the World Bank-funded livestock development programs of the 1960s and 1970s (Zaal and Dietz 1999: 165).



Little's work in northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia largely focuses on the relationship between household wealth and livestock market integration (Little 1992, 2003). Studies specifically looking at Maasai participation in livestock markets have primarily taken place within the Kajiado district of southern Kenya (Bekure 1991, Zaal and Dietz 1999). These studies focus on the contributions livestock sales make to household incomes and explore how the commoditization of the livestock economy has led to new wealth inequality among households.

### ***Cultivation***

The adoption of agriculture into pastoral livelihoods is the most common form of livelihood diversification with some Maasai families farming as early as the 1930s (Hodgson 1999a: 224). Most studies focus on the reasons why people cultivate land and how the profits from crop sales affect household economies. In certain areas, people cultivate land to sustain pastoralism. For example, in Loliondo, in northern Tanzania, E.B. O'Malley (2003) concludes that Maasai grow crops with the intention of future sale for cash, as farming is strategically employed to avoid selling livestock and continue as pastoralists. In other areas, cultivation seems to be a strategy for survival. Studies in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area suggest that fluctuating and restrictive land policies impact livestock production to the extent that farming is necessary to ensure food security and nutrition (Galvin et al. 2002, Galvin et al. 2004, McCabe 2003, McCabe et al. 1992, Smith 1999). Studies in Simanjiro echo these findings by proposing that Maasai farm in order to guarantee food security in the face of increasing impoverishment (Cooke 2007, Davis

2009). Quantifying this process in Simanjiro, Hassan Sachedina and Pippa Trench (2009) provide an extensive analysis of the role of cultivation in household economics.

While these studies emphasize the economic and ecological drivers (i.e. drought) of land-use change at the household level, some studies have recently begun to consider the larger context of agriculture in Maasai livelihoods. For example, in Loliondo, a recent focus on the process through which pastoralists diversify through agriculture has revealed that decisions to diversify are not only economic, but also reflect changing social and cultural norms as well as political histories (McCabe et al 2010: 332–333). In Simanjiro, researchers have hypothesized that Maasai motives for increasing cultivation are more political, and cultivation serves as a means for claiming land in the context of uncertain land tenure and shifting land-use policies (Davis 2009, Nelson 2005). In other words, if land is used, in this sense cultivated, the government cannot allocate or take it for conservation.

### ***Tourism and Conservation***

The tourism sector has become a potentially viable source of income for Maasai in certain areas of Kenya and Tanzania. Kenya has led the way in allowing landowners to benefit from wildlife on their lands, by providing reimbursements to people who live adjacent to protected areas, such as proceeds from photographic safaris (Homewood et al. 2009: 9, Thompson and Homewood 2002, Thompson et al. 2009). Edward Bruner (1994) also discusses how in Kenya, Maasai individuals have been able to profit from their roles as “performers” in private tourism enterprises that aim to recreate a sense of authentic Africa

for their guests.<sup>7</sup>

In Tanzania, government-initiated Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are aimed at involving local communities in tourism and conservation. Yet the confusing and bureaucratic nature of these initiatives often results in resistance among communities, and local communities receive relatively few profits (Davis 2009, 2011, Goldman 2003, Nelson 2007, Nelson et al. 2009). Sachedina and Trench (2009: 287–288) identify three ways Maasai in Simanjiro have benefitted from tourism and conservation: individual benefits from being hired by a private tour company as a camp guard, driver, or hunting and safari guide; village-level benefits from payments for overnight accommodations, concession fees, or contributions from hunting companies for social development projects; and community-level benefits as funds are transferred directly to contractors who work on local development projects. Sachedina and Trench provide an analysis of the monetary proceeds individuals and communities receive from involvement in the tourism sector and conclude that only a few people are able to obtain employment in the tourism industry. Furthermore, village-level proceeds from tourism often do not trickle down to individuals (Sachedina and Trench 2009).

### ***Migrations to Urban Areas for Guard Work***

Since approximately 1996, Maasai men have filled a niche as guards and night watchmen in large urban areas such as Arusha and Dar es Salaam (May 2002, 2007, May and McCabe 2004). In these cases, young men without skills migrate to cities where they are able to secure positions based on their reputations as “brave, honest and fierce warriors” (May and

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<sup>7</sup> In *Ethnicity, Inc.* (2009), John L. Comaroff and Jean Comaroff provide examples of the commodification of ethnicity from around the world.

Ikayo 2007: 277). Ann May (2002) provides a comprehensive examination of this livelihood and the economic and social profiles of migrants. She discusses the process of migration, including people's reasons for leaving their homes and uncovers the details of the migrant experience (ibid.). Looking to the outcomes of these migration patterns, May discusses the implications for changes in decision-making processes and migrants' bonds to their homes and societies. While women do not work as guards, a few go with their husbands to urban areas and even fewer go on their own to sell beadwork and traditional medicine (May and McCabe 2004). May's investigation focuses on the economic factors as important drivers of decisions to migrate. However, she also addresses some of the social implications of guard work, concluding that guard work for Maasai in urban areas of Tanzania is characterized by meager pay, dangerous working conditions, disparagement from other ethnic groups, and risks of HIV/AIDS from men's sexual relations with women in cities (May 2002, May and McCabe 2004).

### ***Women and Livelihood Diversification***

All of the livelihood diversification activities presented thus far are male-dominated activities. Even though women contribute a significant amount of labor to cultivation, men have jurisdiction over agricultural decisions and control profits resulting from crop sales. Additionally, as previously noted, some women migrate to urban areas with their husbands who are working as guards, but these women generally provide companionship and do not engage in business while in the city. Livelihood diversification strategies practiced by pastoral women are generally mentioned as peripheral to household economies and have received very little attention in the literature (Little et al. 2001).

Traditionally, women in pastoral societies have exclusive control over milk offtake and for decades have traded and sold milk to purchase agricultural products (Talle 1988). This is shown to be more important for poorer households as milk can be exchanged for higher-calorie grains (Holden et al. 1999). Along with milk, women also sell animal hides, traditional medicine, and beadwork, and participate in small-scale vegetable production (see Coast 2002, Fratkin and Smith 1995, Holden and Coppock 1992, Little 2001, May and McCabe 2004, Smith 1998). In addition, very poor Maasai women both historically and contemporarily, have migrated to urban areas for prostitution (Talle 1999, White 1990).

The few studies that discuss women's involvement in livelihood diversification do address the implications of these activities. Little (1987) mentions how livelihood diversification empowers women among the Il Chamus in Kenya by offering them a source of income they can control. Jean Ensminger (1987) shows that Orma women in Kenya, who were members of households that had transitioned from being primarily nomadic to more settled, were able to take advantage of money-making opportunities and control their profits. Dan Brockington (2001) discusses how Maasai and Parakuyo women were forced to take up diversification strategies after their families' eviction from the Mkomazi Game Reserve in Tanzania. He describes the outcomes of these activities as "contested": on one hand contributing to women's economic empowerment, yet on the other hand, resulting in the withdrawal of male support (Brockington 2001: 307). While these examples address women's livelihood diversification endeavors, women's work in these trades is rarely quantified and relatively understudied.

### ***Implications of Narrow Views on Livelihoods***

The framework that has been generally applied to understanding livelihood diversification asks the following questions: Why do people diversify? Who diversifies? What are the advantages or risks of diversification? With few exceptions, the answers to these questions address the economic context of the household as well as the ecological factors that contribute to and are affected by livelihood strategies. This restricted focus on the processes and impacts of livelihood diversification can have potentially grave implications. In a recent edited volume on livelihoods and land-use strategies, Katherine Homewood and her colleagues (2009: 25) critique the ways in which government and development agencies employ the sustainable livelihoods framework (SLF) as a development paradigm to reduce poverty. The SLF identifies five assets that define livelihoods. These assets include “physical (spatial/infrastructural); natural (agro-ecological, environment and biodiversity); financial (capital in various forms, including livestock as wealth store); human (people, defined by age, sex, education and skills, and as economically active or dependant individuals) and social (social networks including, for example, family support; leadership positions)” (Homewood et al. 2009: 25). While Homewood acknowledges that the SLF is a valuable “heuristic and analytical” tool, she claims it is “not really able to deal well with the dynamics of households” (ibid.).

In a later chapter in this same volume, Suzanne Serneels and her colleagues qualify Homewood’s claim and explicitly discuss the shortcomings of the SLF. They write, “The livelihoods approach tends to lack historical and site-specific depth, generating ‘thin’ descriptions . . . It does not capture life cycle effects well . . . nor the long-term dynamics of livelihoods and their interplay with social and cultural institutions” (Serneels et al. 2009:

63). In essence, the SLF allows for a relatively limited view of pastoral livelihoods by neglecting to take into account the variability and complexity of livelihood strategies. This can result in misdirected development strategies with futile or even negative outcomes. In light of the real implications that narrow views of livelihoods have on people's lives, I argue that understanding the complex processes through which people diversify their livelihood strategies and the various outcomes is pressing. My analysis addresses this urgency by incorporating a broader framework for studying livelihoods.

### **Expanding the Analytical Approach to Livelihood Strategies**

The framework I use in this dissertation coalesces three strategies for studying livelihoods: anthropological approaches to understanding *agricultural* livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa, anthropologist Peter Little's recommendations for studying livelihoods among east African pastoralists, and perspectives on livelihoods within geography. In a 1998 survey of the literature on livelihood diversification among rural agricultural populations in Sub-Saharan Africa, Frank Ellis concludes that livelihood diversification should be conceived of as a social process. By this he means that livelihood diversification is not solely driven by economic factors. Instead, people's capacity to engage in livelihood diversification strategies depends on the larger social context that encompasses beliefs, ethnicity, social institutions, and gender (Ellis 1998). Furthermore, Ellis stresses how livelihood diversification can have divergent outcomes across households, communities, and societies.

Since Ellis's review, studies among rural agriculturalists in Sub-Saharan Africa continue to address the social context of livelihood strategies by exploring how livelihoods

influence decision-making power, age and gender divisions of labor within households, and the commoditization of reciprocal exchanges (Batterbury 2001, Bryceson 2002). While studies among agricultural populations in Sub-Saharan Africa attend to the important social dynamics of livelihood diversification, why have studies on pastoral diversification lagged behind? This question is not posed to undermine the depth and importance of research that has been done on livelihood diversification among pastoralists, but more to point out what can be learned from investigations incorporating a broader approach. Anthropologist Peter Little and colleagues (2001) provide an incipient framework for attending to the various mechanisms driving and shaping pastoral livelihood diversification and the outcomes of diversification activities.

Little's work among pastoral communities in southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya points to the heterogeneity of diversification decisions, strategies, and outcomes. Little provides a conceptual model that includes "conditional variables," "opportunity variables," and "local response variables" (Little et al. 2001). Conditional variables address system-level phenomena and include human population density, open rangeland per capita, and per capita livestock holdings and distribution. Opportunity variables explain the types of diversification opportunities available and factors in measurements of climate (rainfall), distance to cities and market towns, and available services and infrastructure. Finally, local response variables such as wealth, gender, and age help explain which herders will or will not respond, who will share in the costs and benefits of diversification, and how certain social processes may impact diversification decisions (Little et al. 2001: 406). While Little's primary goal in proposing this model is to provide a mechanism for understanding



heterogeneity, the local response variables he identifies begin to capture the social processes and changes that characterize livelihood diversification.

Working in southern Tanzania, geographer Torben Birch-Thomsen and his colleagues outline a livelihood strategies framework that is useful for grounding my analysis. Birch-Thomsen advocates for “an understanding of livelihoods as an approach to the study of rural change and environmental management” (2001: 43). While he focuses on shifts in land use and resource management among agrarian producers in southern Tanzania, he provides a perspective on the social context of livelihood strategies. He outlines three dimensions of inquiry that are essential to understanding the far-reaching drivers of and implications of livelihood strategies: (1) the examination of how wider social, economic, and political changes impact, are influenced by, and relate to local change; (2) an emphasis on how social differentiation and agency determine outcomes of social change; and (3) the understanding of how individuals and households employ physical and social resources in shaping livelihood strategies (Birch-Thomsen et al. 2001: 43–44). Through his analysis, Birch-Thomsen concludes that livelihood diversification is an active process and encompasses the activities and social mechanisms rural populations employ and are constrained by in their efforts to survive and improve their living standards.

Following these different approaches within anthropology and geography, I explore livelihood diversification as a social process among Maasai in Simanjiro. Here, the notion of livelihood encompasses not only income, but also the social institutions and relations that regulate access to and mediate the outcomes of a certain standard of living. The ways in which people participate in the tanzanite trade and the outcomes of their activities suggest that indeed economic factors are important. However, through my analysis other cultural

and political institutions surface as critical to structuring livelihood strategies. In addition, livelihood diversification through the tanzanite trade also transforms some of these very institutions. Understanding how culture, history, politics, and gender converge within a new livelihood opens our purview to the differential drivers of livelihood decisions and how livelihoods serve as a mechanism for change.

### **My Entrée to Maasai Livelihoods**

I came to this project with experience doing research in Tanzania with Maasai and a solid foundation in Swahili. In 1998, as a master's student at Colorado State University, I was presented with the opportunity, by my then-advisor Kathleen Galvin, to go to Tanzania for four months to research issues related to conservation policy and Maasai livelihoods. This experience gave me the initial taste of the excitement and tribulations that characterize ethnographic fieldwork. It also provided me with a foundation in Swahili, as well as a thirst to delve deeper into the complexities of Maasai lives and livelihoods.

Seven years after I received my MA, I began the doctoral program at the University of Colorado with the goal of resuming studies in Tanzania. During the second year of my coursework, I studied Swahili with a private tutor in Boulder and spent six weeks the following summer at the Summer Cooperative African Language Institute at the University of Illinois studying Swahili. In January 2008, I left for the field with funding from a National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant. Two months after my arrival in Tanzania, I had officially obtained all of the necessary official permits, and I began to formally engage in research. During the time I collected signatures, paid fees and waited for the permits to be processed, I physically situated myself in Simanjiro by setting up my

research camp and learning the lay of the land. I was fortunate during the beginning stages of this time period to accompany my advisor to Simanjiro. Dr. McCabe's introductions to prestigious community members and his knowledge of unique cultural aspects of the people there provided a springboard from which I was able to establish myself socially within the communities. In essence, my research truly began the very moment I stepped foot in Simanjiro.

Staying in villages was key to this research. By maintaining a relatively constant presence, people began to ask questions about why I was there, who I knew, and how long I would stay. Some would come and ask for small favors, such as to borrow some water or a cup of rice, while others would stop in as they were heading home from the market or the town center. By fulfilling simple requests and taking the time to chat with people, I began to make friends and establish my place in the community. I believe my intentions were perceived to be sincere, and I came to be accepted as a legitimate community member. Through the solid relationships I formed with individuals, participant-observation came to life. Engaging in casual conversations, attending important ceremonies, and being present at "camp fire chats," as I came to call the various interactions that occurred around the campfire in our *boma*,<sup>8</sup> involved more than just talk of tanzanite trading and Mererani. These exchanges and activities provided me with greater access to Maasai culture and life ways and allowed me to experience and understand the nature and pace of life in Simanjiro.

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<sup>8</sup> Boma is the Swahili word that designates a Maasai settlement, surrounded by a thorn-bush enclosure and consisting of one or more men and their wives and children. While Maasai use the word *boma*, they also refer to these homesteads in Maa as *enkang* (sing.)/*inkangitie* (pl.). I will use the word *boma* throughout this dissertation.

As part of my “official” research, I conducted meetings with important village representatives such as traditional leaders, government officials, and heads of women’s groups. I explained what I was doing, the goals of my research, and I also requested their approval and participation. I was formally welcomed in all the villages, and men and women both agreed to gather friends and associates for group interviews where I could ask about general trends of livelihood diversification in general and patterns characteristic to tanzanite trading in particular.

Focus group interviews were held with these groups of men and women in almost all the subvillages within the four villages of this study and consisted of a cross-section of various ages and age-set alliances. I am purposefully not revealing the names of the villages I worked in or the names of the people I interviewed to protect individuals’ anonymity as some sensitive topics are discussed throughout this dissertation. I strive to avoid jeopardizing anyone’s reputation or relationship with others. Focus group interviews consisted mostly of open-ended questions and revealed the major patterns of livelihood diversification and some of the important characteristics of the tanzanite trade. The majority of focus groups consisted of just men or just women, but sometimes women joined the predominantly male groups. Due to the nature of men’s and women’s social interactions, it was important to separate these interviews by gender. I conducted thirty focus groups with men and ten focus groups with women. From these focus groups, I was able to discern the primary issues Maasai perceive to be important and consequently construct useful questions for interviews with individuals.

The process through which individual men and women were chosen for interviews evolved during the course of my research. I began by incorporating systematic methods by

assigning each male household head a number and then using a random number chart to identify interviewees. While this method was reliable in ensuring random sampling, it had its faults due to both the Maasai way of life, as well as the work in the tanzanite trade. Often we were not able to locate an identified interviewee because he had moved to a dry-season boma or was away at Mererani. In light of these challenges, I soon placed a greater emphasis on snowball sampling, or the use of informants to locate people (Bernard 2006). Relying on social networks was useful for finding people who were available and willing to be interviewed, and a friend's recommendation carried social capital. I believe this strengthened the reliability of the interviews. Overall, I conducted nearly 100 interviews with men and over forty interviews with women. These interviews were semi-structured and consisted of a combination of closed and open-ended questions.

Throughout the course of my twelve months of fieldwork, I primarily worked with two male research assistants and one female. My research assistants facilitated all of the formal interviews. All of my research assistants were Maasai and most of the interviews were conducted in the Maa language and translated during the interview. Not knowing Maa is definitely a shortcoming of this study, however, my ability to speak Swahili allowed me to have several valuable, less-formal conversations with people. Per my research assistants' recommendations, I did not record the interviews as they felt this would compromise the accuracy, candidness, and fluidity of the interviewee's responses. The direct quotes included throughout this dissertation come from my research assistants' translations.

Living and camping with research assistants in my boma posed some challenges but allowed me to debrief with them each evening. Often we would talk about an interview, including how we could best word the questions to convey the true meaning, clarify

confusing responses or discuss the context of a particular response, and delve deeper into topics that surfaced during interviews. I came to rely on this type of campfire chat to help me grasp the underlying meanings behind my research assistants' English—their third language after Maa and Swahili—and to learn the meanings behind some of their translations. One of my research assistants was extremely bright and had a passion and propensity for language. We would often discuss words and phrases in Maa, Swahili, and English and his amusement with the nuances, clichés, and adages of the English language, made him reflect on Maa and Swahili and find metaphors among the languages. Undoubtedly, this is reflected in the translations, which I feel add to the richness of my ethnography.

Although the majority of interviews were conducted within four villages in Simanjiro, I also took opportunities to meet with several tanzanite traders and women in Arusha during my stays to restock the boma and enjoy some of the amenities of the urban environment. As many of the tanzanite traders worked between Mererani and Arusha, I was able to find them either at Kati Makutano, the hotel and restaurant where Maasai gathered in Arusha or busy trading gemstones in a certain area of town. While Maasai were the focus of my research, the national and global scope of the tanzanite trade led me to conversations and interviews with other key players, such as mining lawyers and tanzanite retailers.

After returning home in December of 2008, I set the wheels in motion to return the following summer. In a three-week visit in July 2009, (thanks to a Beverly Sears graduate student grant from the University of Colorado at Boulder Graduate School), I presented my preliminary research findings to the village councils in each of my study villages. These

meetings helped confirm and solidify some of the conclusions I was drawing from my research. At each of these meetings I provided the village with a tailored poster, translated into Swahili, explaining my research and some of the significant findings.

During my year of research in Simanjiro and my subsequent return, I became totally immersed as a village participant, yet was always reminded that I was merely an observer. The endless pleas for money, rides, and other favors were constant cues that I was American and despite my status in the USA as a highly indebted (financially and otherwise) graduate student at the lower rungs of academic and certain social hierarchies, I was perceived as privileged and wealthy. I recognize I will never be able to fully span the divide that separates my life in the USA from Maasai lives in Tanzania. From this rift, I write this dissertation, acknowledging that the perspectives in it are my own. While I attempt to recreate the world as I saw it through Maasai words, behaviors, and emotions, I recognize I can never truly comprehend the full set of histories that converged to form the present moment as I experienced it. Thus, I humbly aim to represent the particulars of a certain place and time in hopes that some of the broad patterns can influence the ways we think about pastoral livelihoods in general and Maasai in particular. To set the stage for my analysis, it is important to first understand who the Maasai are by exploring some of their most identifying social institutions.

### **Durable Institutions in Maasai Culture and Production**

“Everyone knows the Maasai. Men wearing red capes while balancing on one leg and a long spear, gazing out over the semi-arid plains stretching endlessly to the horizon, or women heavily bedecked in beads, stare out at us from countless coffee-table books and tourists’

snapshots” (Spear 1993:1). Maasai are perhaps the most well known (and well studied) group of pastoralists in the world. Images portraying them as traditional and able to resist change have distorted the reality that Maasai have faced years of political, economic, and social marginalization and dispossession (Galaty 2002).

Maasai are primarily pastoralists and agropastoralists and inhabit a 150,000km<sup>2</sup> area of northern Tanzania and southern Kenya (McCabe et al. 2010). Ancestors of the Maasai came from southern Sudan during the first millennium AD. They did not reach the East African Rift Valley until the end of the ninth century, and it was not until at least the mid-sixteenth century that they arrived in Tanzania.<sup>9</sup> Maasai speak the eastern Nilotic language Maa; both pastoral and agricultural groups in Kenya and Tanzania speak dialects of Maa. In Tanzania, the Purko, Loita, Laitoyoka, and Kisongo sections dominate. In Simanjiro, Maasai are primarily members of the Kisongo section and comprise the majority of people living in the area.

Maasai production and social organization are intricately intertwined. Anthropologist and Maasai scholar Dorothy Hodgson writes, “Pastoral production is almost always clearly structured by gender and age, although there is of necessity flexibility in the assignment of duties to accommodate individual and household exigencies” (Hodgson 2000: 10). Hodgson draws our attention to how Maasai production is bound to and regulated by important social institutions. Among social groups, institutions provide the “rules of the game,” and thus play a significant role in shaping identities (Lesorogol 2008: 4). For Maasai, social institutions also regulate access to production (ibid.). The case of Maasai and the tanzanite trade brings to focus the relationship between social institutions

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<sup>9</sup> Current population of Maasai in Tanzania is difficult to determine because in recent years, the census has not explicitly asked about ethnicity (Coast 2002).



and production. However, following Hodgson's suggestion that social institutions are flexible, the case presented here also reveals the way social institutions are stretched, challenged, and shaped. As social shifts occur in the context of new forms of production, it is critical to understand the identifying features of Maasai social organization. Important aspects of Maasai economic and social life are intricately bound to ideas about age-sets.

The age-set system may very well be one of the most defining and enduring institutions of Maasai society. An age-set, or a group of male peers within a certain range of ages, travels together through a series of life stages or age-grades, including uncircumcised boys (*ilaiyok*; sing. *olayioni*), circumcised young men (warriors; *ilmurran*; sing. *olmurrani*), and elders (*ilmoruak/ilpayiani*) (Goldman 2006: 66, Spencer 1993).<sup>10</sup> Further divisions exist within these categories such as senior and junior categories (Goldman 2006). The current named Maasai age-sets in order of increasing seniority are the following: Korianga (*ilmurran*/warriors), Landis (junior elders), Makaa (elders), Seuri (elders), Meshuki (elders), and Ilterito (elders) (Fig 1.3).<sup>11</sup> Women do not have age-sets per se; they are generally associated with the age-sets of their husbands (Talle 1988). But women are distinguished by different age categories, including young, uncircumcised girls (*intoyie*; sing. *entito*); young, married women (*isiangikin*; sing. *esiangiki*); and older women who are often beyond child-bearing age (*intasati*; sing. *entasat*) (Talle 1988: 94). An older woman is

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<sup>10</sup> Paul Spencer (1993) proposes several models of the Maasai age system that focus on the series of rites and initiations marking different life stages and the intergenerational relations that are characteristic to age-set membership.

<sup>11</sup> These names were the most commonly used in Simanjiro; however, Maasai in other areas use different names.

more commonly referred to as *koko*. Among other things, age-sets dictate social relations and mediate access to means of production and reproduction (Talle 1988: 77).

<b>Maasai Names</b>	<b>Time of Warriorhood and Major Rites of Passage</b>	<b>Representation in this Study</b>
<b>Korianga</b> <i>Irimireh</i> <i>Imirishi</i>	1998–present	<b>Warriors (ilmurran)</b> Senior warriors at the time of this study.
<b>Landis</b> <i>Irkimunya</i> <i>Ilkidotu</i> <i>Irkidotu</i>	1981?/1983–2003 (~20 years)	<b>Junior Elders (ilmoruak)</b> Junior elders at the time of this study.
<b>Makaa</b>	1971–1988 (17 years)	<b>Senior Elder (ilmoruak)</b> Elders at the time of this study.
<b>Seuri</b>	Circumcision: 1955 (19 years)	<b>Retired Elder (ilmoruak)</b> Elders at the time of this study.
<b>Meshuki</b> (Ilnyankusi)	Circumcision: 1935 (23 years)	<b>Retired Elder (ilmoruak)</b> Very few were alive at the time of this study.
<b>Ilterito</b>	Circumcision: 1926 (21 years)	<b>Retired Elder (ilmoruak)</b> I did not meet or hear of one living Ilterito during this study.

Source: Adapted from Goldman 2006: 78.

**Figure 1.3:** Diagram of age-sets with different names and representations in this study.

### ***Social Relations and the Age-Set System***

For Maasai men, among other things, the age-set system provides a context for male bonding. The collective experiences of age-mates in a series of rites and rituals unite them

as they forge their own group identity and come to be recognized as a unified cohort (Spencer 1993: 140). Approximately every fifteen years a new age-set is initiated. This is signified by a sequence of rituals including circumcision. Men who are circumcised during this period become *ilmurran* or warriors. The initiation of young men as *ilmurran* marks a critical period in their lives when they develop “loyalty, discipline, and higher qualities” (Spencer 1993: 150). Traditionally, the camaraderie young men engage in during this time is based on ideas about communality, ethnic pride, brotherhood, and sharing.<sup>12</sup>

Participation in the *manyatta* (warrior camps) further strengthens and solidifies age-set camaraderie (and competition). Traditionally, *ilmurran* lived away from their homes at the *manyatta*.<sup>13</sup> The *manyatta* served as a place to prepare for war and raids, carry out prescribed rituals such as exclusively eating and sleeping with other warriors, and bond with members of the same age-set (Goldman 2006, Spencer 2003, Waller 1979). While this tradition still maintains a certain amount of symbolic importance, in Tanzania, *ilmurran* no longer spend long periods of time at the *manyatta* and only stay for short periods of time preceding the *Eunoto* ceremony, which occurs about midway through the warrior period and marks the transition of junior warriors to senior warrior status (Goldman 2006).<sup>14</sup> The bonding that occurs among age-mates contrasts with the intergenerational tensions that exist between age-sets.

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<sup>12</sup> The period of warriorhood is also marked by competition. Young men strive to prove their skills by competing with one another to be the better dancer or have the best singing voice (Goldman 2006, Hodgson 1999b).

<sup>13</sup> Women play an important role in age-set rituals as mothers, staying at the *manyatta*, and participating in important rites associated with age-set transitions such as shaving their son’s heads as part of their initiation into warriorhood.

<sup>14</sup> Ernestine Coast (2001: 33) describes a similar decline in the importance of the *manyatta* among Maasai in Kenya. She attributes this to Maasai youths’ increased participation in formal education and land subdivision

Elders encourage and sanction the time of warriorhood, yet they also scrutinize ilmurran behavior. The source of tensions between elders and ilmurran appears to be vested in the views they hold of each other (Spencer 2003). The elders scorn the ilmurran's flamboyant ways, blame them for any acts of thievery, adultery, or misconduct, and assume the moral high ground in matters of authority and respect (Spencer 2003: 21). Ilmurran view elders as self-indulgent and only interested in building up their personal possessions in the form of livestock and families (ibid.). Ilmurran contrast these views of elders with their fervent group solidarity (ibid.).<sup>15</sup> Despite their complaints about the elders, the gerontocratic nature of the age-set system positions ilmurran in a regime imposed by the elders which is sanctioned through ideas about respect.

*Enkanyit* or "respect" or "obedience" governs interactions between age-sets as well as between men and women (Llewelyn-Davies 1979, Spencer 1988). At the most basic level, junior men show deference to senior men and women toward men (Talle 1988: 92). Among men, boys are regarded as irresponsible and undeserving of respect, ilmurran have a mixed status, as they are on the path to elderhood, yet still reveal their youth, and elders have acquired the utmost respect (Spencer 2003: 30–31). In practice, Maasai notions of respect are realized through several aspects of daily life including expressions of obedience and greetings and the considerable social and political influence of elder men.<sup>16</sup> While in

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that prevents the physical establishment of the manyatta. *Olng'esh* is another important ceremony that signifies the end of warriorhood. After *olng'esh*, an official name is given to the age-set.

<sup>15</sup> There are also links between the age-set of the warriors and elders who are two age-sets their seniors who act as warrior's ritual firestick patrons (see Goldman 2006 and Spencer 2003).

<sup>16</sup> While men have traditionally held more power and influence over youth due to the age-set system, women were described in pre-colonial times as integral to political and social decisions within Maasai communities. The changing influence of women in Maasai political and social spheres as a result of colonial and post-colonial influences is discussed in chapter 4.

general women show deference to men, a man must show respect to certain women such as his mother's sister's daughters or his wife's sisters (Talle 1988: 80). He is not permitted to have sexual intercourse with or marry any of these women (ibid.).

### ***Access to Production and Reproduction***

Relations to the primary means of production, livestock, are mediated through the age-set system. The antagonisms that exist between elders and young men not only stem from their perspectives of one another described above, but also arise due to elders' undifferentiated control of resources (Coast 2001). Historically, the primary role of warriors was to act as a standing army to defend cattle and raid other people's herds (Goldman 2006); however, male elders have the utmost authority, as the patriarchs of their family (*olmarei*), in matters related to livestock and family (Coast 2001).<sup>17</sup>

Throughout the period of warriorhood, young men acquire livestock either as payment for work or as gifts (Coast 2001: 33). The building up of a herd provides a young man with bridewealth payments and the means to support his future family. Once a man marries, he generally stays in the boma of his father and is not considered truly independent until his household has its own gate in the boma, which may not occur until his father dies or he gains enough wealth to move away. "Such a move may take several years to complete, and until such time the husband must defer to his father's authority" (Coast 2001: 34).

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<sup>17</sup> Today, the warrior's responsibilities in raiding and protecting the livestock herds, while still symbolically and socially relevant, are not as important on a daily basis (Coast 2002: 96).

Men's access to reproduction is also determined by the age-set system whereby older men have greater access to wives because of their economic and social status. A man is theoretically not allowed to marry until he is financially secure and is formally a junior elder, although in practice, it appears exceptions are made to this rule (Coast 2001, Fosbrooke 1948). Thus, young men have relatively limited access to sources of reproduction, but throughout their lives increasingly gain political and social power as they build their herds and are allowed to marry (Hodgson 1999c). Despite the deep entrenchment of these patterns, some scholars have predicted that the customary socialization of young men may become unseated as young men pursue education and work elsewhere and increase their means to becoming economically secure (Spear 1993: 14).

This overview of the age-set system and how it governs Maasai relations provides a backdrop for understanding the changes that are occurring in light of the tanzanite trade. By far, young men represent the largest demographic of Maasai who work at Mererani, and tanzanite trading is the most widely participated in livelihood strategy (outside of cultivation) in Simanjiro (Table 1.1). By addressing how aspects of social, cultural, economic, and political systems, including age, gender, and relations to production, structure and are shaped by Maasai involvement with a new livelihood strategy, I show how livelihoods represent more than just a way of making a living. Placing Maasai in the context of the tanzanite trade and showing to what extent they are embedded in the global and local circulation of tanzanite, brings to focus the far-reaching scale of the tanzanite trade and provides a foundation for discussing the unprecedented characteristics of this new livelihood for Maasai in Simanjiro.

**Table 1.1:** Percentage by age-set of Maasai men in this study who have participated in livelihood strategies outside of the village. Cultivation is not included here, as all families in the study farm.

<b>Age-Set</b>	<b>Mererani (%)</b>	<b>Livestock Business (%)</b>	<b>Mererani and Livestock Business (%)</b>	<b>Nothing (%)</b>	<b>Guard Work (%)</b>
Korianga	83	11	0	0	6
Landis	85	45	45	15	0
Makaa	47	58	37	32	0
Seuri	0	14	0	86	0

### **The Setting: Maasai and Tanzanite**

In the past thirty years, Mererani has been transformed from a predominately Maasai, agropastoral community into the largest urban center of Simanjiro with a population approaching 50,000.<sup>18</sup> But the links between Maasai and tanzanite go beyond the fact that Mererani was originally grazing area for livestock herds. Maasai have been integral to the increasing popularity of tanzanite, and thus in some ways have contributed to the transformation of this once pastoral landscape. Maasai are generally attributed with the discovery of tanzanite, they are central to global marketing schemes and heralded as the poster children of tanzanite, and they provide an important link between mining and the global circulation of tanzanite.

The exact history of the discovery of tanzanite is unclear; however, the story that is most commonly told credits a Maasai herder who was grazing his livestock in Mererani, picked up the interesting-looking rock, and brought it to Manuel D'Souza, a ruby prospector

<sup>18</sup> From 2002 Tanzanian census data: <http://www.tzgisug.org/tikiwiki/tiki-index.php>

who was working in the area.<sup>19</sup> D'Souza thought it was a sapphire, however, subsequent gemological analyses proved it to be blue *zoisite*, something completely different and much more rare than sapphire. Even though Maasai were the first to “find” tanzanite, their associations with the gemstone dropped off once it got into the hands of the New York-based jeweler Tiffany & Company.

The naming of tanzanite is generally attributed to Henry Platt, then president of Tiffany & Company. Upon learning about the discovery of blue *zoisite*, Platt seized the opportunity to capitalize on its rarity; only he felt that the name, *zoisite* would not appeal to consumers, as it sounded too much like the word “suicide.” He proposed the name tanzanite in honor of the only place in the world where the gemstone is found and to further distinguish the exclusivity of this gem.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, tanzanite became known worldwide by jewelers, gemstone aficionados, and consumers, due to Platt’s deft marketing, and his claim that this was “the most important gemstone discovery in over 2000 years.”<sup>21</sup> Despite tanzanite’s worldwide acclaim, the USA accounts for over 70% of the tanzanite market. While prices fluctuate according to the quality of the stone, as well as the

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<sup>19</sup> In many popular stories of tanzanite appearing in various websites and publications, Mererani is spelled, Merelani. Although I cannot definitively say, I suspect that Mererani was too cumbersome for native English speakers and thus the name was anglicized. I also recently came across a website titled “Africamediaonline: Africans Telling Africa’s Story” that referred to Mererani as “Mererape.”  
<http://www.africamediaonline.com/mmc/gallery/detail/features/tanzanite>

<sup>20</sup> Another less publicized account attributes the naming of tanzanite to Julius Nyerere, the president of Tanzania after independence in 1962. The *Monitor* newspaper of Kampala, Uganda (October 17, 1999) reported: “Shortly after this a type of precious stone was unearthed in Tanzania. The country's parliament unanimously resolved to name this gem the “Nyeretrite” in recognition of his stature as a statesman locally as well as internationally. The president thanked his countrymen for their kind consideration but politely declined the honour. Instead he proposed that the stone be named “Tanzanite.” Tanzania, he argued, was more important than individuals.”

<sup>21</sup> <http://tanzaniteamerica.com/Tanzanite-History.php>



market demand, in 2008, prices ranged from \$250 to \$500 for one carat of cut and polished tanzanite (Figure 1.4).



**Figure 1.4:** Untreated tanzanite crystal (left). Photo credit: Jeff Scovil. A 45-carat finished tanzanite (right). Property of Pala International Inc., a large gemstone retailer. Photo credit: Wimon Manorotkul, Palagem.com.

The global popularity of tanzanite may in part be attributed to Platt; however, it has also become well known because of the marketing finesse of TanzaniteOne,<sup>22</sup> the corporation that now controls and mines the most expansive and productive area of Mererani. In 1990, in an attempt to privatize the mining sector in accordance with economic reforms mandated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the Tanzanian government evicted all artisanal, small-scale miners, and the state mining company (STAMICO) from the core of the mining area at Mererani (Schroeder 2010: 58). In 1996, the South African corporation, African Gemstone Mining Ltd., or Afgem, began mining tanzanite in the largest allocation at Mererani, or what is known as Block C (ibid.).

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<sup>22</sup> "TanzaniteOne" is not a typo. This is how the company promotes its name.

In 2003, Afgem was restructured and renamed TanzaniteOne and transferred its stock listing from South Africa to London's Alternate Investment Market (ibid.).<sup>23</sup> While South Africans continue to occupy the majority of the board and management positions, TanzaniteOne's registered office is located in Bermuda.<sup>24</sup> The ambitious marketing campaign of TanzaniteOne has earned them the reputation as "the DeBeers" of tanzanite. Here is where Maasai re-enter the story.

Maasai are the icon and poster children of TanzaniteOne's propaganda. The "Tanzanite Experience," the museum and brainchild of TanzaniteOne, centrally located in downtown Arusha, contains multiple images and narratives including Maasai. Larger-than-life photographs of Maasai attribute them with tanzanite's discovery and authenticate tanzanite through narratives that quote Maasai legends about the source of and traditional meanings given to tanzanite. For example, Maasai men are said to give tanzanite to their wives when they have their first baby.<sup>25</sup> Maasai located in the village closest to the mining area are also the beneficiaries of TanzaniteOne's community development initiatives.

Building on Henry Platt's foundations, TanzaniteOne's marketing scheme converges two exotic images from Tanzania and has effectively cast tanzanite across social and political spheres. For example, tanzanite was reportedly donned by "a number of stars and

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<sup>23</sup> As of August 2011, TanzaniteOne has changed its name to Richland Resources allegedly to reflect their diversification into tsavorite and sapphire mining in the Manyara Region of Tanzania and Australia respectively <http://allafrica.com/stories/201108191489.html>. Incidentally, this is the third name change and restructuring the company has gone through since it first started working at Mererani. It was suggested to me that the company changed its name frequently to continually fall into the grace period of not having to pay taxes as a new company in Tanzania during the first five years in operation; however, I was not able to verify this claim

<sup>24</sup> <http://richlandresourcesltd.com/contacts>

<sup>25</sup> According to Maasai I spoke with in Simanjiro, this claim is untrue.

starlets”<sup>26</sup> at the 2009 Oscar Awards and on a recent visit to Tanzania, Hilary Clinton “fell in love with tanzanite”<sup>27</sup> and purchased a pair of tanzanite earrings, which she proudly wore to a meeting with President Kikwete. While Maasai play an indirect role in the popularity of tanzanite, through TanzaniteOne’s marketing, (and undoubtedly benefit from this propaganda and popularity), at Mererani they provide a direct link between mining and the circulation of this valuable commodity.

Since the 1980s, Mererani has become a hub of activity. The mining area covers an expanse of 12 km<sup>2</sup> (Schroder 2010) and is marked by miners covered in graphite ash.<sup>28</sup> Yet where tanzanite truly comes to life is in the town center. The main street of Mererani is dedicated to tanzanite trading and men cluster around tables lining the street and weigh, inspect, and chip at raw pieces of tanzanite. Here, Maasai men dominate the tanzanite trade.

Young men comprise the largest demographic of Maasai working as tanzanite traders. But in contrast to other studies on mining in Africa and elsewhere in the world, that focus on people’s involvement as miners (Ferguson 1999, Moodie 1994, Nash 1979, Taussig 1980), Maasai are not working as miners. Most of them work as middleman and are viewed as businessmen. This job is perceived to be higher class and more financially lucrative than brokering or mining.

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<sup>26</sup> *The Arusha Times* “Tanzanite for Hollywood World Famous Celebrities,” August 16–22, 2008.

<sup>27</sup> An article on Hilary Clinton’s “love for Tanzanite” appeared as a press release from the International Colored Gem Association July 18, 2011. <http://www.gemstone.org>.

<sup>28</sup> Tanzanite is located in boudin structures found embedded in other rocks such as graphite (Oliver 2006).

Few men go to Mererani without any cash, but those who do first work as brokers or miners. Brokers trade gemstones, but they do not have cash for purchases and are usually given gemstones by someone they know with the expectation that they return, after selling the gems, with a requested monetary amount. Little by little, brokers are able to profit from these transactions. Even fewer men start their work at Mererani as miners, and Maasai call miners, *mwanapolo*, in reference to the Apollo astronauts. Miners are said to go “as far down into the earth as astronauts go up into the sky.” Among Maasai, mining is heavily stigmatized because of the hazardous, filthy working conditions, and its association with drugs and corruption. In fact, Maasai who allegedly once worked as miners will often deny this claim. Brokers and miners share the common goal of building enough capital so they can purchase gemstones and work as middlemen.

Also found in the town center are Maasai women. While very few women work at Mererani, their activities selling milk and beadwork further accentuate the presence of Maasai at Mererani and their integration within the gemstone trade. The following chapter summaries address people’s activities in the tanzanite trade as well as the broader implications of this type of work. In each chapter, I aim to connect the overarching themes that surfaced during my research and are critical to understanding how tanzanite, Maasai, money, and power converge within the context of this new livelihood strategy.

## **Chapter-by-Chapter Overview**

### ***Chapter Two: Mobs and Men: “Being Maasai” in the Tanzanite Trade***

*How do different groups of men engage in livelihood diversification strategies, and how do they uniquely experience the outcomes?*

While tanzanite trading is a common livelihood strategy among Maasai in Simanjiro, not everyone participates in the same manner, nor do they experience similar outcomes. In this chapter, I explore how men of different age groups involve themselves in the tanzanite trade. By focusing on the groups young men form at Mererani as sites of articulation, I show how they, as well as their fathers and elders, reproduce and rely on customary economic, social, and political institutions to succeed and to secure their customary rights to productive resources—albeit in an entirely new context. While these processes reinforce certain aspects of these institutions as well as men’s particular roles within them, the outcomes of men’s work has the opposite effect. Thus this chapter also shows how these very institutions are challenged and men’s rights to production are renegotiated. The heterogeneity that exists among people’s participation in and the ways they experience the outcomes of livelihood diversification strategies are emphasized.

### ***Chapter Three: Bling, Bling: Capital, Power, and Success in Maasai Communities***

*What different forms of capital are men able to access from tanzanite trading, and how do these forms of capital contribute to new arrangements of power?*

Continuing with the theme of heterogeneity, I focus in on a select group of tanzanite traders—those who are extremely successful. I examine economic, social and cultural forms of capital that successful tanzanite traders possess and are perceived to embody from their work in the tanzanite trade. This deeper look at the outcomes of men’s

involvement in the tanzanite trade shows how this livelihood strategy not only serves as a vehicle for obtaining money, but also as one to increase social status and political influence. As new forms of capital coalesce with contemporary notions of success among Maasai, successful tanzanite traders are able to access political positions within the villages. Through this I argue that men's motives for engaging in the tanzanite trade may also rest in the potential social and political benefits that tanzanite trading allows. Thus, I show how inequalities emerge as men gain unequal access to institutionalized power.

#### ***Chapter Four: Sex, Power, and Production: Women Pushing the Limits of Gendered Subjectivities***

*How do subject positions define and constrain women's activities in livelihood diversification strategies? What does this say about women's roles within Maasai households and communities?*

Women in Maasai society are increasingly participating in livelihood diversification strategies. By looking at the ways in which gendered subjectivities are rooted and perpetuated within Maasai society, I explore how their relationship to production has been defined and what happens when women defy these roles. Even as they appear to overcome the limitations of history and culture that confine them to the domestic sphere, women's efforts are still inhibited and undermined by men's authority. In addition, I address how women themselves have internalized these subjectivities. Thus, as women's sexuality and morality is challenged, I show how their involvement in livelihood diversification strategies in general and tanzanite trading in particular reinforces gender inequality.

## ***Chapter Five: The Dark Side of the Crystal: Narratives of Witchcraft and Zombies***

*What tensions surface in the context of new livelihood strategies, and how do people attempt to alleviate these tensions?*

The witchcraft narrative is a new form of discourse that has emerged in the context of Maasai involvement in the tanzanite trade. I describe this narrative as a way Maasai give meaning to tanzanite trader's success. I also examine how the witchcraft narrative reveals structures of power and represents the struggles that occur in the context of this new livelihood. While the witchcraft narrative attempts to undermine tanzanite trader's success, through its perpetuation it also inadvertently gives tanzanite traders power. On the other hand, the counternarrative expressed by successful tanzanite traders shows how tanzanite traders vie to reclaim their power. I argue that the witchcraft narrative addresses and attempts to contend with new forms of inequality created through livelihood diversification.

## ***Chapter Six: Booms and Busts: Broadening Approaches and Questioning Sustainability of Pastoral Livelihood Diversification***

In the final chapter, I summarize the arguments put forth across the chapters and address how social scientists can begin to understand the complete impacts livelihood strategies have on pastoral people's lives. By looking to the impacts livelihood strategies have on economics and households and also social relations, ideologies, and power structures, I stress the importance of applying a framework of analysis that allows social scientists to explore the far-reaching influences livelihood diversification strategies can have among individuals, households, communities, and society. In conclusion, I address the sustainability of this livelihood strategy and its implications for Maasai in Simanjiro.

## CHAPTER TWO

### MOBS AND MEN: “BEING MAASAI” IN THE TANZANITE TRADE

Sipitek and I sit in his boma as he recounts his experiences at Mererani.

A typical day at Mererani? Well, first I woke up, prayed, washed, and prepared to leave the house. I took my scale and a little hammer that’s used to sort gems. In the past we went to the hill to find gems, but after getting a large amount of money, we bought a table and sat in the market and waited for people to come to sell gems to us. When miners or others with gems came to our table we had a little conversation. We put the gems on the scale and negotiated a price. We made an agreement and paid. If we did not come to an agreement, they moved on to another table.

Sipitek is a member of the Landis age-set. When he was a warrior, he worked as a livestock trader. In 1994, after seeing the successes people were having in the tanzanite trade, he decided to stop trading livestock and go to Mererani. He took 2,000 Tanzanian shillings (TZS); 1,200 TZS paid for his fare to Mererani leaving him with only 800 TZS in his pocket.

Sipitek reminisces,

It was a Saturday afternoon when I arrived at Mererani. I am a Christian so the next day I went to church in the morning and then went up to the hill where people used to go to collect gems. On the way I found two rocks on the ground, and I had an idea that they might be worth something. I didn’t know how to evaluate gemstones at this point. I took the gems—there was one big one and one small one—and I threw the small one away. I showed the big



one to people who said it wasn't worth anything and who wanted to take it from me. I then went to a relative who said, "this is a gem." I sold it for 20,000 TZS. I bought clothes for myself and my mother and stayed at Mererani with 7,000 TZS.

Sipitek worked at Mererani for twelve years and was very successful. He explains how shortly after his initial luck, he joined a group of men, or as Maasai themselves refer to them as a "mob"<sup>29</sup>:

I worked in a mob with four others. They were all members of my age-set. We put together our capital to buy gemstones. We had a leader who sat at the table with another member. The other two members would work around the area and on the hill collecting tanzanite. But the people who sat at the table and bought and sold gemstones wouldn't do so without the entire group's agreement. It was luck if someone chose to show gemstones to your table. There might be sixty middlemen in the area. Some groups have money but they do not like to pay; other groups have a good reputation—miners may say good things about you. After you sell gems you divide the profit equally among the group members, the capital remains and you start over.

Sipitek calls our attention to the uniqueness of tanzanite trading as a livelihood strategy for Maasai. Never before have Maasai been so immersed in the trade of a global commodity or so entwined in the circulation of transnational flows of capital. Moreover, to pursue this livelihood strategy and forge new connections with a global marketplace, people do not have to travel long distances or cross geopolitical borders. Instead, viable sources of income exist in a place that is geographically (within the same region) and

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<sup>29</sup> Maasai refer to a mob as *mobu*. The use of this word is most likely co-opted from its use in Hollywood films in reference to the mafia. On weekends in Arusha, I often saw people at small movie houses gathered around a television set watching bootlegged copies of foreign films.

administratively (within the same political district and nation-state) contiguous with their home villages. However, the world of tanzanite trading is far from familiar. As one elder said to me, “Mererani is like going to the forest far from our society.” So how do Maasai men navigate this unfamiliar socioeconomic terrain?<sup>30</sup>

To address this question, I draw from Stuart Hall’s and Tania Li’s approaches to the theory of articulation, which suggest that various social and economic influences shape and constrain people’s process of identity formation in powerful, yet not totalizing ways. Using the concept of articulation allows me to consider the different forces at play, as young men, fathers, and elders position themselves in the tanzanite trade and are repositioned in their households and communities. I look at how this is happening on two levels.

First, as each group of men directly and indirectly contributes to the mob, they depend on familiar social and economic institutions that define their customary roles in society and production. This is evidenced in the way young men uphold some of the most important tenets of Maasai social and economic organization; fathers exert their control over household production; and elders assert their societal-level authority over common resources. Second, as these very institutions are reproduced and relied on, they are also shaped and challenged by the outcomes of tanzanite trading; young men defy norms of production and reproduction, fathers lose access to household resources, and elders’ authority is undermined. A thorough investigation of these two processes brings to focus the influences and constraints that characterize the process of articulation. It also shows

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<sup>30</sup> I focus exclusively on men in this chapter because of their roles as middlemen, trading tanzanite, as well as fathers and elders in this process. Few women go to Mererani and those who do work independently in small businesses selling beadwork jewelry, milk, and other commodities. Women’s work at Mererani is discussed at length in chapter 4.

the variable and often, unpredictable impacts livelihood strategies have on individuals and groups of people. The analysis provided highlights the heterogeneous nature of livelihood diversification, as different men participate in and are influenced by the tanzanite trade in divergent ways. Articulation provides a useful framework for understanding the nuanced ways people maneuver through and make sense of their lived experiences in the context of the tanzanite trade.

### **Toward a Framework of Articulation**

To conceptualize the ways in which Maasai men negotiate the tanzanite trade, I start with Stuart Hall's (1986) approach to articulation.<sup>31</sup> Hall's theory of articulation addresses identity and class formation. While he acknowledges that identity and status are indeed linked to the means of production, he suggests that "ideological elements" such as race, gender, or ethnicity also define and constrain identity and class. To Hall, articulation is

the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask, under what circumstances can a connection be forged or made? So the so-called 'unity' of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary 'belongingness.' The 'unity' which matters is a linkage between that articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected. Thus a theory

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<sup>31</sup> Hall's discussions on the politics of articulation largely draw from Antonio Gramsci's (1971) work on hegemony. Other uses of the theory of articulation are described by Kearney (1986), who refers to articulation as the ways different systems of production, in particular capitalist and non-capitalist systems, adjust and interact with each other (see also Li 1996 and Meillassoux 1975 for examples of articulations between capitalism and Chinese communism and African economies respectively).

of articulation is both a way of understanding how ideological elements come, under certain conditions to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects. (Hall 1986: 53)

Hall's ideas about articulation consider multiple forces that shape identities and class formations. I use his ideas, but instead of focusing on identity per se, I look at the process of positioning and repositioning. As young men, fathers, and elders attempt to position themselves in relation to a new form of production at Mererani, they reproduce a social structure, albeit in an entirely new context. Thus, the mob emerges as an important site of articulation where men appear to be bound to their customary roles in long-standing institutions.

To conceptualize how these institutions are being adapted to this new context, I invoke Tania Murray Li's (2000) approach to articulation that builds upon Hall's work and examines the ways in which actors articulate an indigenous identity (indigeneity). Li stresses the importance of recognizing what is being articulated and how. She and others suggest that articulations are not isolated acts but instead are part of a cultural pattern, although not bound to their original form (Choy 2005, Li 2000, Slack 1996). This dislocation renders articulations neither given nor absolute but "complex, contestable, and subject to rearticulation" (Li 2000: 153). Li illustrates this by exploring how individuals' and groups' identities are shaped by cultural and historical factors that contain embedded subjectivities. Li's discussion brings to focus the boundaries that limit and constrain articulations, as well as the ways in which these boundaries can be stretched and challenged.

Following Li, I show that while young men, fathers, and elders reproduce customary social, political, and economic institutions to forge their connections to the means of production at Mererani, these very institutions are reconfigured, or rearticulated, through men's work at Mererani. In fact, some of the outcomes of tanzanite trading actually end up redefining and challenging their respective roles in production. As young men gain greater access to and exert their control over production, fathers and elders lose out. The tensions that erupt in this process highlight the boundaries that are crossed in the process of articulation. My analysis provides an ethnographically sound example of how articulations are strategic and deliberate, yet are not tension free. To understand the context in which these processes emerge, it is important to first examine the fundamental conduct of the mob by exploring the reasons why men work in these groups at Mererani.

### **Why Belong to a Mob?**

At Mererani, most men belong to a mob so they can afford to buy gemstones that they could not individually afford. This allows men from the poorest households to engage in the tanzanite trade. Maasai were the first to form mobs, and mobs are arguably the most effective means through which Maasai have become competitive in this market. But the mob is not only a site where men pool capital, it also provides a forum for learning from others, it serves as an investment of sorts, and finally, the mob helps ensure safety.

Capital inputs are formalized through membership fees, which vary from mob to mob. While one man told me his mob cost 2 million TZS to join, another described how his current mob does not have a set amount for membership, instead asking new members to contribute what they can. Mob members generally work to maintain each person's original

capital, and they split exceeding profits equally among all contributing men. This allows a man to collect his initial investment at any time and leave a mob to join another, work on his own, or return home for good.

For shorter absences from Mererani, investing in a mob secures a man's place in the tanzanite trade. Generally, men leave Mererani to go home once every month or two to take cash, buy things, move livestock, or plant crops. In some ways, this practice resembles the Maasai migrants who work as guards in urban areas of Tanzania. Anthropologist Ann May (May 2002: 247) explains how the men with urban jobs practice a "rotational 'exchange' or 'replacement' pattern of migration." Each time May returned to visit men's places of employment or *iloipi*<sup>32</sup> she found new faces. Once a migrant had accumulated enough cash to take home, he recruited a friend or relative to take his place. Upon his return, days, weeks, or months later, he assumed his original position, and the second man either returned home or looked for another job. In essence, men "saved" their places by having friends or relatives take over. At Mererani, men do not replace each other in the same fashion. However, in the spirit of the urban migrants May describes, the organization of the mob is such that business can continue without all members being physically and simultaneously present.

In addition to the economic benefits of working in a mob, there are several social incentives. Mobs provide a venue for Maasai men to collectivize skills, as each man brings different strengths and skill sets to a mob. The mob also serves as an important vehicle for

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<sup>32</sup> Iloipi (*oloip*, sing.) means "shaded areas" in Maa and at home refers to midday gatherings of ilmurran and young girls to sing and play in the shade. The Maasai migrants in May's study used oloip to refer to a place in the shade, usually under a big tree, where men gather in the middle of the day. May describes iloipi as places in Dar es Salaam where groups of 30–40 Maasai men gathered together to socialize, and rest, and where they "drew strength from each other's presence" when they were not working (May 2002: 159, May and McCabe 2004).

men to learn the nuances of tanzanite trading, as they do not go to Mererani knowing how to evaluate gemstones. Finally, mobs help ensure an individual's safety. Danger, deceit, and corruption lie amidst the bustle and sizeable cash transactions that characterize the tanzanite trade. Moving around and renting a room or a house with other mob members helps provide security.

Alais is a member of the Korianga age-set who has been trading gemstones for nine years and has been a member of three different mobs. Alais explains,

Maasai went with very little money and it's hard to run a business alone, but someone may be good at evaluation but has little money and another guy might have more money so they will buy together and sell together to get a profit. And another friend might come and want to join. We work in mobs with Maasai only because we trust each other. But if you work with a non-Maasai he might steal the money and not be truthful.

Alais's narrative points to some of the important economic and social reasons why Maasai men form and join mobs at Mererani. The way mob members pool capital, benefit from each other's knowledge and skills, and rely on fellow mob members for safety, provides individuals with a number of mechanisms to effectively operate at Mererani.<sup>33</sup> But mobs are more than just a venue for capital gains and social cohesion. A more comprehensive analysis of the mob shows how men of all ages directly and indirectly contribute to the workings and efficacy of the mob. Thus, a deeper investigation of mob organization and formation allows the process of articulation to unfold.

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<sup>33</sup> A few men told me how in some of their mobs, other members were dishonest about profits or stole money from the mob. While this was rare, it does point to the risks of being in a mob.

## **The Mob as a Site of Articulation**

The mob emerges as an important site of articulation where young men, fathers, and the group of elders simultaneously reinscribe various characteristics of familiar institutions. In the following discussion, I focus on how these different groups of men uniquely participate in the tanzanite trade and the mob. Young men, fathers, and elders are each represented in a separate section, as they all participate in the tanzanite trade in distinct ways. In each segment, I also highlight the politics behind this process as each group vies to position themselves within the tanzanite trade in order to secure their access to and control over resources.

### ***Young Men Reproducing Familiar Institutions***

The customary responsibility of warriors to help their family and society has generally been focused around livestock protection and raiding. Indeed, young men continue to fulfill their obligations of accessing and securing means of production by participating in livelihood strategies away from home. But now, in Simanjiro, the role of helping family and society appears to be centered on going to Mererani. Nonetheless, young men continue to uphold their customary responsibilities and their role in society by relying on central features of social, economic, and political institutions. This is evidenced in how young men replicate some important tenets of the age-set system, reproduce significant Maasai rites, and perpetuate formal forms of organization.

The fundamental basis for mob organization is found in one of the most enduring Maasai institutions, the age-set system. Mobs are generally comprised of anywhere from two to twelve members, and while mob members may originate from different villages or



clans, they almost always belong to the same age-set. Some men leave for Mererani with a cohort of age-mates organized as a mob, while others join or form a mob at Mererani with members of the same age-set. At home, the age-set serves as a basis for inclusion, as it represents one significant way to define group membership. At Mererani, the age-set system serves the same purpose through its replication via mob membership. The insertion of the age-set system into this new context reflects and emphasizes the deep-rooted importance and utility of this customary form of social organization. Young men also reproduce and reinforce important rites associated with the age-set system.

As I explained in the introduction to this dissertation, *ilmurran* are traditionally expected to leave their villages and stay for long periods of time at the *manyatta*. The *manyatta* represents a place and a time in young men's lives where they adhere to customs and rituals that ground them within Maasai society, participate in intra-age-set bonding, and prepare for their future responsibilities as fathers and elders. While the practice of going to the *manyatta* has waned in recent years across Maasailand, the pattern of young men leaving continues. But I argue that going to Mererani is different from other patterns of leaving, as young men reproduce the social significance of the *manyatta*.<sup>34</sup> Much like their practices at the *manyatta*, men in mobs at Mererani create and build bonds with age-set members by learning from them, living with them, and relying on them for capital inputs and safety. In this way, young men build, promote, and reinforce intraethnic cohesion and age-set bonding and reproduce important social characteristics of the *manyatta*.

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<sup>34</sup> Ethnographic research on migration conducted by J. Terrence McCabe suggests that this pattern may also surface in other types of migration (McCabe, personal communication, September 30, 2011).

Young men also replicate formal patterns of organization, further exemplifying how they rely on common, recognizable forms to craft communities of belonging and compete in the gemstone trade. Most mobs have named positions and roles, including a president, secretary, and treasurer. The position a man may hold in a mob is designated by consensus on the basis of his particular strengths. For example, the secretary can read and write, and the treasurer is good with money. In some instances, positions are determined by how much money someone initially contributes to a mob. In these cases, the president is generally the person who contributes the most. Although the origins of these patterns are somewhat unclear, they appear to mimic structures of state- or corporate-style organization that are increasingly imitated in evolving Maasai leadership structures (Mara Goldman, personal communication, July 14, 2010).

One afternoon, I sat in a busy café in Arusha with Kibori, a member of the Korianga age-set who works in a mob with five other men. Kibori tells me how he has been a member of several mobs, but his current one is the most successful. He stresses his role as president of his mob. “I am the president of my mob because I am good at evaluating gemstones. I make the final decision whether to purchase or sell a gemstone.” To illustrate this, Kibori reaches in the safari vest he wears over his Maasai *shuka*<sup>35</sup> and pulls out three large rocks. He places them in the palm of his hand and continues, “See, this is tanzanite. My mob just bought these rocks for 700,000 TZS and I will sell them for 1 million TZS to anyone who will buy them.” Kibori returns the tanzanite to the pocket of his vest and

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<sup>35</sup> *Shuka* is the Swahili word for the characteristic clothing Maasai wear consisting of red, layered wraps of cotton material. Although some Maasai predominately wear western clothing, most continue to wear the shuka and refer to this clothing using the Swahili word shuka. A trademark dress of many tanzanite traders is the traditional shuka worn with a tan, pocketed, safari vest over it.

describes the other positions within his mob. “We have a secretary—someone who can write—who keeps track of all the tanzanite purchases and sales, and there is a treasurer who handles the money.” Kibori’s flippant treatment of the high dollar goods contained in his pocket in the middle of the busy café shows his desensitization with the scale of economy at Mererani. But, he also provides insight into how the formation and organization of mobs provide men with a structure to facilitate their involvement in this marketplace.

By relying on some of the foundations of the age-set system as well as using the named positions Kibori describes, young men position themselves within a new livelihood strategy by depending on durable institutions from the village. This practice not only reinforces the effectiveness of these institutions through their use in a new context, but also it reproduces young men’s responsibilities to production and their important roles in social life.

### ***A Family-Level Affair: Father’s Investments***

Fathers attempt to solidify their customary rights to household means of production through their use of capital. Most fathers give their sons cash as start-up capital with the expectation that they will benefit from their son’s profits. Fathers thus act as the primary investors in their sons’ business ventures. However, fathers are strategic in these decisions, and the amount of money fathers give their sons, and the rationale they provide for these decisions, varies among households.

In discussing how much money fathers allot their sons for tanzanite trading, fathers often contrast this business with the livestock trade. Karaine, a member of the Seuri age-set

worked trading livestock for many years, claiming he decided to stop after he got old and tired. Now, two of his sons trade livestock, and one of his sons trades tanzanite. He explains how he gave his two sons two cows each to embark in the livestock trade, while he gave his son who went to Mererani one castrated male (steer) to sell for cash. Karaine describes, “The castrated male was worth more than the two cows. Working in the livestock business is like being at home because they can get food wherever they go. At Mererani, my son needs to have money for each and everything.” He indicates the perceived familiarity and ease of the livestock trade where men travel from market to market, camp out with their livestock or stay in neighboring Maasai villages, and receive food as a trade or from other Maasai. Additionally, Karaine brings to focus the nature of working at Mererani, a totally new socioeconomic context, where men have to rent lodging and purchase their own food. For these reasons, Karaine believes that men need greater amounts of money at Mererani.

Some fathers, however, have different ideas about sending their sons with cash. Kiloriti, a member of the Makaa age-set worked trading livestock for several years when he was a warrior. He stopped when he had sons who were old enough to go away to pursue businesses outside of the village. He describes his business tactics:

I have one son at Mererani, and one son who works trading livestock. I decided they would do this. I did not give capital to my son who went to Mererani, but I did sell livestock to help my son who went to the cattle business. These are two different businesses. We all know livestock; you don’t need to learn for that business. For gemstone trading, you need to go first, learn the business, and gain experience. So I sent my son to go learn rather than give him money first, and he goes and buys bad gems, and all the money disappears.

Kiloriti's Korianga son Moses, who trades tanzanite, verifies his father's story and provides more depth. "My father told me to go to Mererani, and I left with no capital. I worked for four years as a broker by myself, and then I found a mob I wanted to join. Before joining the mob, I came back home and asked for 300,000 TZS for capital from my father. He sold cattle and gave me the cash." Moses explains how he quelled his father's skepticism by proving to him that he had a viable way to make money by finding a mob to join. However fathers choose to support their sons ends up directly contributing to young men's activities and productivity at Mererani. In this way they use their investments to ensure returns and thereby reinforce their customary access and rights to household production and resources.

The primary roles fathers continue to play in livelihood strategies and production at the household level also surface through their decisions regarding which, if any, of their sons will go to Mererani.<sup>36</sup> Several anthropological studies supporting these patterns suggest that decisions to diversify livelihoods through migration are generally part of a family-level strategy whereby households are able to reduce risk and support their families by relying on migrants' profits (Selby and Murphy 1982, Stark 1991, Trager 1988, 2005). These studies emphasize the father's reliance on migrant remittances to sustain the family.

In the same fashion, fathers by and large appoint their sons to go to Mererani. Leposo, a member of the Makaa age-set tells me how he has never left the village for work, but he has two sons at Mererani. He explains,

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<sup>36</sup> Only a couple fathers forbid their sons to embark on the tanzanite trade. These fathers cite dangerous working conditions, school, and responsibilities at home as reasons.

Before anyone from my family went to Mererani we came together and made a plan. The plan was for these two guys to go rather than others. We chose them because everyone has his own personality. These two guys like to do business while the others like to stay at home, take care of livestock, and help me. As parents we know our children from the beginning. When they are young, while they are playing, one might make a settlement with a corral made out of stones and pretend to have livestock. This one likes livestock. After primary school you will know: this one likes livestock; this one likes business. You can tell as a parent.

While Leposo acknowledges that his sons might have unique interests and strengths, he decides nonetheless who should participate in which business.

Compared to Leposo's sons, some young men are more involved in the decision to go to Mererani. Njorbe, a member of the Korianga age-set explains how livelihood strategies were negotiated in his family.

We are two sons from the same mother. We decided I would go to Mererani and my brother would work as a livestock businessman. My father decided we would start these businesses. He asked us what we preferred. My brother chose the livestock business because he has been into livestock since the beginning, and he thought he would be better at that business. I choose Mererani because I thought I could be more successful at gemstone trading. I still go to Mererani, but my brother has stopped the livestock business because my father is getting old. My father told him to stay home and take care of things here.

Njorbe's narrative describes how even though he and his brother were given a choice of which business they wanted to pursue, their father ultimately decided that his sons would engage in either the livestock business or tanzanite trading. While their father initiated

their involvement in these businesses, he also decided when their participation in these businesses should end.

The Maasai migrants in Ann May's study demonstrate a contrasting process. May describes how young men usually made an independent decision to migrate to urban areas and rarely consulted their fathers before they left (May 2002, May and McCabe 2004).<sup>37</sup> Indeed, a few men initially left for Mererani without any family members' input or consent. But most of these men were either older members of the Landis and Makaa age-sets who had their own bomas and were independent from their fathers, or they were younger members of the Landis and Korianga age-sets whose fathers had passed away. Either way, these men no longer relied on their fathers for access to production, nor did they fall under their fathers' authority. One young Korianga who went to Mererani without first consulting his father describes how he stole away without anyone knowing and returned only after he had enough profits to prove the worth of his leaving. He explains the process of asking his father's forgiveness by finding other, respected elders in the community to mediate by pleading the young man's case and explaining to his father the benefits of his son's going to Mererani. While this young man circumscribed his father's input, he still yielded to his father's authority by making the proper amends.

Fathers' decisions about whether their sons should pursue or discontinue business opportunities outside the village reflect the influence fathers continue to maintain over their sons. Ultimately, it is up to them whether or not their sons will pursue alternative

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<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, in two of the narratives May (2002) provides where young men left their villages without consulting their fathers, both men told their mothers they were leaving. This suggests some interesting differences in parental authority, or perhaps the sons knew their mothers would be upset if they did not know where their sons were.

livelihoods, which of their sons will engage in different trades, and when their sons will begin or discontinue these businesses. This provides a concrete example of the way fathers solidify their sons' obligation to the family and exert their influence within the household. As part of the group of elders, fathers also assert their authority on a societal level.

### ***For the Greater Good: Elders Exerting their Community Influence***

Elders' role in securing community-level resources is sanctioned through societal-level decisions promoting young men's sojourns to Mererani. Roughly ten years ago, elders in Simanjiro held a meeting to discuss the practice of young men going to urban areas to work as guards. They decided that the low pay and precarious work conditions were not worth continuing to pursue this livelihood strategy. They deemed guard work "illegal" and enforced this decision by going to urban areas to bring young men home or threatening them with curses if they continued to engage in this type of work. The elders' disdain for guard work was based in their collective notion of what constituted a viable livelihood strategy. They determined that trading gemstones was a more effective, less risky, and much more profitable way to make a living. Thus, instead of going to urban areas to pursue guard work, young men were encouraged to go to Mererani to trade tanzanite.

Because of the numerous horror stories I heard about the tanzanite trade, including accounts of men who got robbed, narratives of people doing witchcraft, and stories of fraudulent tanzanite dealings, I often asked elders if they thought they would come together, as they had with guard work, and decide that Mererani was not a good place for young men to go. I was often met with a chuckle and a response similar to Logida's, a member of the Makaa age-set, "This did happen in other villages near Mererani. All the



elders got together because they heard the youth were going to witches. They said to the youth, if you go to witches and try to kill an elder, you will die. But we will not tell them they can't go to Mererani because we have seen guys go to Mererani and come back with different things." Prompting Logida further, I asked him, if he were younger would he have gone to Mererani. He quickly replied, "Yes! Because you see someone who was poor in the past, but after going to Mererani his life changes and he becomes rich." The following responses reflect Logida's sentiments and generally elucidate elders' views of tanzanite trading as a decent livelihood strategy with viable community returns:

I think it's a good place to find money.

I have seen some good things come from Mererani. There are Maasai who have cars and help the community.

Mererani is better than the livestock business because you can go and make more money in a shorter period of time than the livestock business.

All the ilmuran who are working at Mererani will come back to work and invest in the area.

Even though some went and had money for a certain period of time and later the money disappeared and they sort of went crazy and ended up in a bad situation, I will still let my sons go. The money you can make is worth the risks. But it is a risk because you can get killed because you have money.

As evidenced by the last elder's comment, the tanzanite trade can be equally as dangerous as guard work. Yet, the paybacks are perceived to outweigh the risks. Indeed, several elders have personally profited from their sons' work at Mererani, and as evidenced by the quotes above, others are optimistic that profits from tanzanite trading

will benefit the community. Thus, elders generally operate under the expectation that profits from the tanzanite trade will aid in community development. By advocating tanzanite trading as a viable livelihood strategy for young Maasai men in Simanjiro, elders exercise their societal level of authority and reinforce their long-standing collective responsibilities to the community in the context of production and livelihood strategies.

Young men, fathers, and elders all intentionally and strategically position themselves in the tanzanite trade by either directly or indirectly contributing to mob activities. I have shown how in doing this, they reinforce their particular roles in production, in livelihood strategies, and within the household and community. However, the outcomes of young men's work in the tanzanite trade tell a different story. In the next section of this chapter, I turn to these outcomes and explore how men become repositioned within these various spheres.

### **Strategic Homecomings and Maneuverings**

Despite the roles fathers and elders play in young men leaving for and engaging in the tanzanite trade, young men are not implicit to this process. Instead, they candidly express their desires to engage in this livelihood strategy and are fortunate to have their dreams and predilections backed by their fathers' blessings and cash. Many men give back to their fathers in small amounts by buying them livestock or purchasing food or other household goods. Some of the most successful have pleased elders by giving back to the household and community. In contrast, very few men who have gone to Mererani have come home with

nothing.<sup>38</sup> By and large however, the majority of young men have profited to some extent. By virtue of their profits, their membership in mobs, and their activities at Mererani, young men are able to renegotiate their customary access to production, as well as their roles within Maasai society. This pattern shows a fundamental difference in perceptions of men's work at Mererani. Fathers view the tanzanite trade as a family-level strategy, while sons perceive the tanzanite trade as a vehicle for individual gain. Since the age-sets organize men into social groupings so that all men of a father's age-set are "father" to all younger age-sets for all intents and purposes, the tanzanite trade proves to be a shaping force in the relationship between young men and their fathers and the elders.

One example of this is shown in the specific manner young men use their profits from tanzanite trading. While these profits are indeed variable, most young men have purchased livestock for or given cash as bridewealth payments; many men have also supported their brothers' marriages. Several Korianga gemstone traders I spoke with lived in their own boma, were married when they were junior elders, and had large numbers of livestock. This is typically uncharacteristic practice for junior warriors, as they are not expected to marry until they are senior warriors, and they generally only gain primary access to and ownership over livestock once they move out of their father's boma or their fathers pass away. This recent pattern reflects young men's increasing access to greater amounts of money, and the ability to secure their own means of production. It also suggests a greater degree of individualism among a society that is characteristically more communal (Talle 1995: 56). The economic and social independence young men gain results in increased responsibilities to their own households. Thus, young men are able to liberate

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<sup>38</sup> The few men who returned home from Mererani with nothing usually told stories of getting robbed or being cheated by dishonest mob members.

themselves from their obligations to their fathers and release themselves from their father's control at an earlier age.<sup>39</sup>

As young men strategically move beyond their fathers' jurisdiction, they recognize they are going against societal norms. Gabriel, a member of the Korianga age-set explains,

While we are there [at Mererani], everyone works hard to find business/money—someone older tries to send me somewhere while I am there; I can't because I am trying to start my business and can't stop it. We are there, all of us Korianga; we may share in buying gems. As you know money, the elders want to take the money. Respect starts to decrease among us because they fight for their right to the money. Sometimes someone will abuse an elder if he comes to Mererani and the elder will ask, "Why do you treat me poorly here?" The [young] man will respond, "Elders are at home taking care of livestock; elders are not here at Mererani." Someone else will ask this young man, "Why did you say bad things to this elder?" He [the young man] will reply, "He is not an elder, we are from same age-set, but he looks old because he is suffering from hunger." But we should not treat the elders this way, it is not right. They are the reason we are able to work there.

Gabriel's narrative brings forth young men's rationalizations for treating elders poorly. He plainly recognizes the support young men receive from elders and the critical role it plays in men's activities at Mererani, yet he demonstrates that elders are perceived as a distraction and potential impediment to their workings at Mererani. They also pose a threat to young men's profits. In this way, Gabriel suggests that elders are of relatively little value once young men arrive in Mererani. The dialogue Gabriel presents also illustrates how some young men justify their lack of respect toward elders at Mererani by claiming an

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<sup>39</sup> It is important to note here that young men's obligations to their fathers may be linked to how much money their fathers gave them to start their businesses trading tanzanite; however, I do not have data to support this claim.

elder is from the same age-set and only looks older because he is hungry. Essentially, Gabriel insinuates that young men view elders as having no place in the tanzanite trade.

Young men's decreased reliance on fathers and elders at Mererani is also reflected in the evolving social interactions among these groups. Greetings are important in Maasai society and reflect the authority of elders. For example, uncircumcised boys, young girls, and women customarily greet elders by offering their heads. Circumcised men belonging to a younger age-set than the men they are greeting, will address them appropriately and shake hands. These greetings are changing, however, and many men attribute these changes to working in the tanzanite trade. Gabriel explains,

We agree that we don't take the time to shake hands with everyone. The time will go away if we take the time to greet everyone properly. We use *kaya* as a greeting.<sup>40</sup> I think *kaya* is a quick greeting that developed because we are busy, there are a lot of people, and we are all working buying and selling gemstones, roaming within the area, not staying in one place for very long. Also, people from all over the world are at Mererani. They do not have the same habits of greeting people. But it's not ok to say that greeting to elders.

As Gabriel stresses, there is little room in the fast pace of Mererani for seemingly tedious greetings. In addition the use of *kaya* provides young men with a "universalized" greeting that is more appropriate to the social atmosphere at Mererani and arguably beyond, as I was often greeted with "kaya" by Korianga men. But Gabriel acknowledges that it is not

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<sup>40</sup> It was not clear to me the exact origins of *kaya*. *Kaya* is a commonly used greeting among youth in Simanjiro and in other areas. It basically means "what's up?" Whether or not it originated at Mererani like the people I interviewed suggest, it is catching on and is generally associated with the "language" of Maasai tanzanite traders. Interestingly, there is a bongo flava band out of Tanga, Tanzania, named *Wagosi wa Kaya*. This name is a Sumbaa language translation of the African American slang expression "homeboys" (Thompson 2010: 496).

proper to use this greeting with elders, fully recognizing its appropriateness in particular contexts and its incongruity in others.

Young men's use of profits as investments in their own futures and their use of alternative (disrespectful) greetings show how young men are able to move beyond the control of their fathers and elders in both practical and symbolic ways. As young men exert their individuality they pose challenges to customary practices and ways of being. These changes do not go unnoticed by their fathers and elders.

### **Disadvantaged Fathers and Elders**

Fathers' and elders' discourse contests young men's new actions and behaviors. But why do they complain, when they are so entrenched in young men's involvement in the tanzanite trade to begin with? I propose that the answer to this question lies in the fact that fathers' and elders' authority over resources and decision making is renegotiated as young men gain greater access to means of production and become entrenched in the workings of the tanzanite trade. Of course, households and communities have benefited from young men's profits; however, these returns have limits. But the contempt fathers and elders feel regarding these impacts of tanzanite trading is only expressed through their discourse. They have made no efforts to stop their sons from going to Mererani. In some ways then, fathers and elders are trapped by their reliance on this new livelihood strategy.

### ***Fathers' "Unexpected" Returns***

In the context of the tanzanite trade, fathers are dependent on prior patterns, even though they are well aware of the trends that violate their authority, and in their opinion, bypass

the proper steps to a “normal life.” Fathers express how their sons selfishly use their profits, blatantly violate decision-making norms, and deliberately disobey their fathers.

As mentioned, many young men have the financial resources to become independent from their fathers at an earlier age. Thus they do not have to solely rely on their fathers for economic support and livestock inheritance. In some ways, these patterns may be viewed as liberating fathers from the burden of supporting their sons. However, to fathers these practices signify a loss of control over their sons, as well as their sons’ profits. For example, many fathers told me that when their sons initially started going to Mererani, they brought home money for the family to purchase livestock, plow land, and pay for other expenses such as hospital charges and school fees. But most fathers lamented that this happened “only for a couple years” and now their sons “live in a different boma and no longer help the family.”

Fathers bemoan the loss of access to their sons’ profits, and express how they feel they are losing a grip on important social decisions. Fathers continually indicate that their sons circumvent the “proper” social steps to marriage and independence by marrying younger and choosing their own wives. Tanzanite trading is one factor they blame for these trends.<sup>41</sup> A Makaa elder remarks,

In the past, fathers decided who their sons and daughters would marry. Now their children decide themselves who they want to marry. This has happened from Mererani. Even those who are here and haven’t gone to Mererani change, but I think it’s Mererani’s influence. I think the girls have learned this

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<sup>41</sup> Education also surfaced in my and other studies as a factor contributing to young Maasai men and women choosing their own marriage partners (Coast 2006, Hodgson 1996). I discuss this more in depth in the next chapter.

from the young warriors from Mererani. Sometimes girls will choose who they marry; you do not get as many livestock for that exchange anymore.

This elder indicates an important shift in decision-making and a consequent loss of authority over children. Moreover, he illustrates how children's choices about their marriage partners have social and economic implications on a larger scale. A father's customary decision about who his children marry is one way he strategically solidifies bonds between families, expands and strengthens his social networks, and negotiates his access to future resources from his in-laws. Even though a father still benefits from marriages arranged by his children through bridewealth payments and in-laws' social and economic obligations, these new patterns place a father in the margins of this important decision and do not allow him to be strategic about forming alliances between families.

Fathers also view their power and influence diminishing, as their sons refuse to conform to customary performances of obedience. L'engai is a Makaa elder who has two sons who work trading tanzanite. He explains,

Mererani has changed the younger generation, especially their obedience. Obedience has disappeared because of Mererani. In the past a father ordered his son to do something and he did it; now if a father asks his son to do something he says "Are you paying me?" or he won't even do it or listen to you. For example, you might ask an olmurrani to go somewhere and he refuses. He makes excuses. In the past, if a man wanted his son or daughter to do something he might trick them. If he wanted them to take livestock to a certain area he would say, "I want you to take livestock to a nearby village. I know it will take you three days, I know you will go slow and stop on the way. I know you are not good at taking care of livestock, but just go." An olmurrani gets very angry if he hears this, so he really tries to prove to his



father that he is good, and he will struggle to take care of the livestock. So we kind of trick our children into doing good things. Now, since Korianga have been going to Mererani, we continue to try our tricks and the Korianga give in and agree with their fathers and say, “Ok, I am not good at taking care of livestock, I just won’t then.” They do not try to prove themselves and instead they do just as the father said and take three days to take livestock to that village when you can go and come back in the same day.

L’engai’s narrative communicates fathers’ perception that their sons are increasingly insubordinate, and he directly blames the tanzanite trade for these behaviors. L’engai also underscores a shift in young men’s dependency on their fathers, especially with regard to livestock production. Sons’ unwillingness to help their fathers indicates that they no longer feel the need to establish themselves as competent livestock herders and prove to their fathers that they are worthy of livestock inheritance. In other words, for a son, working in the tanzanite trade is seen as a better investment of time and energy with potentially greater returns than helping his father herd livestock.

Fathers are aware of the changes that are occurring in the context of the tanzanite trade, nonetheless they continue to support their sons’ business ventures at Mererani. Thus, the fact that sons are moving out of their fathers’ bomas earlier, choosing their own marriage partners, and increasingly disobeying their fathers does *not* erupt as an unintended consequence of sending their sons to Mererani. Instead, fathers’ conscious awareness of and reactions to young men’s social defiance brings out the conflicts individuals experience as they embark on new livelihood strategies. These tensions also emerge collectively, as elders support as well as disapprove of the broader outcomes of tanzanite trading.

### ***Elders' Reactions***

On a community level, elders disparage the changes they observe among young men who work in the tanzanite trade. I had several discussions with elders about their perspectives on youth. While arguably elders across the world grumble about the “youth of today,” Maasai elders in Simanjiro claim young men’s increasing insolence is worse than ever, and the tanzanite trade is to blame. One elder, invoking a famous Maasai proverb said to me one day, “The neck never goes beyond the head; now the neck is going above the head.” This sentiment indicates that young men are perceived to be defying long-standing, entrenched rules to the extent that they appear to be violating the natural order of things. In essence, young men are not being “proper” young men and are acting out of accordance with what is expected from them at a certain age. Ideas about respect occupy the focus of elders’ discourse.

Elders directly blame money for youths’ lack of respect. Lengere, a member of the Seuri age-set comments,

Respect has decreased because of Mererani. People went, got a lot of money there, and maybe that’s why they disrespect elders. Someone young might go and is able to buy 100 livestock. He comes here and I only have twenty. He might say, oh, this elder has only twenty cows and I have 100, I am better. The youth don’t care about elders. They care about money, and they respect money, not people. Respect is the thing that holds everything together so if they have lost respect everything else gets bad; they start to leave the culture. Before Mererani people were respectful of their elders and parents.

Lengere believes that young men are increasingly disrespectful and disobedient because they have access to new sources of cash. Furthermore, he emphasizes young men’s

increasing individuality by suggesting that young men belittle elders who have less livestock instead of helping them as they were expected to do in the past. But perhaps more serious, however, is his conviction that the impacts of tanzanite trading may be unraveling Maasai culture altogether.

Elders also comment on how youth show a lack of respect through their greetings.

Lengere continues,

Maasai greetings show respect. Disrespect is shown by young people's greetings. In the past, if you call your son, there is a certain respectful tone they should use to answer you. Now they don't. This is common with both girls and boys. Before Mererani we greeted others according to their age and used *sopa* and *epa* [Maasai greetings] and shook hands. If young people came into where elders were sitting, they must come to elders and greet them. Now they may pass elders without greeting and shaking hands, or they will just greet an elder like someone the same age. Young ilmurran also have a new, different style of greeting elders. They just wave and say *kaya*. These changes are especially apparent among Korianga men who went to Mererani. You can tell by the way they talk.

Elders' complaints that young men are disrespectful show how they feel their authority is being challenged. In this way, young men are perceived to push the acceptable limits of important social and cultural institutions and practices at home.

Despite fathers' and elders' contestations of young men's practices and behaviors in the context of tanzanite trading, at this point there appears to be no substantial opposition. Thus, as the institutions that shape men's involvement in the tanzanite trade are stretched and challenged, we see how fathers' and elders' reliance on this new livelihood strategy and the potential returns they can gain, leave them in a structurally disadvantaged position.

In other words, due to the potential to benefit from young men's profits in the tanzanite trade, fathers and elders have no alternative but to continue to promote young men's work trading tanzanite.

### **Conclusion: Revisiting Articulation**

In this chapter, the process of articulation emerges as different groups of men situate themselves as viable actors in the tanzanite trade by reproducing, relying on, and attempting to capitalize on familiar institutions in an entirely new context. Through this process, they affirm and solidify their customary roles in production and society. While I have shown how the process through which different groups of men attempt to access new forms of production is agential, I have also shown how this takes place within the social and economic boundaries that not only define groups of men but also constrain them. As such, articulations are shaped by the social, economic, and political structures from which they evolve.

To summarize, I first explored how young men replicate aspects of the age-set and other recognizable systems within the mob to connect with the transnational tanzanite trade. By going to Mererani, they uphold their familial and societal responsibilities in gaining access to and securing productive resources, as well as participating in and perpetuating important social traditions. Second, I examined how fathers use their capital and assert their decision-making influence within the household by directing young men to participate in the tanzanite trade and supporting them in joining a mob. Thus, fathers solidify the links between their households and sons' productivity in the tanzanite trade and continue to strengthen their authority over family and their role in acquiring

important household resources. Finally, I looked at how elders strengthen their societal-level influence by endorsing young men's ventures to Mererani and connect young men's work at Mererani with community development and societal-level benefits. This reinforces their influence and power in Maasai society, as well as their collective responsibility in obtaining and securing common resources.

I have also discussed how the outcomes of tanzanite trading demonstrate a different process, as young men reposition themselves among Maasai households and society and challenge the very institutions they rely on for success at the tanzanite trade. Thus the process of articulation emerges and evokes Hall's (1986) well-known, visual metaphor of the *lorry* or cargo truck, consisting of two parts connected, but detachable and able to be linked to other sections in meaningful ways. In other words, the disassociations that characterize articulations in Simanjiro surface as young men forge new economic and social relations at home. In this way young men are able to move beyond the structures that confine their access to production.

But the challenges articulations pose are not met with complacency. The tensions that emerge among fathers and elders through discursive contestations of young men's actions and behaviors show how in some ways fathers and elders attempt to reinforce their household and societal authority. But the fact that discourse serves as their only form of resistance, shows how, even though they are dissatisfied with the outcomes, they ultimately depend on young men's work in the tanzanite trade. In other words, fathers and elders are becoming marginalized through young men's abilities to overcome the structures they work so hard to enforce. In this way, articulations are further constrained.

Despite fathers' and elders' discontent, the next chapter reveals how some young men's success at the tanzanite trade is actually rewarded and in some ways institutionalized.

To conclude this chapter, I emphasize the implications of the changes that are occurring in the context of a new livelihood strategy for Maasai households and communities. Livelihood diversification through the tanzanite trade is heterogeneously engaged in, and the outcomes are dissimilarly experienced. In addition it appears that men's involvement in the tanzanite trade is leading to new forms of privilege and exclusion as individualism is emphasized and communality is downplayed. It appears these shifts are symptomatic of the dependence on alternative livelihood strategies and new scales of political economy.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **BLING, BLING: CAPITAL, POWER, AND SUCCESS IN MAASAI COMMUNITIES**

Interviews with Kato almost always took place at a restaurant or hotel dining room in Arusha. Our conversations over roasted meat were constantly interrupted by Kato's interactions with friends and acquaintances who just happened to be passing by or the continuous ringing of his two cell phones positioned neatly next to his plate. Being in Kato's presence always gave me the feeling that I was with a celebrity of sorts due to his reputation in Arusha, Mererani, and across all of Simanjiro.

Kato's homestead was located a short distance away from our camp in Simanjiro. We saw his car coming and going frequently; one of the few travelers on the road most nights. Kato's frequent but short appearances at home were filled with managing the intricacies of his three wives and their children, his livestock and farm, and the numerous community projects he had wholly or partly funded. Kato achieved great success buying and selling gemstones and had also come into fortune prospecting on his own for tanzanite.

Despite his present-day achievements and wealth, Kato grew up in a relatively modest boma. His father died when he was a young boy, and he and his seven brothers and sisters grew up in his uncle's boma and were cared for by his uncle's wives. Kato knew he would not receive a significant livestock inheritance, so when he was initiated as an

olmurrani in the Landis age-set he began looking for his own fortune.<sup>42</sup> He started trading cattle, as well as buying goods wholesale and selling them to small shops in the village. In 1994, upon hearing that people were making money trading tanzanite at Mererani, Kato gathered the money he had saved from his small businesses and decided to “try his luck” in the tanzanite trade.

After several months of working with a friend in a mob, and learning how to evaluate gemstones, Kato broke off on his own as a middleman and was quite successful. Four years later he was among the first Maasai to have earned enough money to purchase a small plot in the mining area along with the rights to dig for tanzanite. Now, he owns four plots and has discovered tanzanite in two of them. Outside of trading and prospecting for tanzanite, Kato has diversified and expanded his business ventures; he is financially invested in building projects within his and other villages, and he owns his own safari tour company.

Kato’s relatively unparalleled success at tanzanite trading is reflected in the different types of capital he possesses. At his boma in Simanjiro, he has over 2,000 cattle, hundreds or even thousands of goats and sheep, two modern houses, his own water borehole, several tractors, and in recent years he cultivated 160 acres of maize. Kato also owns two luxury SUVs and a home in an upscale neighborhood in Arusha. Along with his material possessions or economic capital, Kato has expanded his social networks throughout the village and region. He has friends and colleagues through his involvement in the tanzanite trade that extend his connections from Maasai in other villages, to people

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<sup>42</sup> “Adopted” children have few (if any) rights to livestock inheritance (Archambault 2010).



from different ethnic and class divisions throughout Tanzania, to international players in the tanzanite industry.

Kato has also strengthened his social networks through his community involvement. He is well known because of his generous contributions to development projects within his village, and he is recognized for his political activism. Kato serves as a subvillage chairman, and acting on behalf of his community and pastoralist societies, Kato often travels with others from Simanjiro to the capital city, Dar es Salaam, to lobby for pastoral land rights. Kato's possession of economic and social capital is further augmented by his possession of cultural capital. In this way, Kato embodies a distinct set of goods and attributes, or *tastes* associated with his involvement at Mererani. His persona is characterized by his choice of phones, vehicles, and clothing, and Kato is viewed as being worldlier than others due to his expanded skills, his broadened perspective, and his interactions with different individuals and groups of people at Mererani. In essence, Kato represents the culture of Mererani and the style of tanzanite traders.

Kato is an extreme example of a successful tanzanite trader and miner. Indeed he is similar to other members of the Landis and Korianga age-sets, in that he came into his success at a rather young age; however, he stands in contrast not only because of his relative wealth, but also because of his community donations and societal advocacy. In fact, he is often described as an anomaly among tanzanite traders because of his generosity. But beyond his philanthropy, in some ways Kato represents the epitome of a young, male tanzanite trader due to his embodiment of multiple forms of capital.

In this chapter, I explore the different types of capital tanzanite traders possess, mobilize, and are perceived to embody. In the previous chapter, I touched on aspects of this

by exploring a few of the ways in which young male tanzanite traders use their profits and their behaviors to move beyond their fathers' and elders' control. This chapter adds depth to this discussion by taking a comprehensive look at the alternative forms and configurations of economic, social, and cultural forms of capital tanzanite traders are acquiring as a result of their involvement at Mererani. Given this, my primary goal is to show how different types of capital are important to identify to truly understand the wide-ranging effects tanzanite trading is having on Maasai lives and the multiple ways people are affected by livelihood diversification strategies.

Tanzanite traders are not gaining equal access to the same types of capital, however. Accordingly, in contrast to the previous chapter, where I focused on the overarching trends that are more or less occurring similarly within the broad categories of age-sets, households, and communities, this chapter sharpens the focus on a very select group of tanzanite traders. Therefore, I also explore, although to a lesser extent, the ability of a small group of young, successful tanzanite traders to occupy formal positions of leadership in their home villages. I propose that these men have been able to attain powerful positions due to the relationships between the different forms of capital they possess and contemporary notions of success among Maasai in Simanjiro. In other words, I argue that the landscape of success in Simanjiro includes those who have gone to Mererani. The ability of tanzanite traders to gain power suggests that their reasons for engaging in the tanzanite trade may move beyond economics and may also be socially and politically driven. Thus, the situation I reveal provides a vantage point for understanding how livelihood diversification impacts power relations and structures within communities. To analyze

these processes, I look to Bourdieu's explorations of economic, social, and cultural forms of capital.

### **Livelihoods through a Capital Lens: Invoking Bourdieu**

As emphasized throughout this dissertation, a perspective on economics alone paints only a partial picture of our understanding of the how livelihood diversification strategies play out among pastoralist communities. In light of this I ask, How do new and different forms of capital from alternative livelihood practices affect the social, cultural, and political rubric of households and communities? Pierre Bourdieu's explication of capital provides a framework for answering this question.

Bourdieu (1977) defines capital as a limited good that is given value and significance depending on its particular social and cultural context. He highlights three types of capital: economic, social, and cultural (Bourdieu 1986). Economic capital, as Bourdieu defines it is "immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized" (Bourdieu 1986: 243). Economic capital is generally the most obvious and straightforward type of capital to identify and, therefore, is normally given the most importance and granted the highest value when assessing an individual's or group's resources. But Bourdieu argues that other forms of capital are also significant. He writes, "It is in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory" (Bourdieu 1986: 242). In other words, narrow views of capital focused on just economic factors fail to fully comprehend how other forms of capital affect people's lives.

Social capital refers to the casual acquaintances or sanctioned memberships that make up an individual's network (Bourdieu 1986).<sup>43</sup> The social capital an agent can mobilize is determined by the size of the network he or she has access to and the amount and type of capital possessed by each of those to whom he or she is connected (Bourdieu 1986: 249). The World Bank's relatively recent focus on social capital attempts to operationalize social capital as a measure of organizational belonging that can be used to assess household welfare and determine levels of household poverty (Bebbington et al. 2004: 44). The World Bank has been critiqued in these efforts for reducing social capital to economic terms while neglecting the broader structures of class, ethnicity, gender, power, place, and history that shape networks and relations (Bebbington and Perreault 1999, Bebbington et al. 2004, Fine 2001, Fox 1996, Harriss 2002). In contrast to Bourdieu's ideas about social capital, the World Bank's application of the concept of social capital fails to account for the entire context in which social relations play out among individuals and groups, as well as how social capital is intricately linked to power.

Cultural capital refers to particular bodies of knowledge, symbols, or behaviors that represent "a more polished, more polite, better policed world" (Bourdieu 1984: 77). Characteristically hegemonic, cultural capital may be embodied, objectified, and institutionalized in ways that serve as markers of status and favor the dominant classes (Goldstein 2003). Bourdieu explains,

It should not be forgotten that it [cultural capital] exists as symbolically and materially active, effective capital only insofar as it is appropriated by agents

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<sup>43</sup> Social capital has been defined in many ways by social scientists. At its most fundamental level, most agree that social capital should be used to refer to social connectedness and networks of relationships to which an agent has ties to or is associated with (Bourdieu 1986, Coleman 1988, Portes 1998, Putnam 2001)

and implemented and invested as a weapon and a stake in the struggles that go on in the fields of cultural production (the artistic field, the scientific field, etc.) and, beyond them, in the field of the social classes—struggles in which the agents wield strengths and obtain profits proportionate to their mastery of this objectified capital, and therefore to the extent of their embodied capital (Bourdieu 1986: 247).

Bourdieu's research on the public school system in France looks to the state as a site for the reproduction of cultural capital and argues that structural institutions perpetuate power and class differentials (Bourdieu 1984). In doing this, Bourdieu examines how the habits, likes, and dislikes of wealthy, upper-class students become the norm, as public schools reproduce highbrow "tastes" associated with these students (ibid.). Students from lower classes who wish to succeed within these institutions must engage in performances of language and attitude for example, that represent and reproduce upper-class forms of cultural capital. Thus, the public school system distributes and regulates access to cultural capital according to class preferences. As Bourdieu demonstrates through his examination of cultural capital, individuals and groups may strive to acquire certain types of capital, but they also may be associated with specific forms of capital. In other words, people may be granted privileges and power based on others' perceptions that they have or embody certain types of capital. Thus, capital must be viewed as a dualistic concept that can be accessed and mobilized, as well as associated with or even attached to an individual or a group. In either form it takes, Bourdieu suggests that cultural capital is a mechanism to gain power.

Bourdieu aims to show how the material, as well as the structural shape people's realities. This is important for enabling a broader perspective to understand the

connections between power and capital and for describing how power dynamics play out among groups of people. In this way, capital indicates class position and can be used to create and perpetuate social stratification. Bourdieu writes (1984: 113), "... The social rank and specific power which agents are assigned in a particular field depend firstly on the specific capital they can mobilize, whatever their additional wealth in other types of capital." Capital thus serves as a basis for exclusion, and the absence of capital is just as important as the presence of capital.<sup>44</sup>

Capital in the sense that Bourdieu outlines provides a useful framework to understand the wide-ranging changes occurring among Maasai in Simanjiro. As successful, young male tanzanite traders gain access to large amounts of capital and intentionally mobilize this capital, they become agents in configuring and reconfiguring power relations and social inequalities. But they are also seen to possess new forms of capital that are ascribed societal value because they converge with contemporary ideas about success. My examination using Bourdieu's three forms of capital enables a better understanding of the ways in which Maasai in Simanjiro are becoming differentiated due to the tanzanite trade. To understand the context of new arrangements of capital, alternative visions of success, and the politics of capital, it is necessary to first consider the different kinds capital that are characteristically associated with pastoral groups.

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<sup>44</sup> Philippe Bourgois (2003) provides a poignant example of people lacking class-based cultural capital in his exploration of East Harlem crack dealers. Donna Goldstein (2003) similarly describes a lack of cultural capital among residents of shantytowns in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

## Maasai as People of Cattle: Herding Livelihoods and Capital

Because livestock have customarily been the most common and the most important asset to pastoral populations, scholarly ideas about capital and pastoralists have generally focused on livestock and livestock-related resources (Grandin 1994, McCabe 2003, Potkanski 1999). Important links have been made between livelihood strategies and livestock wealth, whereby livestock wealth has been proposed as the primary symbol of success. In an effort to gain a precise understanding of the implications of wealth differences for pastoral societies, social scientists have typically relied on tropical livestock units (TLUs) to quantify household wealth.

TLUs provide a standardized measure of livestock holdings and have been used as an exclusive measure of household wealth (see Grandin 1998, McCabe et al. 2010).<sup>45</sup> TLUs also have been included as part of a livestock-to-human ratio that classifies households into wealth categories (McCabe et al. 1992).<sup>46</sup> Recent studies have looked at household wealth based on TLUs in combination with other sources of income, such as cash from crop sales

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<sup>45</sup> Tropical (or total) livestock units standardize various livestock holdings into one unit. These calculations are usually based on metabolic body weight or milk yields, yet there may be variation. The Food and Agriculture Organization Production Yearbook (1979) uses the formula 1 TLU = 1 camel or 0.8 cattle or 11 small stock. Researchers with UNESCO projects in Kenya use 1TLU = 1, 250 kg cow, 0.8 camel, or 11 small stock (Fratkin and Roth 1990). J. Terrence McCabe (following Grandin 1988 and Homewood et al. 2009) derives TLUs by multiplying the total number of cattle by 0.72 and the total number of small stock by 0.17 (McCabe et al. 2010: 326). See also Potkanski 1999 for an overview of the history and applications of TLUs.

<sup>46</sup> Several applications using TLUs to determine wealth categories can be found in the literature. Tomasz Potkanski's study creates the following wealth categories for Maasai (1999: 202): destitute households have 0.0–0.50 TLUs per person; very poor households have 0.50–1.25 TLUs per person; poor households have 1.25–2.50 TLUs per person; medium-wealth households have 2.5–5.0 TLUs per person; and rich households have over 5 TLUs per person. Elliot Fratkin and Eric Abella Roth's (1990) study of Ariaal pastoralists and Roth's (1996) study of Rendille pastoralists used the following categories: poor households have less than 4.5 TLUs per person; households with sufficient wealth have between 4.5 and 9 TLUs per person and rich households have over 9 TLUs per person. These categories are based on Pratt and Gwynn's (1977) estimate that 4.5 TLUs per person is the minimum amount of livestock necessary for an individual subsisting off livestock herds to maintain adequate nutrition and survive in arid lands. However, Pratt and Gwynn's analysis neglects to consider the importance of grain in pastoral diets (Fratkin 1991 (Ariaal), Galvin 1985 (Turkana), Homewood and Rodgers 1987 (Maasai), and McCabe et al. 1992 (Maasai)).

or cash from off-farm opportunities (Homewood et al. 2006, Sachedina et al. 2009). While these studies provide a more accurate representation of household wealth, most analyses operate under the assumption that livestock resources are pastoralists' primary form of wealth.

Wealth differences based on livestock holdings have been examined in myriad ways. Several have argued that in the past, very wealthy or very poor herders were driven out of the pastoral economy. For example, Frederik Barth's (1961) landmark study of the Basseri of South Persia describes how wealthy people with many livestock moved into towns and hired labor to manage their livestock herds, thereby maintaining links to their rural homesteads. On the other hand, poor people with no livestock uprooted from their homesteads altogether and moved to towns in search of wage labor. Elliot Fratkin (1998) observes how Ariaal men in Kenya with little or no livestock holdings also move to towns in search of low-paying jobs. Ann May and Francis Ole Ikayo (2007) echo these findings and describe how poor Maasai men in Tanzania pursue work in urban areas as night watchmen or guards. John Galaty (1982) describes different outcomes of poverty by examining the historical context in which very poor Maasai with little or no livestock virtually dropped out of Maasai society and joined groups known as *iltorrobo*. These people lived in the forests foraging and raising honey and often served as a labor supply for Maasai herd owners.<sup>47</sup>

Livestock wealth has also been shown to influence herd management strategies. For example, Ariaal men and women belonging to wealthy households have less labor requirements than those belonging to poorer households (Fratkin 1989). This is due to the

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<sup>47</sup> See also Anderson and Broch-Due (1999) and Salzman (1999) for further discussions of the differential impacts poverty has on pastoralist populations and myth of egalitarianism.



ability of wealthy herders to marry several wives, have more children, and thus maintain a greater source of labor to draw from within the household. Wealthy herders are also able to hire outside labor to help with herd management. Barbara Grandin (1988) shows how poor Maasai households in Kenya milk their livestock more intensively than wealthy households to meet their daily consumption requirements. Thus, calves of wealthier people will be healthier due to the availability of more milk. Wealthy herd owners are also more resistant to dramatic environmental fluctuations. Elliot Fratkin and Eric Abella Roth (1990) describe how wealthy and poor Ariaal households are differentially affected by drought. They illustrate how wealthy households are able to buffer the effects of drought due to their large numbers of livestock, whereas poorer households experience devastating effects from drought due to their small herd sizes.

The implications of livestock wealth for livelihoods and herd management strategies have been described in multiple ways in the literature. While the emphasis has primarily focused on economic forms of capital, social capital—social networks and connections—has also been mentioned as an important factor contributing to livestock production.

### ***Social Capital As Livestock Insurance***

Social capital among pastoralists is generally explained as the relationships that provide access to important ecological (livestock-related) resources as a risk-reduction strategy (Galvin 2008, Goldman and Riosmena under review). In this way, social capital is said to contribute to overall resilience as pastoralists cope with crisis or change (Galvin 2008). During times of hardship, people may borrow livestock from age-mates, neighbors, and clan members, or they may diversify their herds by loaning livestock to others (Salzman

1999). Social networks also allow pastoralists to maintain mobility and access livestock-related resources such as grazing land and water (Galvin 2008, Goldman and Riosmena under review, McCabe 2004, Potkanski 1999). These practices serve as part of a general livelihood strategy and help guarantee livelihood security (Thompson and Homewood 2002).

Undoubtedly, social networks are linked to wealth. For example, a rich man has a wider social network due to his ability to marry more wives. Nonetheless, a pastoralist's extensive network based on age, family, neighbor, and clan relations represents forms of social capital, which enable households to buffer change, reduce risk, and maintain their livestock herds. To some extent, scholarly examinations of these networks have helped broaden our view of the means pastoralists use to protect and increase their livestock assets. However, discussions of social capital among pastoralists primarily address its importance to keeping and managing livestock-related resources (deVries et al. 2006, Thompson and Homewood 2002). The importance of social capital to other aspects of pastoralists' lives has received little attention.

### ***Choosing the Proper Cow: Cultural Capital and Maasai Taste***

In contrast to all the varieties of discussion on economic capital and some on social capital, there has not been a direct focus on cultural capital in the livelihood literature.<sup>48</sup> But cultural capital exists among pastoral communities even though it has not been termed as such. Here, people possess cultural capital by having the capacity and knowledge to

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<sup>48</sup> Other groups of literature indirectly discuss forms of cultural capital among Maasai. For example, studies of tourism and the politics of indigeneity describe how Maasai have both been exploited and have capitalized on their exotic and authentically African image, thereby catering to the cultural "tastes" of Western tourists (Bruner 1994, 2001).

perform in culturally acceptable ways. Because livestock traditionally served as the mark of pastoral societies both economically and culturally, many rites and traditions involve or revolve around livestock. For example, a Maasai man gains status by slaughtering the ideal cow—black with flawless horns—during important ceremonies. Showing a mastery of these practices creates a means for belonging by demonstrating that an individual and his household possess cultural capital. In this way, cultural capital also serves as a source of differentiation from others who may not have the cultural knowledge to perform as such.

For Maasai, beadwork stands as an important cultural marker and a source of distinction in terms of both livelihood and ethnicity. Corinne Kratz and Donna Pido (2000: 44) describe how Maasai aesthetics and identity are intertwined:

From the pastoral Maasai perspective, however, other groups modify the forms and uses of ornament in ways that show their inferiority just as much as their deviance in practice from the pastoral ideal. Indeed, to Maasai the two are interlinked. Aesthetics and expertise in beadwork, pastoral production, and ethnicity are all bound together in the Maasai self-image of domineeringly ideal perfection.

Kratz and Pido explain how cultural capital in the form of an aesthetic sets Maasai apart from other non-herding groups of people. They underscore the notion that cultural capital may be used to create a sense of belonging, as well as a means for differentiation.

The approach to capital in the literature reinforces the links between pastoral societies, livestock, and capital. Indeed, livestock continue to be economically and culturally important to pastoral populations and remain significant forms of capital. However, in part due to new and different livelihood strategies among Maasai in Simanjiro, forms of capital are expanding. Thus, in the next part of this chapter, I examine the recent emergence of

new and the reconfiguration of old forms of economic, social, and cultural capital and suggest that successful tanzanite traders are leading the charge in terms of obtaining and being associated with these alternative configurations of capital.

### **“No Cow Makes This Sort of Profit”: New Configurations of Capital for Maasai in Simanjiro**

“The work at Mererani is a good business. You can build a house, buy a car, a tractor, and livestock. I have never seen a business where you sell such a small thing and make such a big profit. It’s incredible; you can buy a gemstone for 50,000 [TZS] and sell for a million. No cow makes this sort of profit.” Malipe, a member of the Seuri age-set, commented on the tanzanite trade one afternoon as we sat in his boma discussing middleman activities at Mererani. Malipe’s son David is a member of the Korianga age-set and began trading gemstones in 2000. For over a decade now, David has worked as a middleman buying and selling tanzanite and moving substantial amounts of gemstones and cash. David has been extremely successful in the tanzanite trade and represents one of the few young men who have achieved such success. He also presents a unique case compared to the young men discussed in the previous chapter, as he still lives within his father’s boma, and his generosity prevails throughout his father’s households.

As Malipe chronicles David’s success, we sit on squat, three-legged, wooden stools gazing at David’s modern house situated at one end of the boma facing the rest of the houses constructed with stick frames, mud, and dung. Solar panels and a satellite dish on top of David’s house shadow the borehole below that supplies the family with a constant, local source of water. Malipe’s family has obviously benefitted from David’s success. Malipe explains,

He built this house, and we can charge our cell phones with the solar power. He bought livestock, which belong to the whole family, and he purchased a tractor, which was used to clear and plow 40 acres for the family. He paid 300–400,000 TZS to people who are now digging a well for livestock watering. Also he has paid for all of our family's hospital expenses, and he buys livestock medicine. Mererani has helped our family much more than the livestock business.

In addition, David has three wives and owns a motorcycle, a Toyota truck, and has purchased multiple cell phones for family members. Malipe wears his phone around his neck dangling from a beaded necklace, and he periodically plays with it during our conversation.

Malipe's family's economic status portrays the extent to which cash from gemstone trading has infused a few Maasai households in Simanjiro and is testament to the fact that income from tanzanite trading has the potential to far exceed profits from any other livelihood. David is one of the few who have purchased such costly, conspicuously material items such as a car, or built a new, modern house; he is among an even smaller number of men in the ranks of having his own borehole. The fact that David is a member of the Korianga age-set and has three wives further demonstrates the scope of his gains from the tanzanite trade, but also mirrors other, less successful tanzanite trader's practices of purchasing livestock for bridewealth payments. Thus livestock continue to emerge as perhaps the most important item men purchase with their profits from tanzanite trading. However it appears that successful tanzanite traders are changing the nature of livestock investments.

### ***Unconventional Livestock Investments***

Livestock investments reveal the continued significance of livestock both economically and symbolically in Maasai livelihoods. Hassan Sachedina and Pippa Trench's (2009) study in Emboreet village of Simanjiro quantitatively shows that profits from selling tanzanite are first and foremost invested in livestock. During my conversations with men, they overwhelmingly stated that their primary motive for engaging in the tanzanite trade was to acquire cash in order to avoid selling livestock.

Ngele left for Mererani as a junior elder of the Landis age-set. His father had died several years before, and Ngele was already established in his own boma. He reflects, "I woke up angry about selling my livestock, so I just jumped up and decided to try to find something to make money. I didn't tell anyone, not even my wife. I said I was going to visit my grandmother. Then, after I came back with money I told my wife, 'this is what I brought from there.'" Ngele's account of his initial departure for Mererani is marked by a sense of urgency. He continues on to detail why he feels he was successful at the tanzanite trade. "At that time I only had one wife, nothing else. Now I have two wives, a house at Mererani, which I built and now rent out, and I added nineteen cows to my herd."<sup>49</sup> Ngele, an entrepreneur of sorts, no longer works in the gemstone trade because other business ventures closer to home, although much less lucrative, have captured his interests. "Now after deciding to stay at home, my only source of income is from livestock sales. I plan to return to Mererani someday in the near future." Ngele's sentiments echo numerous men in Simanjiro who lament selling livestock and find relief through the gemstone trade.

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<sup>49</sup> Ngele was able to buy a total of twenty-six cows from the money he made selling gemstones. Seven of those he used as bride price for his second wife.

As Ngele demonstrates, some tanzanite traders can avoid selling livestock and also have the capacity to increase their herds. Generally, young men proudly state that any profit they make beyond that which gets reinvested in their mob is invested in livestock.<sup>50</sup> Livestock helps to insure food security, remains an important status symbol, and serves as the cornerstone of reciprocal relationships for Maasai and other pastoralists, especially in their use as bridewealth payments. Customarily, a herd largely comprised of milking cows not only functioned as a secure investment in long-term family food security but also indicated the potential for perpetuation of the herd through livestock fertility. Households gained prestige due to their capacity to increase their herds and their ability to lend milking cows out to other households, thereby creating systems of obligation (Dahl and Hjort 1976). Now, however, the shape of these investments is changing with regard to herd composition and the perceived value of livestock. Successful tanzanite traders are playing a major part in these changes.

Recently, in Simanjiro, there appears to be a shift in emphasis from herds largely comprised of milking cows to herds dominated by a large number of oxen.<sup>51</sup> Julius is a member of the Landis age-set and was quite successful in the tanzanite trade during his work there from 1990 to 1992. Currently, he only periodically dabbles in the gemstone trade, because he is consumed with his political responsibilities as the village chairman.

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<sup>50</sup> In actuality, the first item men buy with money from Mererani is a cell phone. After that, they invest in livestock. As explored in chapter 2, many of these livestock purchases are used to pay bridewealth. However, the fact that men cite livestock as their number one purchase underscores the importance they place on livestock purchases.

<sup>51</sup> People are also purchasing new breeds of livestock, thereby diversifying their herds and representing further changes in herd composition.

During a series of conversations, Julius addresses the changes he is observing in livestock herding strategies:

People like to invest in castrated males. If someone gets money there [at Mererani] he comes back and buys these because they are worth money. It's really about investment opportunities, things you can sell if your luck fails. But also, they [tanzanite traders] like money and they like to invest in things they can see. They will invest in oxen because they are easily changed to money. A guy will have 100 cows, 60 are oxen because they are worth money, 40 are milking cows; they are not worth so much.

The village chairman's sentiment reveals the emerging importance of oxen in livestock production systems. While oxen serve as forms of quick, exchangeable capital (for cash), the incorporation of cultivation further valorizes oxen as they are rented out for use with ox-drawn plows. Tanzanite trading allows some households to invest in livestock for reasons beyond subsistence.

But successful tanzanite traders are not only investing in livestock, as livestock are no longer perceived to be as secure an investment as they once were. As Malipe, the Maasai elder who opened this section explains, "Money is leading, and I believe this is because of the tanzanite trade. People have gone and have gotten a lot of money. Also, the people who have left here have seen lots of changes. They are looking to the future. They would rather have different things like a car. A car cannot die of ECF;<sup>52</sup> if you run out of money you can choose to sell it or not run it." Malipe provides an important perspective on money, livestock, and material goods. While diseases such as ECF have always been problematic for

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<sup>52</sup> East Coast Fever (ECF) is a livestock disease transmitted by ticks. According to the International Livestock Research Institute based in Nairobi, ECF kills thousands of cows each year across Africa (<http://ilriclippings.wordpress.com/tag/ecf/>). Recently, however, new vaccines have significantly decreased livestock deaths from ECF (J. Terrence McCabe, personal communication, November 11, 2011).



Maasai livestock herds, Malipe suggests that tanzanite traders may be able to mitigate livestock losses by investing in alternative purchases that are more secure and long term. Certainly Malipe is not ignorant to the costs involved with keeping a car, nor the fact that cars often need repairing. Malipe is also well aware that livestock increase in value over time, while cars depreciate. However, Malipe insinuates that one has more control over a car than livestock and indicates the extent to which diseases have devastated livestock herds in this area. Thus, according to Malipe, a car is a less risky and more valuable investment than livestock—a car will not die of disease, and it may be sold for cash. By drawing attention to tanzanite traders' foresight, Malipe demonstrates that tanzanite traders realize and rely on the value of material goods beyond livestock and some are investing in those items with cash from tanzanite trading.

Further illustrating tanzanite traders' discretion is the example of Siti. Siti is an elder of the Seuri age-set. He has never been to Mererani and is generally described as being very wealthy. He has eight wives, numerous children, and many livestock. According to several people, he has the most livestock in all of Simanjiro; some report that his herd numbers in the thousands. Siti's herd size is a reflection of his family inheritance and his savvy herd management over the years. However, Siti's success at livestock herding is often undermined. His neighbor Mollel complains,

My neighbor [Siti] has thousands of livestock but his boma looks the poorest. Where he sleeps, what he eats, and what his children wear make him look very poor. Everyone is very busy taking care of livestock and he (Siti) hasn't sold any livestock. The people in the boma do lots of work for nothing. He won't sell livestock, build a good house, buy food, clothing, or send his kids to

school. I think his heart is poor because he has not given livestock to any relatives. Instead, he only tells you his problems with sickness and hunger.

Mollel's reflections on his neighbor demonstrate how it is not just having livestock, but what one does with livestock that is important. In Mollel's view, if a wealthy herd owner fails to dress his family appropriately, build a house, or send his children to school, he looks poor.

Siti is looked down upon due to how he manages his wealth and his emphatic emphasis on livestock production. While Siti has economic capital and the capacity to sell livestock for money, he apparently lacks the foresight to mobilize this capital, as evidenced by his neglect in sending his children to school, his and his family's outward appearance, and his disregard for his relatives. Even though some wealthy herd owners who have not been to Mererani have the capability to invest in alternative items, they are not, and therefore their wealth in livestock is minimized.

It is clear that livestock are still important to Maasai in Simanjiro, however, it is equally, if not more important for people to diversify their assets and means of production. Successful tanzanite traders are able to do this with the cash they are earning and the insight they exert in making investments that have the potential be more sustainable over the long term. Some successful tanzanite traders also use their cash to improve cultivation.

### ***Cash and Cultivation***

Cash from the tanzanite trade is not directly contributing to an increase in cultivated acreage (Sachedina and Trench 2009), but access to cash is indeed changing the shape of farming practices in Simanjiro and has potential implications for agricultural

productivity.<sup>53</sup> Many households in Simanjiro experience tradeoffs between keeping livestock and cultivating land. Because of unpredictable rainfall and poor growing soils, crop yields in this area are generally not enough to support agricultural inputs from year to year. Therefore, people with little or no income from outside sources often sell livestock to pay for seeds and plowing. In an effort to maximize profits, livestock sales will be strategically timed to correspond with optimal livestock health and a high market value. Consequently, if the market price for livestock is low, but it is the right time to cultivate, households are forced to sell livestock at a low price and will have less money for seeds and plowing. If sales are delayed until the market price increases, households risk missing optimal planting times. This is a common scenario in Simanjiro but is not experienced by everyone.

Malipe does not face these dilemmas, as cash on hand from his son David's work at Mererani allows his family to purchase inputs for farming regardless of livestock health or market price. Malipe describes how his family has not had to sell livestock to purchase seeds. In fact, that year they bought seeds and planted a second time because the first planting never germinated due to inadequate rainfall. Malipe's family has also hired labor to help with cultivation. Furthermore, owning their own tractor serves as a form of income (much like oxen), that they can rent to others to assist with plowing.

As Malipe's family demonstrates, cash from the tanzanite trade not only pays for inputs such as seeds, labor, and tractors, but also allows for more flexibility in planting. Families who have access to this type of cash do not have to sell livestock to pay for

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<sup>53</sup> Sachedina and Trench (2009: 283) show that in one village of Simanjiro, the mean acres under cultivation between households with someone who trades tanzanite and households with no one who trades tanzanite are almost the same.

cultivation expenses and are able to mitigate some of the risks associated with farming in this area. Additionally, they benefit by having crops to eat and surplus they can sell for profit. While cash from the tanzanite trade has obvious economic impacts on livestock production and cultivation in some households in Simanjiro, no less important are the social changes that are occurring as a result of tanzanite trading.

### ***Social Capital: Pro-Social Prosperity***

Successful Maasai tanzanite traders build and possess increasing amounts of social capital through their capacity for expanding their social networks both within and outside of the village. These relationships are not based on livestock and transcend the boundaries of age, family, neighbor, clan, and ethnicity that have guided social relations in the past. Only the very successful tanzanite traders engage in what James Ferguson (2006: 73) refers to as “pro-social prosperity,” a benevolent, collective type of wealth that “feeds” people and “provides the basis for community and mutuality.”

Pro-social prosperity improves a village’s resources, and at the same time increases an individual’s or family’s visibility. Typically, pro-social prosperity is represented by the rise of village-wide infrastructural and institutional developments. As a positive association is formed between a person and the project they funded or donated to, they build social capital by becoming well known and respected, thereby increasing their status. In Simanjiro, there are several projects including guesthouses, health clinics, water pumps and storage tanks, grinding machines, and schools that have been initiated and largely funded by a few village members who have been very successful in the tanzanite trade.

As mentioned, Kato, who was introduced in this chapter's opening vignette, is well known for his generosity. During a visit with him at his home in Arusha, he told me that his father was one of the few *iloibonok*<sup>54</sup> in the past who helped people without charging them for his services. When Kato was very young, his father told him that if he helped others, he would live long. Kato confided, "I wasn't born with tanzanite. It's not that it's really something I love. It's mainly the business. It wasn't something I did to be famous or political. It's something I did to help my community." Indeed, Kato's generosity is pervasive throughout his village. He has contributed the majority of funding for development projects including the construction of a water tank and a secondary school. In addition, during my stay in Simanjiro, Kato was funding and managing the building of a hotel in the village center. On several occasions, when I spent time with Kato, he would hand out money to friends and relatives who asked for help.

Some tanzanite traders exhibit pro-social prosperity on a smaller scale. Tractors with trailers attached, owned by successful tanzanite traders, are often used to carry loads of people to and from ceremonies and church services; they are also used to haul large amounts of water for these types of social gatherings. The generosity of some tanzanite traders makes them well known and respected by others in their villages, thereby building their social capital.

Tanzanite traders also build social capital in other ways. As discussed in chapter 2, working in mobs at Mererani creates connections between Maasai men. These groups solidify and strengthen already existing relationships and expand men's networks outside of the village to Maasai who live elsewhere and may represent different clans. Tanzanite

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<sup>54</sup> *Iloibonok* (*oloiboni* sing.) are traditional spiritual leaders in Maasai society.

traders also extend their social networks beyond Maasai, as they conduct business and interact with people from different ethnic groups and various regions of Tanzania. While the creation and reinforcing of social capital is characteristic to most men who work at Mererani, the most successful tanzanite traders have business networks that span international borders. These relationships can have obvious payoffs by broadening tanzanite traders' connections. But successful tanzanite traders also build cultural capital.

### ***Cultural Capital: Tanzanite Traders' Distinction***

Economic and social capital are important but are not the only forms of capital tanzanite traders are able to access through their work at Mererani. In general, tanzanite traders possess cultural capital that is not related to livestock or pastoral livelihoods but is characteristic to tanzanite trading and Mererani. This is built through the ownership of certain material items, the display of a particular aesthetic, and the embodiment of a unique skill-set and worldview. In tanzanite traders' home villages, the "culture" of Mererani contributes to their distinction.

On occasion, Kimani and Sitoko, members of the Korianga age-set, would stop by my camp to visit. They were both working as middlemen, and while not as successful as some tanzanite traders, they were able to invest some of their profits from tanzanite trading toward building up their livestock herds. They knew of my interest in tanzanite trading and the people involved in such activities, and they confirmed their pride in their work by habitually engaging in conversations and eagerly answering my questions about their activities at Mererani. One evening when Kimani and Sitoko were on their way home to their bomas from Mererani, they showed up at my camp as I was taking photographs of the

full moon rising. Kimani and Sitoko enthusiastically asked me to take their picture.<sup>55</sup> As they positioned themselves for the photo, they each reached into their shukas, pulled out their cell phones, and put them to their ears. The photo Kimani and Sitoko desired, portrayed them pretending to be in the midst of important phone calls.

While patterns of consumption obviously represent forms of economic capital, they also symbolize cultural forms of capital. Soon after my interaction with Kimani and Sitoko, I came to realize the symbolic significance of cell phones in Simanjiro and arguably beyond. The first item men buy with money from tanzanite trading is a phone. Owning a phone suggests a level of importance such that one must be able to be reached quickly, as well as have immediate means to contact others. Kimani and Sitoko emphatically explained that their phones were critical to their business ventures at Mererani, as all tanzanite traders relied on cell phones to conduct gemstone transactions and keep in touch with members of their mob. Some tanzanite traders have more than one phone and many have purchased phones for their family members.<sup>56</sup> But it is not only the function of the phone, but also the phone itself, which carries cultural capital. Cell phones are discussed, compared, and constantly handled, and very successful tanzanite traders may have more than one expensive phone, and thus are placed higher on the social hierarchy of consumers (Bourdieu 1984: 1). While every Maasai tanzanite trader I met owned a cell phone, the more successful men also possessed other, costlier symbols of cultural capital.

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<sup>55</sup> Korianga men often displayed their vanity by asking me to photograph them. During my fieldwork, I gave printed copies of photos to the people who were in the photographs. Kimani and Sitoko were thrilled when they received the pictures of themselves “talking” on their cell phones.

<sup>56</sup> Other people who are not working at Mererani also have cell phones. These people have either worked at Mererani in the past or have a family member who is working there and bought the phone for them.

The most successful tanzanite traders invest in expensive goods such as cars, motorcycles, and tractors and have built the majority of the modern houses in the area.<sup>57</sup> Some of them also have invested in property elsewhere. For example, Kato owns a home in Arusha, as well as a plot of land in a nearby village where he is building guesthouses. While these material goods are obvious forms of economic capital, they also represent unique consumption patterns associated with working at Mererani and symbolize tanzanite traders' different tastes. Tanzanite traders are not solely investing in livestock, they are diversifying their assets and building cultural capital in the process.

Tanzanite traders also exhibit cultural capital through an aesthetic that is unique to their trade. While they continue to wear Maasai beaded jewelry, their styles are shifting because of their connection to Mererani. Typically, Maasai men are gifted beaded jewelry made by their girlfriends, lovers, or wives. Tanzanite traders however, are buying jewelry made and sold by Maasai women at Mererani. Therefore, new styles of beadwork are made at Mererani and then taken back to the villages giving tanzanite traders a unique look at home. In addition, tanzanite traders often wear copper rings around their fingers, which further set them apart from people who are not working at Mererani.

Tanzanite traders also have a distinct aesthetic because of their clothing. Most Maasai tanzanite traders continue to wear the Maasai shuka; however, since they have available cash, their shukas are often new. Also, because tanzanite traders purchase their clothing in Mererani and Arusha, they typically wear shukas with different patterns from those worn by people at home and they often wear a beige safari vest with multiple pockets

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<sup>57</sup> There were only a few modern houses owned by non-tanzanite traders. One man who worked for an NGO lived in a modern house. Also, in the area there was a modern house owned by a state-level politician, as well as one owned by a European man. The Catholic Church in one village had a modern house on its grounds as well.



over their shukas. While tanzanite traders' clothing sets them apart from non-tanzanite-trading Maasai in their home villages, it also distinguishes them as Maasai in other contexts. For example, I often saw Maasai tanzanite traders from Simanjiro driving their vehicles around Arusha in their Maasai attire. In this way, cultural capital in the form of an aesthetic constitutes symbols that serve as a basis for differentiation on several levels. But the fact that most tanzanite traders continue to wear the traditional shuka signifies how the display of cultural capital also reinforces their identity as Maasai.

Kato's clothing style, however, represents an example of how the most successful tanzanite traders set themselves apart from other Maasai. Most of the time, Kato dresses in Western-style clothes, including a button-up shirt, slacks or blue jeans, and sneakers or dress shoes. He usually wears a thick gold chain around his neck and like other tanzanite traders, copper rings on each hand. Kato also wears a beaded bracelet around his wrist—a marker of his Maasai ethnicity (Kratz and Pido 2000). The one time I saw Kato dressed in a shuka without his gold and copper jewelry was during a circumcision ceremony in his home village. The situational character of Kato's self-presentation brings to focus his shrewd ability to fit into two different contexts. He illustrates the importance of knowing when and where to mobilize different forms of capital. But, despite his customary attire at the circumcision ceremony, Kato's cultural capital was ever-present. Even though Kato's boma was located a very short distance from the ceremonial boma, he drove his Lexus SUV and parked it inside the boma next to the house where the circumcisions were taking place. Throughout the day, the Lexus maintained a conspicuous presence adjacent to the focal point of the ceremonial happenings. While Kato's dress appropriately fit into the milieu of the ceremony, the Lexus stood as a constant reminder of his distinction.

In many ways, Kato stands out as an exception due to his incomparable success at tanzanite trading; however, all tanzanite traders possess certain forms of cultural capital due to the simple fact that they work at Mererani. One Korianga remarks, “Some went [to Mererani] and are not successful, but they keep staying there in order to come back and tell others they are at Mererani.” This young man illustrates how men engage in the performance of going to Mererani which gives them a mark of distinction in their home villages.

Beyond the performance of going to Mererani, men also become “educated” at Mererani. Many tanzanite traders deem themselves more knowledgeable and worldlier than those who do not work at Mererani because they are interacting with a global market and learning a new trade. One Korianga tanzanite trader professed, “Those who stay home are ignorant especially in terms of business. They are just people who take care of livestock and know about the forest only. We consider them bush people who don’t know much about the big city.”<sup>58</sup> At home, tanzanite traders turn their experiences outside of the village at Mererani into cultural capital by giving others the impression that as a group, they are open-minded, more aware of the world outside their villages, and educated. These symbols of cultural capital are unique to Mererani and show how the culture of Mererani is infusing Maasai villages.

Examples of the cultural, social, and economic capital successful tanzanite traders possess highlight the important intersections between livelihood diversification and new forms of capital. But in keeping with Bourdieu’s framework, it is also critical to examine the

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<sup>58</sup> Maasai often referred to Arusha using the Swahili words *mji mkubwa* translated as the “big city.”

relationship between capital and power. This relationship is mediated by shifting notions of success among Maasai in Simanjiro.

### **The Convergence of Different Forms of Capital: Shifting Notions of Success**

The most successful tanzanite traders have unequal power and influence in their villages. This appears to rest in the fact that they have been able to access important resources and exhibit behaviors that articulate with contemporary notions of success. In addition, others view tanzanite traders as possessing important forms of capital. These processes reflect how ideas about success are socially, materially, and structurally constructed. Furthermore, these patterns bring to focus the relationship between capital and power in Maasai communities and suggest important connections between livelihoods and cultural identity. Richard Waller (1993: 299) addresses these connections:

Maasai identity has been defined by the successful. Indeed, "Maasainess" may be a projection of that success. But that does not mean that we can ignore the possibility that other views exist and that some of these might come to surface in the future. There may be not a permanent hierarchy of identities, ranging from dominant to suppressed, but instead a wide repertoire from which the community may choose under changing circumstances.

Waller addresses the deep-seated links between pastoral livelihoods and ideologies of success. These connections surfaced in 1998, during my master's research. In several interviews with Maasai in two distinct areas of northern Tanzania, the Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Loliondo, I asked people "what does it mean to be successful?" The overwhelming response in both areas was "many livestock and many children." For Maasai,

success or, as Waller synonymously calls it, “Maasainess” traditionally has been associated with pastoral production.

But as Waller indicates, views of success and success itself are not permanent. Thus, Waller forecasts the need to open the purview to the potential for cultural identity and notions of success to shift from an exclusive dependence on pastoral production. Today, in Simanjiro, Waller’s conjecture rings true. Ten years after my initial inquiries into what constitutes success, I posed the same question to Maasai households in Simanjiro. Myriad responses paralleled those from ten years before, yet also demonstrate changing and expanding notions of success. Many people still consider livestock fundamental to an individual’s or household’s success; however, other material items, such as cars, tractors, and modern houses are also mentioned and a different emphasis is placed on children.

In Simanjiro, people’s ideas of success are consistently linked to the gemstone trade. In other words, when people discuss success, they reference those who have gained material possessions and non-material attributes from their work in the tanzanite trade. One member of the Makaa age-set named Paulo stated,

In the past, successful Maasai had livestock. Now this is changing because of Mererani. Successful Maasai now have livestock, cars, and modern houses. They are sending kids to school, have a farm, and have money in the bank.<sup>59</sup> Most of the people who have these things are people who went to Mererani and were successful there. In fact, this wouldn’t have happened outside of Mererani.

Paulo’s observation reflects a common perception that success in Simanjiro is directly linked to the tanzanite trade. He primarily addresses the material characteristics of

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<sup>59</sup> Only one or two people I know of have a bank account in Arusha.

success, but he also alludes to the symbolic features of success, in particular his observation that successful people are sending their children to school.

### ***Success = Education***

Education emerges as a fundamental component of people's ideas about success and thus shows the increasing importance of this type of cultural capital.<sup>60</sup> Children have always been a symbol of status for Maasai, and while children are still important, educating them is even more important. Lasaro, a prominent elder of the Makaa age-set astutely observes, "If you have many children, you can't afford to feed them or send them all to school. It is better to have a small family so you can educate them all." Lasaro suggests a cultural shift from having many children to educating children.<sup>61</sup> According to Lasaro, formal education serves as a means to greater economic opportunities and builds social and cultural capital, as it expands people's networks and legitimizes social difference. Maasai who are formally educated are taught the national language, Swahili, and are enculturated in accordance with national customs and holidays.

Education is also a factor in the diminishing role of children as a promise of livestock for a Maasai man. Whereas children once assured a man future livestock holdings through bridewealth exchanges, factors including education and the influx of cash have affected this practice. Lasaro explains, "In the past having a lot of children meant you were successful, especially if you had a lot of girls because you received livestock for bridewealth. Now having livestock, a modern house, and money means you are successful.

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<sup>60</sup> Education is important for Maasai in other areas of Tanzania as well (Goldman 2006).

<sup>61</sup> I observed that even people who claimed that having less children was better, still had many children.

We want daughters to go to school and after school they can get married.” Lasaro’s ideas about success reflect the importance of education in contemporary notions of success. He also indicates that Maasai identities may be shifting from being intimately linked to livestock production to including other forms of production. Linguistic representations of success also demonstrate these processes.

### ***New Language for New Wealth***

The language people use to describe success reflects changing ideologies of success. The Maa word *orkasis* is generally used to describe someone who is successful. It also is used synonymously to refer to someone who is wealthy. My questions to people about success used the term *orkasis*. Some people answered by separating wealth linguistically and conceptually into two categories. One man explains, “Orkasis means having many cows and a big family. *Tajiri* means having many things such as a house, money, cows, and a car, but few children.”<sup>62</sup>

Orkasis and *tajiri* are both used to refer to a successful person, but they imply very distinct types of success and separate people into categories based on different kinds of wealth and how that wealth is obtained. Orkasis implies wealth that is accumulated in a more traditional or “Maasai manner,” through large livestock herds and big families. *Tajiri* describes wealth that is also associated with livestock, but less so with family and includes non-cattle material goods. The use of the Swahili word *tajiri*—co-opted from national vernacular—reflects how Maasai ideas about material wealth and success are becoming

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<sup>62</sup> The TUKI Swahili-English Dictionary (2001: 307) defines *tajiri* as a rich or wealthy person, a businessperson (man or woman), and an employer.

more grounded in national and even international settings. In Simanjoro, successful tanzanite traders are at the forefront of these changes.

Sinyok, a very successful tanzanite trader in the Landis age-set, describes the difference between *orkasis* and *tajiri* and focuses less on material aspects of wealth and success and more on who gains different types of wealth and how:

*Orkasis* means livestock and kids. *Tajiri* means livestock, no kids, and having a lot of money. These people are recently successful like those at Mererani. When young people go to Mererani and they don't even have a single wife and they get millions of shillings, they are *tajiri*. They can buy whatever they want and they may have livestock, cars, money, and houses, but they are too young to have children.

Sinyok goes on to describe how several young men he knows of the Korianga age-set have not married or have only just started their families; these are the ones he says who are quickly becoming wealthy from their work at Mererani.<sup>63</sup> In contrast, Sinyok implies that the type of wealth represented by *orkasis* is acquired over one's lifetime and is thus characteristic to elders.

The role age customarily plays in ideas about wealth and success is evidenced by the influence and power male elders generally hold within Maasai society. Now, however, success is linked to the convergence of new and different forms of capital that successful tanzanite traders possess. As young, successful tanzanite traders attain particular goods

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<sup>63</sup> As discussed in chapter 2, many Korianga tanzanite traders were able to marry at a younger age due to their profits from Mererani. While Sinyok's narrative appears to contradict this process, it must be kept in mind, that Sinyok speaks to the definitions of *orkasis* and *tajiri*. It was not clear whether or not once a Korianga married and had several children, Sinyok would label him as *orkasis*.

and qualities associated with changing views of success they are becoming respected and powerful in their own right.

### **The Power of the Gem: Mobilizing Political Influence**

A vivid example of the structural characteristics of success can be seen in who is being elected to political positions within the village. The most successful tanzanite traders are overwhelmingly represented in village governments in Simanjiro. In the four villages represented in this study, all of the village chairmen have worked at Mererani and the majority (75%; n=31) of the subvillage chairmen have also worked as tanzanite traders. The prevalence of successful tanzanite traders in village governments signifies a shift in Maasai ideas about leadership.

Major village decisions have traditionally fallen to the responsibility of senior male elders whose status is based on age and sex. However, it has been suggested that the creation of post-colonial village governments has resulted in a scenario where younger, formally educated men are now making important village decisions (Goldman 2006, Igoe 2000).<sup>64</sup> In some Maasai-dominated areas, young men who “wield the power of the pen” (Goldman 2006: 121, see also Hodgson 1999b: 145), have been voted into village leadership positions, and are therefore able to exert considerable influence over important decisions. These men are respected for their ability to read, write, and speak Swahili, giving them necessary skills to negotiate with others beyond the village setting. In Simanjiro, it appears that the power of the pen has yielded to the power of the gem.

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<sup>64</sup> Sharon Hutchinson (1996) describes similar patterns among the Nuer in Sudan, where young, formally educated, literate men were able to occupy powerful political offices.



While younger men belonging to the Landis age-set dominate village governments in Simanjiro, only a few of them have attended school. But the majority of them have spent time at Mererani, which is often likened to a school. Tobiko, an elder of the Makaa age-set observes, “Tanzanite traders are involved with politics because Mererani is kind of like a school; they learn how to speak Swahili and hold meetings.” As discussed, formal education is important in Maasai society; however, it appears that the skills tanzanite traders gain from working at Mererani also serve as a valuable form of cultural capital. Tobiko continues, “When people go out there [to Mererani], they become more open minded, meet different people from all over, and learn from these people and see different things. Tanzanite traders have seen the world out there. So when they come back they feel they need to show their people what others are doing, and people listen to them.” From Tobiko’s perspective, newly acquired skills, a broadened awareness of the world, and access to useful information help prepare men for positions within village governments. Thus, cultural capital in the form of “education” and social capital through the new connections tanzanite traders make, contribute to the perception that tanzanite traders have the capacity to perform as village leaders. Thus, tanzanite traders both mobilize and are perceived to embody different forms of capital and this enables them to gain power.

### **Conclusion: Cultivating Cultural Style**

Bourdieu’s analysis of capital allows me to examine the different forms of capital successful tanzanite traders can access through their work at Mererani. Certainly economic forms of capital are important, but social and cultural forms of capital are also significant in giving tanzanite traders an air of distinction and setting them apart from others. The different

forms of capital that constitute a tanzanite trader's success are also included in ideas about who is wealthy, who makes a good leader, who should serve as a village representative, and ultimately, who is a successful Maasai. The shifting political and social landscape in Simanjiro is not only linked to streams of cash but is also shaped through the new skills and abilities tanzanite traders acquire through the tanzanite trade.

As such, successful tanzanite traders exhibit what James Ferguson (1999: 95) referred to among urban Zambian Copperbelt workers as "cultural style" or the "*practices that signify differences between social categories*" [emphasis in original]. Ferguson (1999: 95) argues that Copperbelt workers cultivate a viable style over time through a performance that represents the convergence of cross-cutting poles of social signification. For example, Ferguson explains that class may cross-cut masculinity. In other words, the working class style of being masculine may differ from the upper-class style of being masculine, and thus there is not a "unitary 'masculine' mode of behavior" (ibid.). Successful tanzanite traders appear to be involved in the same process of "self-making and structural determinations" (Ferguson 1999: 101). As they accumulate forms of capital, that may be seen as originating from different "poles," such as having large livestock herds and international social networks, they create a cultural style that is uniquely Maasai yet allows them to fit into a new social category. The ultimate exertion of difference is in their ability to access power.

The links between different forms of capital, success, and power indicate that tanzanite traders may be motivated to pursue opportunities at Mererani not only due to economic constraints at home, but also to improve their status and community authority. Thus the reasons why people engage in this livelihood strategy at Mererani could also rest

in the potential to advance socially and politically. Possessing a cultural style that sets them apart from others, successful tanzanite traders illustrate how privilege, exclusion, and structural forms of power are produced.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SEX, POWER, AND PRODUCTION: WOMEN PUSHING THE LIMITS OF GENDERED SUBJECTIVITIES

“People say I am doing prostitution, but I know I am working at Mererani for my children. If I stay home, my children have bad clothes and people laugh; if I go away, people talk bad. Once a woman leaves and works, people will say she is bad and a prostitute. But if you stay at home asking for things they are laughing again. I have to work, and I do not care if people are talking. I sent 110,000 [TZS] home yesterday with someone who was going to my village. If I decided to collect all my money and go back home today, I would have 500,000 [TZS] from selling milk and beads. That money would not last very long.”

—Nyla, Arusha, September 2008

I first met Nyla on a September day in Arusha. My research assistant Ester scheduled the interview via cell phone, and as was planned, I picked up Nyla at the Kati Makutano,<sup>65</sup> a guesthouse and restaurant frequented by Maasai when they spend time in Arusha. We proceeded to Ester’s house, where we talked with Nyla in Ester’s comfortable living room. A long-time friend of Ester, Nyla immediately extended her friendship toward me by revealing the details of her life and work at Mererani and gifting me beadwork each time we met thereafter. During the following months, she also introduced me to several of her female friends who worked at Mererani.

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<sup>65</sup> Kati Makutano is a well known place to gather and stay for Maasai when they are in Arusha. There is usually a large concentration of Maasai male tanzanite traders at Kati Makutano, as well, but other Maasai also stay there when they are in Arusha for hospital or doctor visits or other reasons.

Nyla first went to Mererani in 2001 with her husband. She left her children in the care of her mother and sought to find money to support them.<sup>66</sup> According to Nyla, when she began earning more than her husband, who was working as a tanzanite trader, he attempted to take the money to invest in his business. She recollects how she resisted his pleas: “He started to complain about me, and I became stronger than him; he came back home and I stayed.” Soon after her husband returned to the village from Mererani he moved to a nearby village and married a second wife. Nyla confided that she no longer communicates with her husband, and she rarely contacts her mother and children.

Nyla’s main work at Mererani is making and selling beadwork and selling milk. She buys the milk from Meru women in Arusha and sells it to Maasai at Mererani.<sup>67</sup> At the time of the interview she said she could buy 20 liters for 11,000 TZS and sell them for 25,000 TZS. There is a certain irony in the fact that Nyla, a Maasai woman, buys milk from Meru people who are primarily agriculturalists. This signifies her detachment from her Maasai roots and perhaps her alienation from Maasai society. Nyla claims it is currently a difficult time at Mererani because tanzanite is not found as easily as in the past, and people do not have extra money to spend on beadwork. Also, she is not immediately paid for milk, and she is constantly trying to collect on debts.

When Nyla first went to Mererani she made quite a bit of money. She sent money and food home periodically, and she bought goats, clothes, and furniture for her mother

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<sup>66</sup> When I talked with Nyla’s mother, she complained she did not realize the responsibility of taking care of Nyla’s children would last until the present day.

<sup>67</sup> Meru people (or Waro as they call themselves) live on or below the slopes of Mt. Meru just north of Arusha. They primarily practice agriculture growing coffee, maize, and other food crops; however, they also keep livestock. See Neumann 1998 for an extensive discussion of the Meru people and how they have been impacted by colonial and post-colonial land and conservation policies.

and children. She also supported her children to attend school; most of her eight children have completed primary school. Two of her daughters currently attend secondary school in Arusha. Their education is subsidized by the Emusoi Center, but she continues to contribute some money for fees and expenses.<sup>68</sup> Nyla paid the bridewealth for her first and second sons to marry, and she complains that her husband did not contribute anything. She feels betrayed by both her husband and her sons and claims how regardless of her support, her sons sold all seventy-three of her goats and do not contribute to the family. She recently decided she would refuse to help them in the future and plans to spend her profits on herself and her daughters.

Nyla's account of her life surrounding her work at Mererani is very distinct although she brings up an important theme that is central to women's work at Mererani. The epigraph opening this chapter reveals Nyla's outlook on her precarious economic and social situation and echoes other women's narratives about their work at Mererani. On one hand, Nyla perceives work at Mererani to be the only opportunity to earn money to support her family, while on the other hand she acknowledges that she is victim to disparaging discourse labeling her as a prostitute. While Nyla appears to rise above this reproachful discourse by stating she does not care what people say about her, she remains trapped in a contradiction, as she has suffered the grave consequences of social ostracism. In Nyla's case, her independence and initiative have cost her the relationships with her husband, mother, and children.

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<sup>68</sup> Emusoi Center is located in Arusha and provides funding and support for pastoralist girls to attend secondary school. It also provides remedial education for girls to pass their entrance exams to secondary school and provide shelter and support for girls who are in trouble (<http://www.emusoicentre.co.tz/>).

Nyla's narrative points to important links among production, power, and sexuality, which to some extent affect all Maasai women in Simanjiro who engage in livelihood strategies outside their homes. Thus, Nyla's situation reveals larger issues and raises the following questions: How have Maasai women been positioned within production systems and household economies and how do their activities with new livelihood strategies shape and challenge these roles? How are women's engagements in livelihood strategies constrained by societal norms and power relations that place men in control of women and resources? Furthermore, how does women's work at Mererani defy these power structures and how are women subjected to societal anxieties around production, power, and sexuality?

In this chapter, I address these questions by taking a comprehensive look at women's engagements with livelihood diversification strategies. I argue that despite women's attempts at economic gain and social empowerment, they are still socially relegated to the domestic sphere. In doing this, I discuss the ways in which women's place within Maasai society is rooted in historical context. Focusing on the pre-colonial, colonial, and post-independence periods, I show how women's roles have been shaped (and imposed) by larger social, economic, and political structures. I then incorporate a discussion of these legacies into an examination of women's increasing involvement with small, local, self-owned businesses. Here, I propose that while women appear to be moving beyond the structures that confine them, they are only really repositioning themselves within the acceptable limits of these structures that have been and continue to be determined and controlled by men.

In the second part of this chapter, I turn to women's work at Mererani. I show how this type of work far surpasses the acceptable limits of women's activities outside the home, and I argue that women's roles are not only defined in relation to men, but also are defined by society. In other words, both women and men are involved in perpetuating societal norms for the way women *ought* to be. I also examine how as women who go to Mererani defy these norms, they risk becoming social outcasts or suffering from even graver consequences. In spite of these risks, I address possible reasons why women continue to go to Mererani, and thus argue that women are actively attempting to overcome the structures that confine them.

My analysis draws from the theoretical framework of gendered subjectivities. This approach allows me to consider how women's work outside the home challenges and contests but in other ways reinforces long-standing gendered subject positions women are assigned to and embody. By exploring accusations toward women of sexual impropriety, I show how women's increasing involvement in economic production is made sense of among both Maasai women and men. This illustrates the gendered dimensions and dilemmas of livelihood diversification. As Maasai women who work at Mererani are marginalized and excluded, I show how economic and sexual activities are linked in a way that reinforces forms of gendered power. Through this analysis, I argue that rapid social and economic transformations are critical vantage points for understanding how gendered identities are defined, negotiated, and reproduced among contemporary societies. The increasing marginalization of Maasai women who work at Mererani reveals the ways in which power relations are continually tied to means of production, even as the productive resources themselves may change.



## **Toward a Framework of Gendered Subjectivities**

The theoretical approach to subject formation provides a basis for the framework I am using in this chapter. Michel Foucault's (1982) definition of the subject illustrates how people are made subjects and are consciously recreating themselves as subjects. Foucault states, "There are two meanings of the word 'subject': subject to someone else's control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience and self-knowledge" (1982: 781). Here, Foucault reminds us that external and internal forces are inherently involved in processes of subject formation.

Anthropologist Sherry Ortner (2005) reinforces Foucault's claims by focusing on how subjects are formed through the interplay between an individual or a collective conscious (or subconscious) and broader institutions. She usefully expands Foucault's analysis of the subject by providing a number of mechanisms for understanding this process.<sup>69</sup> She poses, "By subjectivity I will mean the ensemble of modes of perception, affect, thought, desire, fear, and so forth that animate acting subjects. But I will always mean as well the cultural and social formations that shape, organize, and provoke those modes of affect, thought and so on" (Ortner 2005: 31).

Ortner challenges us to consider myriad ways people are assigned to and take on different positions, as well as the basis for people's embodiment of the sociopolitical hierarchies embedded within colonial histories, the state, contemporary development and market interventions, families, and communities. In other words, Ortner proposes that an understanding of how subjects are formed can reveal how individuals and groups internalize, reproduce, and contest the power differentials that lie within particular

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<sup>69</sup> Ortner draws largely from the work of Clifford Geertz (1973) to examine subjectivity.

cultural and historical patterns. Here, Ortner echoes Foucault by suggesting that subjects are immersed in power as well as being agents in power. According to Foucault, power “doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no, but . . . it traverses and produces things . . . . It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body” (Foucault 1980: 119). Both Ortner and Foucault bring to focus how power is imposed upon as well as inhabited by subjects. Accordingly, power produces subjects even as subjects perceive themselves to be navigating around power.

The power structures that facilitate the making of subjects may be based on a number of social, economic, and political factors. But perhaps the most important node through which subjects are crafted, for the purposes of this chapter, is that of gender. Judith Butler (1990, 1993) examines how gender identities are neither exclusive nor biologically assigned. She contends, “It becomes impossible to separate out ‘gender’ from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained” (Butler 2003: 31). Butler encourages us to consider how gender is continually produced through the performances of historically and socially situated actors.

Connecting Butler’s approach to gender to subjectivities, anthropologist Henrietta Moore states (1994: 65):

The historical contextualization of discourses means that not all subject positions are equal, some positions carry much more social reward than others and some are negatively sanctioned. The role of dominant or hegemonic discourses on gender and gender identity is pivotal here. While non-dominant discourses certainly provide subject positions and modes of subjectivity which might be individually satisfying and which might challenge or resist dominant modes, those individuals who do challenge or resist the dominant discourses on gender and gender identity frequently find

that this is at the expense of such things as social power, social approval and even material benefits.

Here Moore illustrates the links between gender, economics, and subjectivities. Just as subjectivities are historically and socially constructed, so too is gender. Thus gendered subjectivities, as Moore emphasizes, reveal how power relations and inequities are gendered, as well as socially and culturally defined and embedded. Many theorists, including Butler and Moore, agree that gendered subjectivities are important for recognizing how gender reflects larger structural and material relations and inequalities (Butler 1999, Cornwall 2005, di Leonardo 1991, Moore 1994, Ortner and Whitehead 1981).<sup>70</sup> This was recently echoed in anthropologist Carla Jones's discussion of labor and consumption among Indonesian women. Drawing attention to the cultural and historical construction of gender, Jones (2010: 271) reminds us that "the objectification of subjectivity always takes specific forms." Otherwise stated, Jones invites us to consider gendered subjectivities as they characterize *contextualized* power, or particular forms of power in a particular time and place. Thus, gendered subjectivities reflect ever-evolving manifestations of power relations, and have come to serve as a decisive basis for inclusion and exclusion.

Drawing from Foucault and Ortner, I aim to show in this chapter the mechanisms through which subjectivities are crafted and perpetuated within Maasai society as well as how they reflect and reproduce power structures. Following Butler, Moore, and Jones, I discuss subjectivities in the context of gender and explore how gendered subjectivities are

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<sup>70</sup> While theorists of the 1980s brought socio-cultural constructions of gender to the forefront, earlier anthropologists provided the foundation for this mode of thought. See Lévi-Strauss (1969) and Parsons (1937) for early discussions of structural influences on socio-cultural formations.

critical to shaping social and economic relations within households and society. Thus, I add to the theoretical discussions of subject formation in general and gendered subjectivities in particular, by providing a unique, ethnographically situated example of how these patterns play out in people's lives in the context of new livelihoods and women's attempts at entrepreneurship.

### ***Feminine Subjectivities and the Domestic Sphere***

An issue central to gendered subjectivities is the specific creation of feminine subjects. In other words, what makes a woman a woman? Furthermore, how have constructions of femininity both resulted in and justified women's inferior status to men? Early scholars attempting to grapple with situations of male dominance over women searched for universal explanations for the oppression of women. It was suggested that women and men occupy dichotomous, value-laden positions relative to each another (MacCormack and Strathern 1980, Ortner 1972, 1974, Rosaldo 1974). Women's associations with the supposedly disempowered domains of nature and the domestic sphere positioned them lower in status relative to men, who were associated with the esteemed and authoritative realms of culture and the public sphere (ibid.). These dichotomies have been critiqued for denying the presence of women's agency and portraying heteronormative views of women and men (Goddard 2000.).

In response to these critiques I emphasize Maasai women's desires and initiatives in engaging in new businesses outside the home. I also show how these activities are differentially participated in and responded to among women themselves, thereby emphasizing the heterogeneity that exists in practice and discourse among women.

However, I also find some aspects of the association between women and the domestic sphere and men and the public sphere useful to my analysis. As Maasai women and men have been historically relegated to these realms, looking to this divide creates a mechanism through which to understand how economic production is essentially gendered.

## **Deconstructing Maasai Femininities**

### ***Women in the Pre-Colony***

Although data from pre-capitalist, pre-colonial times is primarily based on second hand sources and explorers' accounts, the argument put forth by Dorothy Hodgson (2001) suggests that women's and men's roles within Maasai society during this time period generally have been described as separate, yet complementary. She writes (2001: 35-36),

Maasai ethnic and gender identities and relations in this period were thus premised on interaction and complementarity—between Maasai pastoralists and their cultivating neighbors, between Maasai men and women, and across generations . . . . Gender relationships of power varied within and between groups, according to age, marital status, kinship relationship, and other social differences and individual circumstances. Moreover, there was no clear, gendered distinction between the “domestic” and “public/political” domains, or among social, economic, and political activities.

Hodgson proposes that distinctions in various domains were not based on gender, but rather were defined by other social differences such as age, marital status, and kinship relations. Indeed these factors were significant as women's and men's roles revolved around their respective positions within the household and community. But Hodgson argues that women's and men's roles were more complementary than unequal in social,

economic, and political spheres, as evidenced by women's integration into the age-set system and their important responsibilities to production.

While women do not belong to age-sets per se, women played (and continue to play) a critical part in the customs and ceremonies of male age-sets, as well as had jurisdiction over their own parallel rituals (Kipuri 1989: 95, Spencer 1993). Also, women did not hold positions of traditional leadership, such as *ilaigwenak*,<sup>71</sup> but they commanded significant influence over important social decisions. This was evidenced through their involvement in marriage negotiations for their children, their participation in judicial proceedings, and their responsibility for mediating conflict among younger women and children (Hodgson 2001).

In addition, women were responsible for important aspects of livestock management and production, by taking care of calves, small stock, and sick animals, and through their exclusive privileges to livestock products by controlling the distribution and trade of milk and maintaining the rights to process, use, or trade animal skins (Hodgson 2001: 29, Kipuri 1989, Talle 1988). During this period (and still today) women did not own livestock per se, but through their control over specific livestock products, women shared in certain rights to both cattle and small stock. For example, the cows a man transferred to a new wife were to be managed and kept by her as "house-property" for sustaining the household and for her son's inheritance (Hodgson 2001: 29). A woman also had rights to give a calf to a new wife of her husband, and women often gifted small stock to one another (ibid.). Finally, women and men discussed and agreed upon whether an animal should be slaughtered, traded, or given away (ibid.).

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<sup>71</sup> *Ilaigwenak* (*olaigwenani* sing.) are elected leaders of each age-set. They are well respected and recognized as spokesmen for their age-set (Goldman 2006).

Hodgson further explains how Maasai women during pre-colonial times were vital to the sustainability of livestock production systems due to their role as traders. In some areas, dependent on their proximity to other ethnic groups or markets, women traded milk and skins for grain and other foodstuffs that provided necessary supplements to their family's diets, especially during the dry season when cows were not producing as much milk (Hodgson 2001: 30).

While women and men maintained particular roles relative to productive, familial, and community responsibilities, these roles were not assumed to be hierarchically organized in terms of value or significance. Instead, both women and men made important contributions to household- and community-level decision making and production. Therefore, according to Hodgson, female-male relations in general and women's positions in particular, were based on "the autonomy and mutual respect of women and men, the pride of women in their identity as pastoralists and their deep satisfaction with their lives and relationships" (1999: 50).

### ***Shifting Roles and the Colonial Project***

Women's and men's roles within Maasai society took a sharp turn with the advent of colonialism and independent state formation as the emphasis was placed on gender as a basis for differentiation. Anthropologist Naomi Kipuri argues, "The subjugation of women in such societies is not inherent in the age-set ideology. Rather, it is fundamentally bound-up with the circumstances within which these societies have found themselves, especially since their integration within pre-capitalist, colonial and post colonial states" (1989: 121–122).

During the British colonial period, projects aimed at land development and programs focused on taxation, monetization, and commoditization reshaped Maasai gender relations (Hodgson 2001: 49). To help implement and carry out these initiatives, colonial administrators did not choose Maasai women but rather elder Maasai men for positions of political and economic authority. These men were chosen to channel information between colonial offices and Maasai communities, collect taxes, and serve in all public matters (ibid.).

Maasai women became less valued and not as visible as Maasai men were appointed to economic and political positions of authority. Women's exclusions from prominent, public positions during colonial rule relegated them to the more private, domestic sphere associated with the home and childcare. These distinct divisions between the public and private arenas of life were based on gendered ideologies that prevailed in Britain at the time (Hodgson 2001: 67). Additionally, the gendered nature of the colonial project meant that most of the administrators were British men. Maasai social customs for respect limited younger, married women's dealings with these men (ibid.: 66). Although older women with grown children had more freedom to interact with colonial administrators, their voices were markedly less influential than men's (ibid.).

### ***Gender in the Post-Colonial Era***

Post-colonial development projects implemented in Tanzania during Julius Nyerere's socialist rule (1962–1985) focused on market integration and converting Maasai livestock



herders to commercial beef producers.<sup>72</sup> While these programs were relatively unsuccessful, they further denigrated Maasai women's positions in relation to men within the emerging Tanzanian state (Hodgson 2001: 218–219). Androcentric assumptions that pastoralists were *men* undermined women's roles in livestock production. Project language, training, and veterinary services, for example, targeted men and ignored women's roles in taking care of sick animals and smallstock, their jurisdiction over milking and the distribution of milk products, and their rights to certain livestock (ibid.). In addition, as men began to market livestock and control the major source of cash, women lost further access to livestock-related decisions and livestock products (Talle 1988: 13). Thus, money became strictly controlled by men and was only rationed to women in small quantities (ibid.)

Subsequent capitalist influences in Tanzania intensified disparities among class and ethnicity while also reinforcing and entrenching gender inequalities. Structural adjustment programs and development initiatives focused on the “productive” sectors of Tanzania, meaning agricultural development was encouraged and supported, and Maasai livestock herders, due to their primarily subsistence-level livelihoods, were viewed as peripheral to a capitalist economy.

Regardless of the subordinate status of both Maasai women and men in the national economy during these periods, Hodgson suggests that the stark gender differentiations constructed by colonial and post-colonial influences created a scenario where Maasai men

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<sup>72</sup> The largest and most well known of these development projects was a series of USAID-initiated projects referred to collectively as the Maasai Livestock Development and Range Management Project (Hodgson 2001: 208). Hodgson cites that over a ten-year period (1969–1979), 23 million dollars was invested “to assist the Government of Tanzania to achieve its objective of self-sufficiency and an exportable surplus to earn foreign exchange in the livestock sector” (Hodgson 2001 citing Utah State University Team 1976: 6). The project was explicitly designed for livestock development to the benefit the state, rather than the people (Hodgson 2001: 208).

internalized gender inequalities. “The autonomy and interdependence enjoyed by men and women in the late 1800s were replaced by unequal relationships of economic dependence and political control in which men could begin to think about women as property and possessions” (Hodgson 2001: 92). Here gender roles and relations were shaped through the dual interactions between externally imposed subjectivities and Maasai men’s internalization of these subjectivities. Thus, the conflation of colonial and post-colonial influences with Maasai patriarchal biases contributed significantly to the marginalization of Maasai women. In this scenario, Hodgson (2001: 195) argues, “If Maasai men are second-class citizens, Maasai women are third-class citizens (if they are citizens at all).”

Coming on the heels of gendered colonial and post-colonial projects, academic scholarship played an important role in perpetuating the perception that a patriarchal ideology is inherent to pastoralism (Hodgson 2000: 1, see Galaty 1979, Llewelyn-Davies 1979, 1981, Spencer 1965, 1988). In these terms, women were presumed to have always had insignificant roles in livestock production and peripheral positions in public spheres of influence and interaction.<sup>73</sup> Thus, pastoral women’s status was described throughout academic literature as economically, politically, socially, and culturally inferior to men.<sup>74</sup>

Today, in many ways, Maasai women are inferior to men. Men maintain the primary control over production, and a woman’s economic security rests in her sons. A woman is expected to move from her husband’s boma into her son’s boma upon her son’s

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<sup>73</sup> These scholars did note that women have always conducted much of the livestock-related labor essential to Maasai production systems.

<sup>74</sup> It is important to note here that male researchers conducted many of the early studies among Maasai. These men had a difficult time gaining access to Maasai women due to the societal patterns explained above, where Maasai women are limited in their interactions with older men. It is also possible that the perception among researchers that pastoralism was inherently patriarchal was due to their lack of discussions with Maasai women. Melissa Llewelyn Davies is an exception; however, her work has been criticized for perpetuating the same perception (Hodgson 2000).

independence. Here she relies on her son to take care of her as she ages. Women also have significantly less influence and visibility in the economic and public spheres (Hodgson 1999c, 2000, 2001a, 2001b, Kipuri 1989, Talle 1988). However, an understanding of the historical context of these patterns reveals that gender roles are neither static nor innate, and as Hodgson suggests, they are not so deeply tied to a traditional pastoral ideology. Thus, in the next section of this chapter, I examine how Maasai women themselves are attempting to shape and forge new roles within household economics and production systems and the implications of this process.

### **Maasai Women's Economic Dexterity**

On a particularly hot day, I came across a group of six women and several children sitting under a tree near a boma. Recognizing one of the women, my research assistants and I stopped to chat for a bit. After exchanging greetings, I asked the women what they were doing gathered under the tree. One of the women named Mary responded:

We are taking a short rest from the heat of the day, but you are lucky to have found us here now. Women—all of us—have activities. In the past, we would milk the cows in the morning and then sit until evening and milk again. Now, it is different from the past; all of us have many activities. For example, today in the morning we went to the forest to cut tress for fencing the boma, we are taking a short rest right now, but this afternoon we are going to the grinding machine to grind our maize. All of us have our own businesses as well.

Mary indicates how Maasai women's activities have changed over time and addresses outsiders' perceptions of Maasai women. She continues, "A lot of people think women don't have anything going on because we have so many things to do for the house.

Most think men are the only ones who do things to get money.” Because Maasai women have traded and sold milk for decades, their contribution to household economies has usually been discussed solely in terms of their control over milk. This activity has been described as critical for contributing agricultural food products to the household, as well as a potential source of cash for household needs (Brockington 2001, Grandin 1988, Little 1987).<sup>75</sup> In fact, some scholars even suggest that involvement with trade gives pastoral women the opportunity to manage their own money in an economic environment that is typically controlled by men (Buhl and Homewood 2000, Little 1987). Women may also make important contributions to household economies by selling items such as produce, charcoal, firewood, tobacco, and alcohol (Little et al. 2001). Nonetheless, women are rarely acknowledged for the important role they play in livelihood diversification and rigorous studies of such are relatively lacking. The assumption that women provide insignificant income to the household serves as the foundation for the idea that women have limited impact on household economies.

In Simanjiro, however, as Mary describes above, women are increasingly involved with their own, local, small businesses and are making more noticeable contributions to the household because of these business ventures.<sup>76</sup> Well over half of the women interviewed (63%; n = 43) engage in some type of economic venture to bring cash into the household. While six of these women conduct business at Mererani, the majority are involved with small businesses locally—within their home village or in an adjacent village. Women who

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<sup>75</sup> For studies of women’s involvement selling milk among other pastoral groups see Buhl and Homewood 2000 (Fulani), Fratkin and Smith 1995 (Rendille), Nduma et al. 2001 (Rendille), and Smith 1998 (Rendille and Ariaal). Peter Little (1992) also discusses the importance of milk sales among the Il Chamus in Kenya.

<sup>76</sup> Women’s livelihood diversification strategies are much less profitable than men’s.

are involved with these types of businesses generally purchase items in bulk in Arusha, such as salt, sugar, and tea leaves and sell them for a profit at the local markets<sup>77</sup> (see Table 4.1). Milk products from a household's livestock, are sold at the markets as well.<sup>78</sup> Some women's business ventures occur outside the physical marketplace, and they cut grass to sell to people as thatch for house roofs, while others raise chickens and sell the eggs and the hens to friends and neighbors (see Table 4.2). Beadwork falls within this category as well, as friends and neighbors purchase beaded jewelry and clothes for weddings, and on rare occasions a woman opportunistically sells beadwork to tourists, missionaries, researchers, or NGO workers whom they meet in the area.<sup>79</sup> Most women sell multiple items. For example, one woman sells milk, eggs and hens, and another woman sells salt, sugar, and tea leaves.

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<sup>77</sup> Larger markets were held once a week in two of the villages of this study. A smaller market was held in one village once a week.

<sup>78</sup> Women frequently sell chai at the markets.

<sup>79</sup> One woman described herself as "lucky" for her relationship with a "wealthy *mzungu*" (white person) who gave her money to make jewelry that he, an NGO worker, sold in Dar es Salaam. She no longer has this opportunity and is now involved with selling other items at the local market.

**Table 4.1:** Women's local market sales in order of descending prevalence

<b>Women's Market Sales</b>
Milk
Snuff/Tobacco
Tea leaves
Sugar
Vegetables (tomatoes/potatoes)
Soda
Soap
Fried dough (like a doughnut)
Kerosene
Salt
Livestock drugs
Beer (bottles from a purchased case)
Cooking oil

**Table 4.2:** Women's local non-market sales in order of descending prevalence

<b>Women's Non-Market Sales</b>
Beadwork
Grass for roofing
Eggs/Chickens

Some of the products women sell including milk, beadwork, eggs, hens, and grass have traditionally lied within a woman's authority and are therefore sold without asking a husband's permission. Other activities require a capital investment and involvement at nearby markets, and therefore women who want to pursue this type of business have to first ask permission from their husbands. Most of the women who engage in these types of business activities, describe their husbands as supportive of their entrepreneurial pursuits. For example, in the majority of cases, husbands allowed their wives to start their own

businesses and provided women with a certain amount of cash or a goat to sell for start-up capital. In two instances, women received permission from their husbands but no capital. These women were able to obtain money from their brothers to purchase the initial goods required to start their businesses.

Only ten of the total women interviewed (23%; n = 43) do not pursue any type of business venture. For these women, it appears that age and familial social position partially factored into this decision. Two of these women are very young, new wives and two are elderly women. While this data may imply that new wives and elderly women do not have the means or the stamina for starting their own business, this is not consistent across households, as several other new wives and elderly women had their own businesses. Thus, the reason for these women not participating in their own businesses may lie within family decisions or circumstances. However, it is unclear what role these women's husbands may or may not have played in their lack of business pursuits. Two other women claim they are too busy helping with cultivation to concern themselves with their own businesses. This does not necessarily indicate that these households are more economically secure because of profits from cultivation. Rather, these households are actually poorer and therefore, rely on everyone in the household's labor to sustain their agricultural endeavors.

The only other remarkable connection between wealth and women's business pursuits is in terms of the other four women who do not have their own business. These women are Kato's wives. As wives of an extremely successful tanzanite trader (who is discussed in chapter 3), they express their fortunate position at having enough financial

security so they do not need to work; however, one of them, named Nyamonyok, expresses her frustration with this situation:

We are lucky to have such a husband. We are really happy because our husband is so successful. We appreciate Kato is able to send our kids to school. Only there is one thing we are thinking, but we don't have the power of voice to tell him—we will just have to mention it to our husband in a polite way. We need our own business to help each other, to help our families, to help our husband. We would like to contribute. We don't have problems but he has many wives and a lot of children, and he has a lot of responsibility to make sure we are all taken care of. Maybe he can open a store for one and buy a grinding machine for another. It might help us to help him. Even now, we need to ask him for money if we run out of salt. He makes sure we have clothes and things we need, but if we have our own businesses we can do that ourselves. But we don't have the authority to make that decision, and so we will mention it politely and if he says no then we have to agree.

Even though Nyamonyok and her co-wives do not have dire economic needs, Nyamonyok justifies their agency by suggesting the benefits they can gain from having their own income. It appears that involvement with their own small businesses would contribute to their self-esteem by giving them a greater feeling of autonomy and control over their lives. In essence, Nyamonyok's sentiments speak to the relative autonomy that a small business can grant Maasai women. Despite their privileged economic position, Kato's wife's narrative indicates that they may be the least empowered. Thus, the question arises if agency evolves in the context of adversity.

Notably, about a week after I interviewed Kato's wives, Kato called me on the phone to ask if I would meet with the women's group two of his wives were members of. He stated



that they were interested in soliciting ideas for how they may reach external markets to sell their group's beadwork products. While this is not exactly the type of business venture Kato's wives suggested when we spoke, I suspect our dialogue that day invigorated their interest in having their own source of income and afforded them confidence to approach Kato.<sup>80</sup> Although Kato was still exerting his authority over his wives by being the one to contact me as well as attending the meeting I had with the women a week later, this occasion marked the first step in Kato's wives' wielding their agency and facilitating their own economic empowerment.

The examples above suggest that Maasai women are actively involved in pushing the boundaries of feminine subjectivities that tie them to the domestic sphere and alienate them from economic resources. Mary expresses how women's activities have changed over the years and many women are currently involved with their own businesses outside their household duties. This, coupled with the actual number of women interviewed who are currently involved with local business pursuits, demonstrates how women are increasingly engaging with entrepreneurial endeavors that take them outside the domestic sphere and make them visible actors within the public sector. Mary also indicates that women are making important economic contributions to the household. Kato's wives provide an interesting parallel given they are so wealthy. While their families do not necessarily need additional economic support, Kato's wives reveal how business ventures may contribute to women's empowerment by increasing individual self-worth, as women manage their own monetary resources, have decision-making power over certain aspects of household

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<sup>80</sup> This speaks to the impact an ethnographer can have on individuals and groups of people whom which she or he is studying (Marcus and Fischer 1986)

production, and contribute to household economies. These cases suggest that Maasai women are actively participating in the reconfiguration of gendered subjectivities.

While these stories may evoke an optimistic outlook that gendered subjectivities are shifting and women are becoming empowering through their involvement with local businesses and the contributions they make to household economies, Kato's wives illustrate how even within this hopeful atmosphere, there lies a strong undercurrent of male power. When Nyamonyok expressed to me her and her co-wives' desires to have their own businesses, she provided examples of running a grinding mill or managing a shop. However, upon their plea to Kato to engage in these types of income-generating activities, Kato redirected their appeal by suggesting they find a market for the traditional crafts they produce with their local women's group. This example reveals the boundaries that continue to exist between traditional activities for women, in this case selling beadwork, and women's recent business endeavors involving the sale of commodities in local towns and markets. It also suggests that Kato is hesitant to allow his wives to engage in businesses that locate them in the public sphere and are characteristically controlled by men.

In addition, the power Kato exerts by contacting me himself to coordinate the meeting with the women's group, as well as his presence at the meeting, exposes the ultimate control men have over their wives and the power men possess over women's economic activities. It is apparent through the example of Nyamonyok and her co-wives that even as Maasai women appear to stretch the limits of gendered subjectivities, they are still confined by Maasai men's authority. The following story featuring Koko Sarah<sup>81</sup> further

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<sup>81</sup> *Koko* is a Maasai word used to address an older woman.

illustrates this point, however, differs from the narratives above in that it reveals how women also internalize gendered subjectivities.

### ***Koko Sarah's Business Ventures***

Koko Sarah is an older woman who sells soda at two of the local markets. Koko Sarah decided she wanted to start her own business just a year prior to us meeting, because she watched other women doing business and thought she should give it a try. She figured this could be a way for her to make her own money, as well as contribute to the household. Koko Sarah asked her husband to give her 10,000 TZS to purchase one crate of soda (20 bottles). He agreed, and she built her business to where she can now afford to buy three crates each time she visits a market.

Koko Sarah describes the exchanges that first occurred between Maasai women who engaged in local, market-based businesses and those who were not involved with their own businesses. She states,

Once you went back home [from working at a market], those who talked badly about you came to your house and asked for salt or sugar. 'Ok,' you said, 'here, you just take this.' After she came two or more times, she started asking you what you were doing and you said, 'Oh, you just come, I'll show you.' Others came to ask for salt and started to feel shame for asking you every day for salt. No matter what you were doing, they called it prostitution, but they wanted to learn from you.

Koko Sarah goes on to describe how men are now supportive of women's small businesses. She claims, "Women earn cash, and men realize that if their wives are contributing cash to the household, they may not have to sell cows to support the family."

She also addresses the independence and autonomy women gain from having their own source of income. She states,

Women can buy food and school uniforms, and men can contribute for livestock medicine. Now women want to be self-reliant. In the beginning everything, even salt, belonged to men. And sometimes your husband didn't give you anything, even after selling cows. Then he came and asked you for food and he beat you if you didn't have anything. So now we are more confident and can control things.

Toward the end of my discussion with Koko Sarah, I asked her if she or her husband was controlling the money she made from selling sodas. She exclaimed, "I am! My husband will even borrow money from me!"

Koko Sarah's story is especially revealing on several accounts. She exposes the evolving perceptions held by women not involved with local business toward women who are pursuing these opportunities. Koko Sarah addresses the initial assumption that women working outside the home are engaging in prostitution. Thus, this discourse among women *about* women brings to focus how feminine subjectivities may be internalized and how this process shapes women's relations with one another. Moreover, it must be emphasized that regardless of the reasons why women initially respond negatively to their friends' and neighbors' business ventures, they eventually followed suit, as evidenced by Koko Sarah's story as well as the sheer numbers of women who engage in small businesses. It is clear that women have expanded their economic opportunities outside the home and, over time, perceptions of these women have shifted to the extent that they are no longer viewed as prostitutes. Instead, as women gain more confidence, establish a foothold in household

economics, and become more self-reliant, they appear to move beyond the confines of long-held and adhered to subjectivities by both women and men.

Further underscoring this process is the way women now discuss those who do *not* engage in some type of business. One woman scrutinized one of her co-wives: “She doesn’t work. She has a lot of problems. She just gets firewood and cooks porridge. She doesn’t think about life.” The disdain toward women who do not “work” suggests that these women are perceived to be lazy and apathetic or disabled by some sort of emotional or mental instability. In essence, women seem to adhere to the societal norm now that women *should* work outside the home.

In some ways, women’s participation in market-based businesses appears to be challenging long-held notions that a woman’s place is at home. Indeed, these practices are becoming much more pervasive and accepted (and expected) throughout Maasai society and thus signifies that feminine subjectivities are being challenged and altered. A closer look at these activities, however, reveals a less optimistic view. Instead, women’s involvement in businesses outside the home exposes the continued entrenchment of colonial and post-colonial processes that attach women to the domestic sphere. In essence, Maasai women are still restricted to the activities that fall under the surveillance of men and society in general. In this case, feminine subjectivities are challenged through women’s work outside the home, but they are also restricted.

Koko Sarah describes how men are generally supportive of their wives’ involvement in their own businesses and consequently are grateful for the benefits they gain from wives who contribute monetarily to the household. However, Koko Sarah explains how she first had to ask her husband for permission to start her own business and then relied on him to

supply her with capital for her initial investments. This echoes the examples provided in the previous section that describe how women's business pursuits are only possible after their husbands have given them permission to engage in such activities, giving men the final say whether or not their wives conduct their own business ventures. Also, men control the capital that is necessary for a woman to invest in the start-up costs of her business. Thus, Koko Sarah's story further demonstrates how men continue to maintain the ultimate power over women in terms of household economics.

The context in which women's businesses occur further reveals men's authority as well as society's keeping a close eye on the women. All of women's business undertakings described thus far take place close to their homes in local markets, meaning that women's business involvement can be closely surveilled by men, as well as other women. In this way, women's market activities are transparent, as others can see they are not engaging in secretive, amoral behavior such as prostitution. Even as women seem to make greater inroads to the productive realm by pursuing income-generating activities of their own and making greater economic contributions to the household, they continue to be constrained through men's authority, as well as the location and type of activities they may pursue. Furthermore, Koko Sarah's explanation that women can buy food and pay for schooling and men can use their money for livestock medicine underscores the role of women in domestic responsibilities of feeding and caring for the children, and the role of men in livestock production.

Even so, women's work in small, local businesses appears to be a source of income and empowerment as women make greater contributions to household economics and exert control over their own monetary resources. While I argue that this process is having

some positive effects on Maasai women in Simanjiro, I also view men's involvement in and control over women's work a symbol of the authority men continue to possess over women. Furthermore, the fact that women's activities take place close to home and thus are able to be observed by other community members shows how there are acceptable societal boundaries to women's activities. In these ways, the durability of gendered subjectivities is brought to focus as women's work is negotiated within a limited context. In the next section of this chapter, I turn to a different group of women who actually cross the boundaries of acceptable practice through their involvement with small businesses at Mererani. This analysis provides a poignant example of how gendered subjectivities further affect Maasai women's lives in Simanjiro.

### **Pushing the Limits of Maasai Femininities: Women's Work at Mererani**

Very few women leave their villages to pursue business opportunities at Mererani. The six women I interviewed who had gone to Mererani had analogous yet distinctive stories. Each woman described herself in a difficult household economic situation where she felt her only option was to go to a place where she *knew* she could make money. Three of the women had been widowed at a relatively young age and had young children; therefore, their sons were not yet able to take care of the family. Two of the women had elderly husbands (one of whom died soon after she started going to Mererani). Both of these women's husbands agreed to let them go to Mererani, as they viewed their wives' activities as having potential benefits to the household since neither wife had a son old enough to support the household, and the husbands' productive role in their households had diminished because of their declining health and increasing age. Nyla, whose story opened

this chapter, initially went to Mererani with her husband, but he left her after she started earning money. All of the women I interviewed who work at Mererani sell milk, beadwork, food and/or *chai*.<sup>82</sup> A couple of the women dabble in the tanzanite trade, but as Nyla explained, it is not profitable for women because it is a primarily male-dominated business.

One evening I ate dinner in a restaurant with Nyla, Ester, and Nyla's friend Neema. Nyla thought I would enjoy meeting Neema, a young Maasai woman working at Mererani. Neema first went to Mererani seven years ago to find money for her four children. She was married as the second wife to a much older man of the Seuri age-set.<sup>83</sup> Regardless of the age difference between her and her husband, she told me how they decided together that she would go to Mererani. Neema sold beadwork to earn some money to take with her, and she left her children under her mother's care.

Neema works with four other women selling beadwork and milk. She initially worked alone, but she became friends with these women at Mererani, and consequently, they decided to form a group. Unlike the mobs men work with at Mererani, women in groups continue to sell items individually. The group primarily serves as source of companionship and security in a male-dominated mining town. While some of the women in the group rent a house together and share the cost, Neema lives with her brother in a house where she rents a room for 5,000 TZS per month. She describes her brother as a very

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<sup>82</sup> The Maasai "drink of choice" is a milk-based black tea served with sugar.

<sup>83</sup> While I listened to Neema talk about her life, I was taken by her youthful appearance. Because of my own cultural bias, I had a hard time imagining her seven years ago with four children; she did not appear to be older than twenty years old.



successful tanzanite trader who owns a car, a grinding machine, and many cows. She also has a Landis boyfriend who works as a tanzanite trader at Mererani.<sup>84</sup>

When Neema gains a profit from her business ventures, she sends it home to her mother for her children's care. In fact, two of her children are in primary school. Neema sends money home as often as she can, and she tries to return home once a month to see her family. She states she would rather not work at Mererani because, "Mererani is a very dangerous place. People are fighting and there are thieves, and also witchcraft, so I just think about tomorrow . . . can I wake up safely?" Neema would also prefer to stay home because her children, cows, and relatives are there. She continues, "I am always thinking if I can get enough money from selling beads, I can go back home to start my own business if I find a market there. But if not, I will stay."

When I asked Neema how people in her home village perceive her and her work at Mererani, she confidently stated, "Because I left while I had children and a very old husband, and because I come home often, the community does not think poorly of me." But she quickly diverted the focus of the conversation to Nyla and stated, "People say bad things about Nyla. Maybe because she is drinking a lot and I am not."<sup>85</sup> Much like Nyla's story that opened this chapter, Neema's story speaks to the dilemmas women face who work at Mererani. She feels she needs the income to support her children, and she does not view work in her village as secure or profitable enough to warrant pursuing business

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<sup>84</sup> It is common and assumed that Maasai men and women will have lovers in addition to their marriage partners. This will be discussed in more depth later in the chapter.

<sup>85</sup> Stories of Nyla's drinking were ubiquitous and often when we met, she would smell of alcohol. When I asked her about accusations that she drank a lot, she responded, "Sometimes people see you with one bottle of beer and they may report a lot of things. Myself, I know what I am doing."

opportunities there. Thus, she continues her work at Mererani despite her fears of violence and witchcraft and wanting to be closer to her family.

Perhaps the most notable feature of Neema's dialogue, however, is her discourse regarding how community members view her and her work at Mererani. While she provides a brief explanation of why people in her home village have no reason to disapprove of her, she quickly diverts the topic of the conversation to Nyla and juxtaposes Nyla's indulgent behavior with her own seemingly appropriate conduct. Neema's redirection of the focus of the question reveals a tinge of discomfort. While the dominant discourse in Simanjiro demoralizes women who work at Mererani (which will be explored in the next section), Neema's perspective on the social milieu surrounding her work at Mererani presents a stark contrast. Thus, in some ways, Neema appears to deny the reality of her social positioning in relation to her work at Mererani.

Pondering this conversation later, I was forced to reflect upon my own role in Neema's approach to my question of how community members view her because of her work at Mererani. Even if Neema was aware of any social ostracism she suffered due to her work at Mererani, why would she confide this to an outsider and openly admit that she may potentially occupy the margins of her community? Regardless of the reasoning behind Neema's response, it was strikingly clear throughout my stay in Simanjiro that women who worked at Mererani were disrespected and criticized by community members in their home villages.

### ***“My Friend You Bring Me Evil”: The Reproduction of Gendered Subjectivities***

In contrast to Neema’s perceptions that she maintains a favorable image within her community, Maasai women and men alike express blatant disregard toward women who work at Mererani. This provides a practical grounding for feminist theorist Chris Weedon’s (1987: 91) observation: “Forms of subjectivity which challenge the power of the dominant discourses at any particular time are carefully policed. Often they are marginalized as mad or criminal. . . .” In this way, Maasai women who pursue business opportunities at Mererani violate social norms to the extent that they lose friends and, in Nyla’s case, loved ones, and become the subject of reproachful discourse among both women and men within their home communities.

Maasai women’s descriptions of how they avoid other women from their communities who pursue business opportunities at Mererani invokes the Maasai proverb, “My friend, you bring me evil” (*Shore lai kishoriki enapiak*) that refers to an association with someone who has a negative influence or a bad reputation (Kipuri 1983: 187). One woman explained,

When a Mererani woman returns [to our village] we don’t want to be seen with her. Even if she is from the next-door boma and was a good friend in the past, we won’t even go greet her or talk with her. If we accidentally run into each other, we will just say hi and pass, but we don’t want to interact much because she won’t really teach you good things. So long as she didn’t teach herself, how can she teach you?

Another woman concurred, “I wouldn’t really want to be a woman’s friend after she returned from being away at Mererani for a while. Because if she left the boma and her kids and stayed at Mererani, I don’t think she will teach me good things. I think she will teach

me bad things and try to convince me to go there. I really wouldn't want to be her friend."

Women are blatantly vocal about not wanting to be seen or associate with women who return from Mererani. They feel they have nothing to gain from these women, and they express fears of tainting their own reputations. Furthermore, the notion that women at Mererani are not "teaching themselves," or *learning*, and the idea that if they are learning, they are learning "bad things" stands in contrast to the "education" men are perceived to gain at Mererani.

The reality that women do not want to associate with women from Mererani and feel they have nothing to learn from them shows the critical role women play in reproducing gendered subjectivities. Women's very clear ideas and expectations of appropriate or inappropriate behavior serve as a source of tension within female social relations. Thus, Maasai women in Simanjiro provide an example of gendered subject formation as it occurs within a so-called gender category. In this way, the heterogeneous characteristics of gendered subjectivities emerge and shape the daily interactions and societal relationships between women. But men also play a significant role in perpetuating these types of gendered subjectivities.

Men do not want their wives to associate with a woman who recently returned from Mererani. One man described what would happen if he saw his wife talking to a woman returning from working at Mererani: "It will be bad because I will beat her and maybe divorce her." Another man elaborated,

"Most of the women who went [to Mererani] are widows and when they get there they find boyfriends. Some might find one or some might find many. Because of that and because they are there for a long time, no woman can tolerate Mererani. People have bad habits, and there are lots of people from

different areas. Even me, I won't allow my wife to go around with someone who has come from Mererani. She might teach my wife bad things. She might say, "Oh, you are under control of your husband. I am free, just come with me." Not only are widows there, but some married women are there as well. First she will have conflicts with her husband and then go to her father's boma and say, 'My husband beats me.' While she is at her father's boma, she starts to communicate with someone from Mererani, and then she will go.

Men's contempt for women who go to Mererani seems to be riding on the fear that women from Mererani will convince their wives to accompany them. The man's narrative above describes how women from Mererani may tempt his wife with promises of freedom from his control. Women's work at Mererani, therefore, poses a threat to men's authority. As male identities are potentially undermined by women's activities, gendered subjectivities appear to be challenged. However, men's apprehensions are likely unfounded due to the analogous disapproval among women regarding the women who work at Mererani. As discussed, both women and men justify their disdain for women who work at Mererani on the basis that these women are not learning and therefore have nothing to teach those who do not go, or will teach them bad things. But perhaps at the root of social ostracism and condemnation, is the perspective that women who work at Mererani are morally bankrupt.

### ***"A Person with White Eyes": Maasai Prostitutes***

In Simanjiro, the assumption prevails that women who work at Mererani are working as prostitutes. One koko commented, "They [women] go there [to Mererani] and have other lions." A popular euphemism used by Maasai people in Simanjiro for talking about a

prostitute is “a person with white eyes” (*engibor oo njonyek*). It was explained to me as a “polite” way of talking about a prostitute and refers to a woman who is constantly looking around for who she will pursue next so all that shows are the whites of her eyes. During an interview with four young women, one of them stated amidst laughter, “They [women who go to Mererani] go to sell sugar, milk, medicine . . . and themselves!”

Women who work at Mererani go against societal roles that define them as wives, mothers, and daughters. This process takes place as mobility and money converge. Dorothy Hodgson and Sheryl McCurdy’s edited volume titled “*Wicked Women and the Reconfiguration of Gender in Africa*” addresses the links between mobility and money, and begins, “‘Vagabond,’ ‘prostitute,’ ‘wayward,’ ‘unruly,’ ‘indecent,’ and ‘immoral’ are just a few of the terms used to label and stigmatize women whose behavior in some way threatens expectations of ‘the way things ought to be’” (2001: 1). The following two excerpts from interviews with women in Simanjoro provide discursive representations of how women who work at Mererani are perceived to renounce societal expectations and how this is especially linked to mobility and money:

Some go [to Mererani] and sell soda and some go and sell tea, but they leave their children here. I think they are going for prostitution. If they are doing something good, you can see changes in the family but if not, you won’t see the changes. You don’t see any family-level changes with these women.

We think most of the women who have gone are working as prostitutes. They may be widowed or married or their husbands are really old. So if someone has an old husband and she is young, she says she wants to go find food for her children and instead of doing what she promised she involves herself in

prostitution. She might bring home a few things so her husband thinks she is working, but really she is a prostitute.

For Maasai, it is important to understand that the meaning of prostitution diverges from characteristic references to sex workers. Several women claimed that prostitution means just having boyfriends outside marriage. One koko remarked,

Here it is different. Maasai women didn't know they could make money by having sex with men until recently. We don't really think a prostitute is someone who gets paid to sleep with someone. They [boyfriends] may pay for your food, let you stay in their house, have sex with you . . . but they don't give you money for home. Women forget about their families. Really, other women who are non-Maasai are good at prostitution because they make money. Maasai women are not good at it—they should learn from other women about prostitution!

For Maasai women and men, it is common practice to have clandestine lovers outside marriage. Why then, are women who have Maasai boyfriends at Mererani considered prostitutes, whereas women who do not work at Mererani but have lovers outside their marriages are not labeled as such? What is so different about these two types of relationships?

Maasai social and cultural norms of sexual relations begin to answer these questions. While having lovers outside of marriage is done in secret, there are certain rules that prescribe the shape of these relations (Talle 1988). These rules provide guidelines for who is an appropriate lover, largely based on age and social positioning. For example, it is morally reprehensible for a woman to have a lover from her son's age-set, and an ilmuran should not have sexual relations with a married woman. Nyla's relationships at Mererani

directly violate these social norms. Nyla has two boyfriends at Mererani. One works as a tanzanite trader and one works for an NGO based in Mererani. She lives in Mererani with the boyfriend who trades tanzanite but confides to me that he is a member of the Landis age-set. According to Maasai norms for sexual relations, Nyla's relationship with someone of this age-set is not appropriate because Landis is the age-set of two of her sons. Nyla states, "It looks like we are married. He gets jealous and wants me to stay at Mererani—he tells me not to go home because he will give me a lot of money. So it's been a while since I visited my home. But he is just my boyfriend. I don't want to be under someone, but he helps me."

Nyla's testimonial indicates why women who work at Mererani are labeled prostitutes. She describes how her boyfriend manipulates her with promises of money if she does not go home. In fact, at the time of my interview with Nyla she claimed she had not been home to see her mother or her children in more than two years. This falls outside social norms of behavior for Maasai women. Maasai women are not to be controlled by their boyfriends. Rather, they typically move from their father's household into their husband's household, and in each household, these male figures hold authoritative sway over them as daughters and wives respectively (Talle 1988). Instead of being under their fathers' or husbands' influence, Maasai women at Mererani are under the control of their boyfriends. Indeed, Maasai definitions of prostitution are different from the characteristic reference to sex workers; however, the use of the term still carries economic significance and a social stigma among Maasai society. Moreover, labeling women who work at Mererani as prostitutes shows how they and their sexuality are attacked and undermined, as they are perceived to violate Maasai cultural and economic norms.



In addition, women who work at Mererani are involved in a realm that is unknown to most women. Thus imaginings of Mererani as a place riddled with sex, drugs, and crime serve as the foundation for many women's disapproving discourse regarding women's work at Mererani. As women who work at Mererani push the limits of women's acceptable behavior in a mysterious place and discourse erupts among women at home, gendered subjectivities are delineated and reinforced in this context

Women's and men's irreverent perceptions of and behaviors toward women who work at Mererani illustrate the anxieties associated with rapid economic and social change in villages in Simanjoro. The tensions associated with women leaving their home villages, their involvement in new economic spheres, and their exhibits of autonomy are expressed through the discourse of prostitution that represents the convergence of money, power, and sexuality. As women's involvement with production is connected to the commodification of intimacy, gendered subjectivities are both reinforced and crafted by the unease that surrounds new social and economic circumstances.

### **Ultimate Representations of Gendered Subjectivities**

As discussed above, gendered subjectivities have rhetorical and practical effects as seen through discursive characterizations and tenuous social interactions. But perhaps the most dramatic representation of gendered subjectivities is in the final story of Nyla. In July 2010, I received text messages from two of my research assistants telling me of the news of Nyla's

death a month earlier. While neither research assistant could confidently say what the cause of her death was, complications from HIV/AIDS were highly suspected.<sup>86</sup>

Maasai women in Simanjiro frequently voiced fears of HIV during our conversations about Mererani. Many of them believed that women's and men's sexual activities at Mererani had resulted in the proliferation of HIV among Maasai in Simanjiro. Some women discussed their attempts to guard their daughters from young men who returned from Mererani in an effort to protect them from HIV. Other women expressed caution regarding their own husband's return due to fears that he may have become infected with HIV while at Mererani. Notably, men never mentioned fears of HIV nor did they suggest HIV was a risk from working at Mererani.<sup>87</sup>

The very real effects of gendered subjectivities are illustrated by women's discourse regarding their fears of HIV as well as Nyla's death. The undercurrent of powerlessness expressed through women's anxieties about HIV highlights women's vulnerability. Nyla, a woman who rebels against and resists gendered subjectivities and the expected role she should fill among Maasai society, suffered the gravest of consequences with potentially damaging implications for her children (at least her daughters). Thus her death and its association with her activities at Mererani, represents the ultimate marginalization that can occur within society.

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<sup>86</sup> Mererani has one of the highest HIV rates in the country ([http://www.usaid.gov/stories/tanzania/pc\\_tz\\_miners.html](http://www.usaid.gov/stories/tanzania/pc_tz_miners.html)).

<sup>87</sup> On the contrary, J. Terrence McCabe's research in Simanjiro suggests that men do worry about their sons migrating because of the risk of HIV (McCabe, personal communication, May 15, 2011).

### ***So, Why Go to Mererani?: Women's Actions Despite Adversity***

Nyla's unfortunate death raises the question of why certain Maasai women pursue business opportunities at Mererani when they know they run the risk of becoming social outcasts or dying from HIV/AIDs. When I presented this question to women who worked at Mererani, the most common response I received was that they needed money to support their children. This response indicates two non-mutually exclusive processes at work. First, women who are going to Mererani are typically widowed or have very old husbands who are not able to provide economic resources to the household. This factor, coupled with Maasai women's responsibility of providing food for their children, has put women in positions as Nyla describes in the opening to this chapter, where they feel they have no other alternative but to leave to make money. In this way, women attempt to uphold their traditional responsibilities by feeding their children, yet in doing so appear to violate those very roles.

Second, the fact that women pursue such an alternative means for earning money when they could pursue a business venture closer to home that is more legitimized among Maasai society presents an interesting quandary. To help explain this dilemma, I return to Foucault's examination of the subject. Foucault (1982) suggests that power produces subjects even as subjects perceive themselves to be maneuvering around the powerful structures that constrain them. While Nyla expresses agency through her outright defiance of her husband and societal expectations, this occurs within a contemporary cultural, political, and economic context in which Maasai are equating different forms of capital from Mererani with success. This scenario resembles Mary Beth Mills' (1999) and Johan Lindquist's (2009) examinations of women migrants in Thailand and Indonesia,

respectively, who, through their migrations, seek to achieve particular traits associated with modernity and “becoming someone.” While young Maasai men who go to Mererani return with new forms of capital that articulate with contemporary notions of success, they are able to elevate their social status and their political influence. Perhaps women are attempting to do the same; however, their efforts are constrained by the gendered nature of capital and success within Maasai society. Thus, women’s activities take place within a milieu of marginalization and in turn, their activities at Mererani are demonized.

Why women pursue work at Mererani in a social and cultural context that minimizes their work as well as presents health threats, is likely a combination of the two scenarios outlined above. Despite the risks associated with work at Mererani, women who pursue business opportunities there feel they have no other options to provide for their children. As these women see Maasai men earning cash and becoming esteemed, Mererani represents to them a venue where their dreams of becoming economically self-sufficient and empowered may be realized. But as Nyla demonstrates throughout this chapter, women are constrained and in some senses defeated by gendered subjectivities and the way customary power relations play out.

### **Conclusion: Gender As It Is Lived and Constructed**

“Social relations, which are always relations of power and powerlessness between different subject positions, will determine the range of forms of subjectivity immediately open to any individual on the basis of gender, race, class, age and cultural background.”

— Chris Weedon 1987: 95

The construction and reproduction of gendered subjectivities takes place at multiple levels and offers a useful, productive framework for understanding how history, culture, agency,

and power converge and influence Maasai social and economic relations. In this chapter I have addressed how women have historically been positioned within production systems and household economies and how they are attempting to challenge their customary roles in production through their involvement in new livelihood strategies. But I have also shown that despite these attempts, women's engagements in livelihood strategies outside their home are still controlled and surveilled by men and society. Furthermore, I have presented an extreme example of women blatantly defying societal power structures through their work at Mererani and showing how this reveals the anxieties around production, power, and sexuality.

This chapter shows how gendered subjectivities about Maasai women have been crafted, are reproduced, and to a certain extent internalized among Maasai societies. As this process takes place, and even as Maasai women appear to rise above the subjectivities that define and constrain them, they play a critical role in grounding and furthering these very subjectivities. In other words, Maasai women bring to focus "gender as it is lived and gender as it is constructed" (Moore 1994: 50). The stories of Maasai women who work at Mererani show how power is located, produced, and reproduced, and how gender and subjectivity are intricately bound to these power dynamics.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **THE DARK SIDE OF THE CRYSTAL: NARRATIVES OF WITCHCRAFT AND ZOMBIES**

One day my research assistants and I set out for a nearby village that bordered one of the villages in my study. While I was not conducting research in this village per se, stories about successful Maasai tanzanite traders originating from here peaked my curiosity about the people and the place. As we drove into the village center, we passed several structures that looked as if they were in mid-construction. Standing two stories tall and half constructed with bricks, the buildings towered over all the other structures nearby and looked egregiously out of place in the middle of a Maasai village dotted with homes constructed of mud and thatched roofs. My research assistant commented on the building and sadly explained that the project was halted in mid-construction because the owner of the property, a Maasai man by the name of Kois, had passed away in a tragic accident.

Kois was well known throughout Simanjiro due to his success at trading tanzanite, his untimely death, and the story surrounding both his success and his demise. Kois was quite prosperous from trading tanzanite. Along with owning several conspicuous material items such as cars and tractors, he was also funding the construction project we observed that day in the village center. Nobody could ever confidently say what the buildings were going to be used for. According to the story that was told about Kois, he visited a powerful witch doctor who prescribed that to be successful he must chop down a prominent, old tree in the village. "Go out there and cut that tree until it falls down," was the witch doctor's

supposed order. While Kois thought this would be a small price for success, he agreed to the contract and one night clandestinely proceeded, with his machete, to the place where the tree stood. He thought he was executing his plan very well, since no one knew his whereabouts—people at home thought he was at Mererani, and people at Mererani thought he was at home. Nobody would suspect he was the one who cut down the tree. While Kois chopped the tree, he envisioned what he would do with the newfound wealth the witch doctor's order promised him.

After the final blow, he looked up to see the tree teetering back and forth. As the tree swayed, an image appeared in the leaves of an old Maasai woman adorned with ceremonial earrings and necklaces. This image disturbed him, but he brushed it off as a figment of his weariness and watched the tree as it plummeted to the earth. Feeling accomplished, he returned home to his boma, but when he arrived, he found his mother dead. As the story is told, Kois allegedly killed his mother by cutting down the tree that night; the image of the old lady he saw in the tree represented his mother as she and the tree both plummeted to their deaths.

While Kois received vast fortunes from the tanzanite trade it was soon curtailed by his sudden, tragic death in a car accident. Thus, his fame quickly turned to notoriety as his untimely death, coupled with his mother's earlier death, strengthened the belief among others that he amassed his fortune through witchcraft. A week after Kois passed away, 170 of his cattle reportedly fell over a cliff and died, further solidifying people's convictions that his fortune was cursed.

The story of Kois was repeated over and over in the villages of my study and is but one example of the dominant narrative that circulates in Simanjiro regarding wealthy

tanzanite traders and their engagements with witchcraft. The narrative asserts that a wealthy tanzanite trader is successful only because of his relationship with a powerful, non-Maasai witch doctor. Upon entering into a contract with a witch doctor, the tanzanite trader must sacrifice the life or vitality of either a successful person or a beloved family member, such as a wife, mother, or child. Consequently, the tanzanite trader reaps financial success. However, the narrative also predicts disaster, as engagements with witchcraft purportedly come with a cost, and the tanzanite trader eventually suffers by losing his wealth, or even worse, losing his life. As these stories are produced and reproduced throughout Simanjiro, they show how tanzanite trading, witchcraft, and power converge within a dominant narrative. But what does this narrative reveal about the way Maasai experience and interpret socioeconomic changes that are occurring in the context of a new livelihood strategy? Furthermore, how does this narrative expose the tensions that are characteristic to this livelihood strategy?

In this chapter, I address these questions by presenting and analyzing the stories Maasai tell about witchcraft. These stories are only told in relation to the tanzanite trade. I first examine the links people draw between success at the tanzanite trade, witch doctors, and witchcraft and emphasize how the witchcraft narrative has emerged as an explanation for Maasai success in the tanzanite trade. In this way, I argue that witchcraft narratives provide a structure for meaning. In the second part of this chapter, I explore how narratives reveal structures of power. In doing this, I first explore the control tanzanite traders are perceived to have over others because of their ability through witchcraft, to control minds, bodies, and sexuality. I argue that while the perpetuation of these narratives is intended to undermine tanzanite traders' power, it actually *gives* them power. I then turn



to the efforts that are being made to *deny* this power by examining the consequences tanzanite traders are said to face due to their relationships with witch doctors and their acts of witchcraft. Finally, by presenting tanzanite traders' responses to witchcraft allegations through a counternarrative, I show how they attempt to *reclaim* this power by morally repositioning themselves within Maasai society.

In looking to narratives as they reveal structures of meaning and power I speak to a broader level and argue that the channels through which reality is interpreted, accepted, and contested provide another vantage point to realize how livelihood diversification leads to new instances of privilege and exclusion among contemporary societies. As Peter Gescheire (2006: 49) observes from his studies in Cameroon, "powerful rumors circulate about the secret sources of novel forms of wealth that are both tantalising and shocking since they introduce new and glaring inequalities." The witchcraft narrative in Simanjoro illuminates the present-day ambivalences and inequalities Gescheire describes by providing a commentary on and critique of contemporary Maasai reality—a reality that is bound by rapid social and economic transformations in the context of the tanzanite trade.

### ***A Note on Terminology***

Maasai use several words in the context of discussions about witchcraft and tanzanite trading to refer to what I am labeling as witch doctors. These include the Swahili terms *mchawi* (pl. *wachawi*) defined as a witch doctor or sorcerer, *mganga* (pl. *waganga*) defined as a medical person or doctor, and *mganga wa kinyejik* defined as a traditional healer (Tuki 2001). While these words refer to very different types of practitioners, and are generally

applied accordingly among native Swahili speakers, Maasai use them synonymously to refer to a non-Maasai person who performs malevolent magic.

Maasai also refer to a non-Maasai witch doctor using the Maa words *alasakutoni* (pl. *ilasakutok*) and *oloiboni* (pl. *iloibonok*) defined as “male ritual leaders who [have] the powers of prophecy and divination” (Hodgson 2005: 40). The use of various words with different meanings to refer to the same thing shows the absence of a “universal” term for witch doctors among Maasai and suggests that Maasai interactions with these people have occurred relatively recently. Maasai use of various words for witch doctors also presents me with a challenge as to how to refer to these people throughout this chapter. To avoid confusion between terms and meanings, and in keeping with the use of *witch doctor* among English-speaking Maasai, as well as in accordance with examinations of similar practices in other parts of Tanzania (Sanders 1999, 2001), I use the terms *witch doctor* and *witchcraft* accordingly.

### **Narratives as Structures of Meaning and Power**

My analysis of witchcraft focuses on the narratives that are produced and reproduced among Maasai in Simanjiro. Following Akhil Gupta (2005: 5–6), I use the terms, *stories* and *narratives* synonymously, as stories of witchcraft in Simanjiro mirror a formal narrative structure comprised of “a central character or subject; a sequence of events that led to a change or reversal of an initial situation; and a causal explanation for the change that culminated in a revelation or lesson.” While stories of witchcraft in Simanjiro contain these quintessential elements of narratives, I depart from literary or linguistic analyses, for witchcraft narratives expose much more.

Witchcraft narratives, as they are told in Simanjoro, represent the deeper meanings given to new livelihood pursuits. Renato Rosaldo (1986: 98) suggests, "Narratives can provide a particularly rich source of knowledge about the significance people find in their workaday lives. Such narratives often reveal more about what can make life worth living than about how it is routinely lived." In other words, the narratives people impart, reveal the meanings they attach to these new experiences (Garro and Mattingly 2000: 1).

But these meanings are very much embedded with power, and thus I draw from Foucault's (1972, 1977) emphasis on discourse as a form of knowledge production to provide a link between narratives and power. Foucault (1977: 27) writes, "There is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations." Here he emphasizes how the discursive production and reproduction of knowledge becomes unequivocally linked to power. Following Foucault, the witchcraft narrative in Simanjoro reflects the dense, contextual nature of social forces as they differentially affect individuals and groups and come to expose and recreate power structures.

In light of this framework, the question of whether or not individuals are actually pursuing new relationships with witch doctors and engaging with witchcraft is irrelevant to the analysis presented here. Witchcraft narratives in Simanjoro may as well be factual accounts, fanciful gossip, or even a convergence of the two.<sup>88</sup> My intention is not to prove

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<sup>88</sup> Max Gluckman (1963: 315) argues that gossip usually occurs among and about close friends and is "socially virtuous and valuable." Gluckman discusses early anthropological studies of the role of gossip among groups of people and describes gossip as a cultural phenomenon that exists within and between classes (Herskovits 1947) and is also critical for maintaining group unity and group morality (Colson 1953, Herskovits 1947, West 1945). While I recognize the role of gossip among societies, and I agree that the witchcraft narratives in Simanjoro resemble gossip, as described by Gluckman, I choose to focus on narratives, rather than gossip, as an organizing framework. I find this approach allows for a broader analysis of these stories.

the occurrence of, nor do I aim to portray witchcraft narratives as fabricated stories representing unsubstantiated fears and beliefs.<sup>89</sup> Instead, I argue that witchcraft narratives among Maasai are important because they give meaning to success through tanzanite trading and they illuminate the power struggles that occur within a new livelihood strategy. As such, I add to a discussion of narratives by providing an ethnographic example of the importance of narratives in emerging social and economic contexts and revealing how narratives both reflect and influence power configurations. To formulate this analysis, I first consider the trajectory of thought within the anthropology of witchcraft in Africa. This serves as a foundation for conceptualizing the growth of witchcraft narratives and the overarching effects these narratives are having among Maasai in Simanjiro.

### **The Anthropology of Witchcraft in Africa: From Explanations of the Misunderstood to Occult Economies**

Attempts to dispel widespread ideas that witchcraft represents irrational, primitive beliefs in the supernatural are rooted in E.E. Evans-Pritchard's landmark ethnography *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, first published in 1937.<sup>90</sup> Conducting fieldwork among the Azande during colonial rule in Sudan, a time when Western thought was entrenched in scientific explanations for local modes of reasoning, Evans-Pritchard sought to explain the local context of *why* Azande used witchcraft to explain misfortune (Mills 2006). By answering questions that were ontological and cosmological in nature Evans-

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<sup>89</sup> See Paul Stoller and Cheryl Olkes (1989) book *In Sorcery's Shadow* for a personal account of Stoller's experiences in Niger with Songhay sorcery that challenge Western views of sorcery as just fantasy.

<sup>90</sup> The abridged version of this text was published in 1976.

Pritchard concluded that witchcraft served as a rational frame of reference to explain the unexplainable (Moore and Sanders 2001). Despite later critiques that faulted Evans-Pritchard's work for being entrenched in the colonial project (Rutherford 1999), he paved the way for ethnographical investigations that sought to expose the context in which witchcraft beliefs are embedded and portray witchcraft as "something more than meaningless superstition" (Moore and Sanders 2001: 7).

In the 1950s and 1960s, anthropologists belonging to Max Gluckman's Manchester School began to study witchcraft beliefs and practices across the African continent.<sup>91</sup> A number of monographs resulted from their efforts (Middleton 1960, 1963, Mitchell 1956, Turner 1957) that theorized that witchcraft accusations represented a "case," or a challenge, in the continuum of social relations among individuals and groups (Mills 2006: 174, Moore and Sanders 2001). As such, witchcraft was interpreted as a "conservative force within local arenas" that contributed to maintaining the societal status quo against new, external influences (Geschiere 1997: 12, see also Douglas 1970, Geschiere 2006).

Anthropologists Henrietta L. Moore and Todd Sanders summarize the Manchester School's approach:

The Manchester School's concern was thus less with why Africans believed in witchcraft than with the effects that such beliefs had on local social structures. Witchcraft may have been philosophically meaningful, but it was also meaningful because it *did* things: it led to the formation of new villages and lineages, and to the ruin of old ones. Witchcraft made sense because it "functioned" (2001: 7, emphasis in original).

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<sup>91</sup> The Manchester School consisted of a network of scholars and researchers, spanning several generations, and associated with the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute (later renamed the Institute for Social Research of the University of Zambia) and the Department of Social Anthropology and Sociology of the Victoria University of Manchester (Kempny 2006).

While the Manchester School's interpretations of witchcraft addressed social change, they were critiqued for perpetuating the view that societies were socially homeostatic and witchcraft served as a means to release societal tensions and return to a state of equilibrium (Douglas 1970, Geschiere 1997: 12, Moore and Sanders 2001).

My analysis of the witchcraft narrative among Maasai in Simanjiro in part draws from both Evans-Pritchard's and the Manchester School's early investigations. Like Evans-Pritchard, I examine witchcraft as situated in a unique context and characteristic of a particular set of circumstances. This task is relatively straightforward, as Maasai involvement in and success at the tanzanite trade has directly led to the emergence of the witchcraft narrative. However, my analysis moves beyond the philosophical framework characteristic to Evans-Pritchard's work, and similar to the Manchester School's approach I examine the witchcraft narrative and its links to social change. However, I avoid conceptualizing the witchcraft narrative as an outside force that challenges societal stability and instead aim to show that the witchcraft narrative is a constitutive part of contemporary Maasai realities. In some ways then, my analysis aligns with recent anthropological approaches to understanding witchcraft, in particular John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff's discussion of occult economies.

John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff (1999) propose that occult economies in Africa have surfaced as a response to emerging (and imposed) markets, associated with "millennial capitalism": a wave of capitalism imbued with the promise of economic salvation for all and deliverance from the perils of marginalization and disempowerment (2002: 785, 1999). In the context of gross capital accumulation and selfish capitalistic endeavors, malicious magic is pursued and employed for personal, material gain, thus

giving rise to occult economies. Comaroff and Comaroff (1999: 284) identify two primary characteristics of contemporary witchcraft practices constituting occult economies in Africa: the pursuit of magic for otherwise unattainable ends, and the ostracizing (or elimination) of those who purportedly seek out witchcraft for personal gain.

Comaroff and Comaroff's notion of occult economies contests proposals put forth by seminal social theorists of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries that witchcraft beliefs would become relics of a traditional past and fade into the modern present.<sup>92</sup> In occult economies witchcraft is part and parcel of modernity (Sanders 2003). Jean Comaroff (1997: 10) suggests, "Witches represent an attempt to demystify modernity and its charms—its perverse inequities, its mysterious currencies, its political pieties, its threat to the viability of known social worlds." Thus, Comaroff, as well as other anthropologists, attempting to address "multiple modernities" (Appadurai 1996) conceptualizes witchcraft beliefs and practices as nuanced reflections of contemporary social, political, and economic responses to state-level processes (Gescheire 1997), market economy influences (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999), development (Smith 2008), and neoliberalism (Sanders 2001). In keeping with the Comaroffs' discussion of the emergence of occult economies as reactions to market economy influences, I argue that the rise of the witchcraft narrative among Maasai

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<sup>92</sup> Emile Durkheim, Max Weber, and Karl Marx all suggested (albeit in different ways) that witchcraft beliefs would die out with the onset of modernity in traditional societies (Sanders 2003). Durkheim (1915) equated witchcraft with magic and referred to this practice as an individualistic pursuit. In this way, he juxtaposed magic against "religion" and claimed that religion included community-level involvement and would arise as societies evolved into a "single moral community, called a Church" (Durkheim 1915: 47). For Weber (1976, 1981) modernity constituted "disenchantment," whereby science and formal government provided rational epistemologies and superseded beliefs in magic (Jenkins 2000). Marx and Engels (1975) theorized that for pre-capitalist societies "natural religion," which may be characterized by beliefs in magic and witchcraft, aided in humans' struggle with nature, whereas in class societies "social religion" functioned in the struggle against one another (McKown 1975: 29). Concepts of a better afterlife are characteristic to "social religion" and provide a justification for the suffering of lower classes in stratified societies; it is implied that with the advent of capitalism, "natural religion" gives way to "social religion."

in Simanjiro represents modern-day interactions with the new socioeconomic milieu of tanzanite trading.

However, I also address Sally Falk Moore's (1999) critique of Comaroff and Comaroff's notion of occult economies. Moore describes how in Comaroff and Comaroff's attempts to explain the links between millennial capitalism and the occult, they appear to have "solved the much larger and more troublesome question of causality" (Moore 1999: 304). This seemingly functionalist approach neglects to attend to the material and structural constraints that define and determine people's beliefs in and interactions with the occult and market economies. Comaroff and Comaroff admittedly recognize the assumptions they put forth and end their piece on occult economies by cautioning against, "dissolving all things culturally contingent and close to the ground into the great Eurocentric solvent of late capitalism" (1999: 294).

By focusing on the narratives Maasai in Simanjiro tell about witchcraft in the context of the tanzanite trade, I follow Donald L. Donham's (2001) critique of Comaroff and Comaroff's approach to capitalism and history in South Africa. Donham proposes a focus on narratives instead of Comaroff and Comaroff's focus on culture. By focusing on narratives, Donham purports that narratives can indicate how people explain contemporary events, but also how people relate those events with ones of the past. Focusing on the narratives told by people in Simanjiro divulges the links between witchcraft and success at tanzanite trading.



## **The Secret to Success Is No Secret**

The amount of cash garnered and the relatively short amount of time in which profits are attained indicates how tanzanite trading has emerged as a type of occult economy and reveals perspectives on and responses to the accumulation of cash in this manner. The impression that “the ones who have been successful are the ones who have gone to witch doctors” surfaced time and time again during my discussions with people about tanzanite trading. Witchcraft is perceived to be the only way a tanzanite trader can guarantee his success and is viewed as the primary reason for a successful tanzanite trader’s good fortune. Echoing a common perspective throughout Simanjiro, one woman named Ngaiseri, who has never been to Mererani, exclaimed,

Most people think that those who have gone and been successful have done something bad through witchcraft. Since we were young we used to hear that success doesn’t come at once. One person who has gone to Mererani and spends a few days can buy 200 cows, a car, and can build a modern house. They are not successful from God [*Engai*]; their success comes from somewhere else.

Ngaiseri’s narrative points to the customary ways Maasai have interpreted the reasons for success, and how those interpretations are changing in the face of new forms of success. Generally, Maasai attribute success to luck or God. When asked *why* someone is more successful than another at livestock herding, people often provide an example of a man who has many livestock while his neighbor has very few. They would say that despite the fact that these two men practice overlapping management strategies by moving and herding their livestock together, and giving their livestock the same veterinarian treatments, their disparate outcomes can only be explained by good fortune or God’s

intervention. But when asked why people are successful in the gemstone trade, people claim there are other forces at work outside luck and God, mainly witchcraft.

Ngaiseri's narrative indicates how the scale of success at tanzanite trading warrants this explanation. While the profits are unparalleled, so is the period of time in which these profits are attained. Regardless of having luck or God on one's side, it takes time to build wealth in livestock, often over the course of one's life. Livestock wealth is also transparent, people can see how big a man's herd is, they are able to watch a man build his herd over time, and they know when someone is wealthy from inheritance. Likewise, they are aware when someone suffers livestock loss from disease or when someone is moving their herd to a different locale. On the contrary, not only has tanzanite trading resulted in remarkable profits, but equally significant is the fact that these profits are attained relatively quickly. Also, tanzanite trading occurs in a place far from the watchful eye of community members. In essence, people who have not been to Mererani have not seen the process, only the results, and thus they conclude that it is not possible to earn so much money in such a short amount of time by relying on just luck and God. Instead, they assume that witchcraft must be at play. For people who do not go to Mererani, these narratives provide vivid imageries of the links between success and witchcraft. However, people who have not been to Mererani are not the only ones creating and perpetuating this narrative; some tanzanite traders themselves also play a role.

Paulo, a member of the Korianga age-set, spent several years as a tanzanite trader at Mererani, but he did not earn much money. He claimed he never visited a witch doctor; however, he was encouraged by many others at Mererani to do so. One day as we discussed witchcraft and tanzanite trading Paulo commented,

If you look at these people who work at the gemstone business without doing anything bad, you can't really be successful. You only get something to eat if you do witchcraft. The people who have been successful have done bad things. People at Mererani were telling me, "If you go to a witch doctor, you will be successful. You will have a lot of resources including cows and cars and you will be able to give a lot of money away." Maybe they go because some people can't wait for luck. Each person has his own luck from God, but it depends on your timing. So these people who go to witch doctors for luck, they go to find artificial luck, not the kind of luck from God.

Paulo's narrative focuses on both the motives behind and the supposed outcomes of doing witchcraft. He speaks to how he was encouraged by others at Mererani to visit a witch doctor to guarantee his quick success, a type of success characterized by the ability to acquire such things as livestock, cars, and money. Paulo emphasizes the perception, even among tanzanite traders, that witchcraft is the only means for ensuring success in the tanzanite trade. He also stands as testament by his refusal to go to a witch doctor and his relative lack of success. However, Paulo's narrative must be situated within his relative lack of success. In some ways, Paulo could be seen as using his refusal to go to a witch doctor as justification for why he did not succeed. Thus Paulo is able to avoid the fact that he may have just had poor skills in evaluating gemstones or simply was not able to find a mob to join. Instead, he rationalizes his lack of success with the claim that he did not visit a witch doctor and therefore boosts his morality in the context of failure. However, Paulo's possible motives underlying his perpetuation of the witchcraft narrative should not mask the fact that Maasai in Simanjoro feel the secret to success at tanzanite trading lies in witchcraft. To them, it is really no secret.

Without witch doctors and witchcraft, success in the tanzanite trade is thought to be unattainable. In some ways then, people appear to rely on and arguably need witchcraft, to access profits and receive household and community-wide benefits. Thus, as Maasai buy into the promises of millennial capitalism they come to directly and indirectly depend on magical means. Maasai in Simanjiro are not new to capitalist processes, as they have long been involved with and influenced by national and international markets and affected by development, structural adjustment, and neoliberalism (Hodgson 2002, 2011, Igwe 2004, Sachedina 2006). But why then, has the witchcraft narrative evolved in such a context? Indeed, the tanzanite trade represents an entirely new scale of economy associated with millennial capitalism; however, the answer to this question also lies in part with the fact that Maasai are not foreign to beliefs in the supernatural. Thus, I suggest that long-standing supernatural beliefs characteristic to Maasai cosmology, have paved the way and created a ripe environment for beliefs in witchcraft to take form.

### **Spirit Possession, Curses, and Iloibonok**

Maasai have extensive beliefs in the supernatural as evidenced through their beliefs in spirit possession (*orpeko*), curses, and the divination and prophecies of iloibonok. Dorothy Hodgson (2005) suggests that spirit possession emerged among Maasai women in association with the influx of the Catholic Church beginning in the 1950s. She notes that spirit possession is thought to be an ailment of the heart or spirit that is manifested through physical symptoms and is said to be caused by the influence of an evil spirit—usually identified as Satan (Hodgson 2005: 216). By claiming spirits possessed them, women were able to overcome men's unwillingness in allowing them to join the church—a

symbol men associated with “unwanted cultural change” (Hodgson 2005: 228). Thus, Hodgson proposes that spirit possession emerged as a way of dealing with the influence of the Catholic Church and was instrumental in ameliorating the societal tensions associated with women’s initial participation in the church.

Belief in the power of the curse also plays a significant role in shaping daily social relations. Iloibonok, elders, leaders of age-sets, and women are all thought to have the ability to curse (Spencer 1988). Maasai also believe that Maa speakers who practice livelihoods other than livestock herding possess the ability to curse. For example, blacksmiths wield power based on their technical abilities, as well as through the iron implements they craft (Galaty 1982).<sup>93</sup> They are understood to be able to curse Maasai who primarily herd livestock through the iron tools they make and sell to them.

Iloibonok are important figures in Maasai society due to their roles as healers, diviners, and prophets.<sup>94</sup> Iloibonok often provide guidance and medicine in the event of human illness and livestock disease. They are respected for their abilities to “see” the cause of someone’s misfortune, insure good luck, and predict the future. Iloibonok are called upon for medicine to protect people who feel they have been cursed and for amulets for children to wear to ward off evil. Their primary means for divination is to cast stones and other objects from a gourd or horn and “read” them according to a complex scheme of Maasai numerology (Hodgson 2005: 42). Iloibonok are respected and revered, but they are

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<sup>93</sup> The role of blacksmiths among Maasai culture also brings to the fore issues of ethnicity and group membership. See Galaty (1982) and Larick (1991) for comprehensive discussions of the role of blacksmiths in Maasai culture.

<sup>94</sup> See Waller (1995), Bernstein (1979), and Hodgson (2005: 40) for a history of iloibonok that describes how they were originally not members of the Maasai tribe and were gradually incorporated into Maasai society as diviners and prophets.

also feared for their capabilities of exerting inimical powers by supplying bad medicine, cursing those who violate social norms, and engaging in battles amongst themselves (Hodgson 2005).<sup>95</sup>

Spirit possession and the powers of the curse and the iloibonok characterize Maasai beliefs in the supernatural. As such, I suggest this has created a ripe environment for the incorporation and proliferation of the witchcraft narrative among Maasai in Simanjiro. However, the beliefs in witchcraft that have emerged in the context of tanzanite trading are markedly different. While spirit possession in particular signifies a rise in supernatural interactions due to new, outside influences, the actual methods (which will be explored later in this chapter) through which the spiritual world is incorporated and interpreted in these two scenarios are strikingly different. Furthermore, both iloibonok and witch doctors are said to be capable of supernatural powers. As mentioned, Maasai even use the word iloibonok to refer to witch doctors. However, by no means are iloibonok and witch doctors perceived to have the same types of power, nor do they exert their powers in similar ways. While iloibonok engage in internal battles that may ultimately cause harm to or even kill members of each other's families, they are different from witch doctors in that they do not tell people to kill others—a common prescription for luck at tanzanite trading. As such, a stark distinction is maintained between the two types of practitioners. While iloibonok still maintain an important role in Maasai society, I contend that their influence may actually be

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<sup>95</sup> An oloiboni named Simuni told me the story of a battle between his father and another powerful oloiboni. According to the story, Simuni's father married five women. None of his wives gave birth to a male child for a very long time. Simuni was the first and only male child of his father's family. His father claimed that a curse of another oloiboni was the reason for him only having one son, and he warned Simuni not to begin practicing as an oloiboni until later in life because this other oloiboni may cause him harm.

weakening as a result of the witchcraft narrative that identifies new and arguably more powerful supernatural practitioners.

### ***New Sources of Power for a New Livelihood***

Witch doctors are viewed as much more powerful than Maasai iloibonok for bringing good fortune, especially in terms of their influence over tanzanite trading. During a conversation with Pasina, a member of the Landis age-set who works at Mererani, he stated,

So many people involve themselves in witchcraft. You will be more successful if you go to see a non-Maasai witch doctor. They have something called *jini*<sup>96</sup> so they are more powerful. These witch doctors are far away in the regions of Shinyanga or Tanga, or in the Lake Victoria area. I even hear people are going to Nigeria to find the powerful witch doctors. It's like a teacher. If you want to be successful at getting educated you need to find a good teacher. If one isn't good, you go to another. Mererani contains people from every corner of the world, even people from Nigeria. I think these people have told others at Mererani that they have powerful witch doctors in Nigeria and that is why they have gone.<sup>97</sup>

Pasina raises an important issue by suggesting that new and more powerful medicine is required for tanzanite trading. Furthermore, going to a witch doctor who is non-Maasai, and also lives in a distant region is the primary means through which this powerful medicine can be accessed. Thus, the role of iloibonok is minimized in the context

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<sup>96</sup> *Jini* (pl. *majini*) as defined by Tuki's *Swahili-English Dictionary* (2001: 118) is a "genie, spirit, demon, or wicked person" and originates from the Arabic word *Jinn*, meaning "spirits" (Fadlalla 2005: 143).

<sup>97</sup> Discourse referring to powerful witch doctors in Nigeria may also be due in part to the recent popularity of Nigerian films shown on Tanzanian buses and on television. These films almost always feature witchcraft.

of tanzanite trading as they are viewed as not having strong enough medicine to ensure success.

Accordingly, it becomes clear how a new livelihood strategy and the practices associated with it change perceptions of the status and roles of important figures in Maasai society. While the influence of iloibonok wanes in the context of tanzanite trading, certain aspects of their power are also destabilized in unexpected ways. A common story in Simanjiro refers to the stones iloibonok cast out of the gourd or horn for divination purposes. According to several people, some of the stones traditionally used are tanzanite, and since the value of these gemstones is now known, people are stealing them from iloibonok. As the tools of the trade are stolen and valued more for their monetary value rather than their usefulness for divination, incidences such as these, coupled with new engagements with witch doctors, undermine the influence of iloibonok. However, even though iloibonok are said to lack powerful medicine to bring good fortune to tanzanite traders, they are sometimes approached for luck at this type of business venture.

A woman named Rael relayed the story about her neighbor, a well-known oloiboni in the area who was recently approached by a tanzanite trader for medicine to ensure his success at the tanzanite trade. Rael whispered as she told the story because she said the wife of the oloiboni was visiting someone at the boma where we were talking. Despite her attempts to speak softly, Rael told the story while attempting to stifle her hysterical laughter. She said that the oloiboni did not know what to do to ensure luck at tanzanite trading, so he asked the tanzanite trader to bring him a dog. They sacrificed the dog and mounted its head to the outside of the house where the oloiboni lived. Rael's story of the oloiboni and his improvised techniques for bringing luck to the tanzanite trader



underscores his inexperience with this type of medicine. The oloiboni heard accounts of human sacrifices for luck at tanzanite trading and most likely figured that sacrificing something—even as insignificant as a dog—would at least mollify his client and make him feel as if the visit to the oloiboni had some value. Also, it would maintain his reputation in the community by showing others that he still had the means and power to connect with the supernatural. Instead, as Rael illustrates, the oloiboni's attempts were made into a mockery.

As demonstrated by the above accounts, the power of the oloiboni, as well as the tool of his trade, are perceived to be insufficient for good fortune in the tanzanite-dealing business. The justifications given for the apparent move beyond the oloiboni's influence illustrate how the witchcraft narrative represents a structure of meaning. In other words, witchcraft is vindicated through explanations of why people need a new type of power and from whom they are able to access this power. Thus the links are drawn between the witchcraft narrative and tanzanite trading. Other characteristics of the witchcraft narrative, however, reveal structures of power. In the second half of this chapter, I discuss these complex structures of power by first examining how tanzanite traders purportedly execute their acts of witchcraft according the witch doctors' prescriptions and how this narrative inadvertently gives tanzanite traders power. Then I discuss how people attempt to reclaim this power through portions of the narrative that speak to the consequences suffered by successful tanzanite traders. Finally, I examine how successful tanzanite traders vie to reclaim this power through a counternarrative.

## **Witchcraft Mechanisms: The Body Politic**

The methods of witchcraft tanzanite traders are said to use to grant themselves success indicate the power they hold over others. Tanzanite traders are said to manipulate, modify, and even destroy other's minds and bodies. Stories portray them working at night, collecting breast milk, blood, hair, or body parts, and bringing these "personal" items back to the witch doctor for use in potions and spells. As the victims in this scenario experience mental anguish or physical harm, the perpetrator receives good fortune from the tanzanite trade. This part of the witchcraft narrative in many ways captures the "body politic" described by Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret Lock (1987: 7). Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987: 7-8) define the body politic as "the regulation, surveillance, and control of bodies (individual and collective) in reproduction and sexuality, in work and in leisure, in sickness and other forms of deviance and human difference." They draw our attention to the how the body is socially and politically constructed. They continue, "The stability of the body politic rests on its ability to regulate populations (the social body) *and* to discipline individual bodies" (ibid. emphasis in original). Here, Scheper-Hughes and Lock connect the social construction of bodies with power.

The stories that follow illustrate the body politic by showing how tanzanite traders, via witch doctors, are said to be able to control the minds, bodies, and sexuality of others. As such, tanzanite traders are imparted with power through the recent eruption and perpetuation of discourse about zombies. The newness and potential origins of this discourse are evidenced by the lack of a corresponding word in Maa for zombie and the appropriation of the Swahili word *msukule* (pl. *wasukule*). This suggests that Maasai have borrowed certain aspects of the zombie narrative from other groups in Tanzania and

perhaps beyond.<sup>98</sup> Also reflecting this process, one woman in Simanjiro exclaimed, “In the beginning, Maasai only knew cows, but since tanzanite trading, Maasai have heard about zombies.”

### ***Zombie Control***

One morning, I sat in the shadows of the entryway to Reema’s house. Reema and three of her girlfriends had gathered with me to discuss tanzanite trading. The group of women ranged in age from seventeen to twenty-three. As we began to discuss tanzanite trading, three of the women stated that their husbands worked as tanzanite traders. They expressed their satisfaction because they claimed their husbands were able to provide for the family and buy them things; however, they also articulated their reservations due to the stories they had heard about witchcraft. Upon asking them to tell me some of the stories, the energy escalated, even as they spoke in hushed tones to prevent anyone who was passing by from hearing them.

Reema began to tell the story of zombie beings:

Some wealthy people from Mererani have a zombie. The zombie brings them good luck trading gemstones. In order to get one you must kill someone using a magical technique—a witch doctor helps you do this. The person you kill gets buried in a proper way, and everyone all over the area recognizes that he has died, and everyone sees him as dead. Later that night the killer goes to the grave and digs up the body. I don’t know how, but he revives the dead person, perhaps with a special medicine from the witch doctor. He then takes

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<sup>98</sup> *Zombie* (pl. *wasukule*) is a Swahili word denoting a mindless and speechless being who works for his master (Bertoncini-Zúbková 2005, Lindhardt 2009). For other examples of zombie narratives across Africa see Lindhardt (2009) and Sanders (1999) (Tanzania), Geschiere and Nyanmjoh (1998) (Cameroon), and Comaroff and Comaroff (2002) (South Africa).

the zombie to his house and makes cut marks all over the body, destroys his mind somehow, and makes him crazy so he cannot think. He then cuts out the tongue of the zombie so he cannot speak.

A special room is prepared in the killer's house where the zombie stays. Back at the grave everything is quite well and you cannot believe this has happened. Only this guy knows about the zombie and the zombie works for this guy. His wives don't even know about the zombie; he won't want to share this information with anyone else. So if my husband has a zombie, he needs to have a house with a special room and no one can open the room except him. He might just tell you to prepare food 'because we are many,' but he unlocks the room—he has the only key—and he feeds the zombie.

The zombie works in the man's fields at night. For example, in the daytime, a 100-acre farm is not weeded, but the following day, the entire farm is weeded. No one will tell you they have a zombie, but you can tell. We have heard in other villages you might find a zombie in the boma.

Reema brings up some important points that characterize the zombie narrative. She first describes the mechanisms through which a zombie is acquired and points to the critical role of the witch doctor in this process. She then describes the way a tanzanite trader controls the zombie through mind and body annihilation. But as Reema points out, this destruction, at least of the body is only partially complete, as the zombie performs manual labor in the man's agricultural fields. Thus, a zombie is not only invaluable by virtue of its presence and the magical way it bolsters a man's success at tanzanite trading, but a zombie provides manual labor. However, a zombie's labor benefits only agriculture; a zombie never helps with livestock production.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> The links between zombies and production have been explored in other areas of Tanzania. Martin Lindhardt's (2009) work in the southern region of Iringa discusses how zombies are said to earn money for their "owners" by attracting customers to shops and market stalls in mysterious ways and magically stealing

The zombie's exclusive purpose in forms of production outside of livestock keeping invokes Comaroff and Comaroff's discussion of the zombie in occult economies in South Africa. Comaroff and Comaroff (2002: 782) define a zombie and its role as "an embodied, dispirited phantasm widely associated with the production, the possibility and impossibility, of these new forms of wealth." For Maasai, zombies appear to be associated with tanzanite trading and cultivation, or relatively new forms of wealth.

Reema's narrative is most significant for pointing out the powers that tanzanite traders have over others. Motivated to accumulate profits through witchcraft, tanzanite traders are viewed as being able to harm others and assume control over them both mentally and physically. Losing control of the mind and/or body casts individuals and their bodies into a sinister, vulnerable realm and represents the ultimate loss of individual power and agency. However, I suggest that the perpetuation of this narrative actually *gives* tanzanite traders power and control. As fears of being turned into a zombie are quelled by avoiding a successful tanzanite trader altogether, treating him favorably, or even perhaps voting for him to hold a political office, social relations are shaped and take form. The power tanzanite traders are bestowed with through the perpetuation of the witchcraft narrative underscores the complex ways in which the body politic plays out in the context of the tanzanite trade.

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money from their pockets. Todd Sanders (1999) describes how zombie laborers among the Ihanzu of north-central Tanzania work for witches, or those allied with witches, and assist with chores such as hoeing fields, cooking, or brewing beer.

### ***Gendered Power: Control over Women's Sexuality***

Tanzanite traders are also perceived to be able to access control over women's sexuality. Another story Reema relates provides further evidence for the body politic and shows how aspects of the witchcraft narrative are gendered. According to Reema, a woman's husband went to a witch doctor who requested that he return home and tell her she had to have sex with one of his friends. The man went home and the only words he uttered to his wife were, "Ok, you love me so you have to have sex with my friend, but you can't say anything to him."<sup>100</sup> The woman agreed and her husband left the boma. Assuming that her husband was leaving to fetch his friend, the woman sat in the house and waited for their return. All of a sudden, she felt an invisible energy pulling her to the bed and forcing her into intercourse. After this was over, the woman entered a state of panic and fear. She became extremely sick and told people what happened. According to Reema, a few days after this incident, she died.

Reema's story expresses how women are sexually vulnerable through their perception that tanzanite traders are able to gain even tighter control over women as a result of their engagements with witchcraft. While certainly an extreme example, this process is symptomatic of the sexual inequalities that customarily exist between Maasai men and women. For example, social sanctions are imposed on a woman if she repeatedly says no to sex with her husband (Talle 2007). There are also stories about curses in terms of a woman sleeping with her husband's age-mates—if she says no, he can curse her, but if he forces her, she can curse him (Mara Goldman, personal communication, July 14, 2010,

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<sup>100</sup> Traditional social relations dictate that a man's wife is obligated to have sex with other members of his age-set (Talle 2007)

Talle 2007). Even as women appear to have some agency in Maasai sexual relations, they are largely positioned in less empowered roles.

The reinforced and arguably more hostile control men have over women's sexuality in the context of tanzanite trading invokes Foucault's (1978) claim that sexuality is a social construct that reflects a variety of power relations. In Simanjiro, narratives warning of tanzanite traders' increasing control over women's sexuality shows how gender inequality is magnified and strengthened through men's involvement with the tanzanite trade. As Jean Comaroff (1985: 6) observes, "The body is the tangible frame of selfhood in individual and collective experience, providing a constellation of physical signs with the potential for signifying the relation of persons to their contexts." While women's sexual vulnerability represents the power successful tanzanite traders have over them, again the perpetuation of this narrative has the effect of upholding tanzanite traders' power. Thus, the discourse itself becomes powerful as it has real effects on social relations and maintains as well as encourages inequality.

Through their dealings with witchcraft, tanzanite traders appear to have the utmost control and power over others by having the ability to control bodies, minds, and sexuality. Despite the fact that, in some ways, tanzanite traders are bestowed with this power through the perpetuation of the witchcraft narrative, other aspects of this narrative attempt to deny this power.

### **Precarious Success and Its Devastating Consequences**

The witchcraft narrative in Simanjiro almost always concludes with a lengthy discussion of the grave consequences a man will suffer because of his illicit dealings with witch doctors.

This not only brings to focus the ambivalence that exists within the witchcraft narrative, but also it reveals how people attempt to deny a successful tanzanite trader's power. Like one koko said to me, "It's like a lion who says, 'I am going to catch the cows,' and he knows while he is there he will be killed by the people and he still goes. Just like the men who go to the witch doctor. They know they will either be killed or the money will not be good or it will not last, but they still go."

The cost of "selling one's soul" to a witch doctor and engaging in witchcraft is usually described in terms of *laana*. Like msukule, *laana* is a word Maasai have co-opted from Swahili. Directly translated, *laana* means "curse" (Tuki 2001); however, the way *laana* is described resembles a concept more similar to karma. One man remarks, "Laana is something bad that occurs to you as a result of you doing something bad. If you get into trouble, this is your *laana* because you have done something bad." The use of the Swahili word for curse shows how the concept of *laana* encompasses a different type of curse from what Maasai are accustomed to. Thus, the type of curse represented by *laana* is not only symbolic of a new type of curse per se, but also represents how this curse is rooted in the socioeconomic marketplace of Mererani. Rather than being distinctly Maasai, *laana* is markedly Tanzanian. The use of *laana* demonstrates the rift between these two worlds and illuminates the immorality of witchcraft.

The story that began this chapter about Kois is often used to exemplify how success obtained through tanzanite trading and witchcraft comes with a cost. Setting out to gain success at tanzanite trading by making a contract with a witch doctor, Kois inadvertently killed his mother. This in turn, caused his and his livestock's death. While witchcraft enables a man to amass large amounts of money at the tanzanite trade, this fortune is



doomed to “disappear”—the car breaks, he is forced to sell his tractors and cows, he is not able to replace anything he has lost, or even worse, he may lose his life. Kois is a prime example. A man’s success at tanzanite trading is undermined by the suspicion he has engaged in witchcraft and the notion that he will eventually suffer severe consequences.

Sipitek, a well-respected oloiboni shared the following allegory during a conversation we had about tanzanite traders and witchcraft:

The woodpecker is a bird that kills many birds. One day he gathered all the birds near a large tree for a meeting. He told the birds to go up to a high branch of the tree while he stayed below. As the birds sat on the branch above him, the woodpecker told them that they all had weak beaks and therefore their houses were weak as well. So he said to the birds that he wanted to help them have strong beaks so they would be able to build strong houses.

The woodpecker placed a rock beneath the tree and filled a shallow depression in the rock with water. He told all of the birds to fly down into the water and dip their beaks; this would make their beaks nice and strong. The other birds did not know that below the surface of the water that filled the depression of the larger rock, the woodpecker had placed a smaller rock.

All the birds proceeded to dive in the water to dip their beaks. When they did this, they hit the smaller rock that was submerged in the water and broke their necks and they died. The swallow however, was a smart bird and knew the woodpecker’s plan. When it was his turn, he swooped in and out of the water avoiding the submerged rock that killed the other birds. The woodpecker confessed to the swallow that he was trying to kill the other birds because they all talked about how bad he was. Because of the swallow’s cleverness, the woodpecker gave the swallow the strongest and safest nest made out of mud against the rocks.

In this story, the swallow does not capitulate to the woodpecker's cunning promise for a strong house, and thus, he wins out in the end. Sipitek infers that the woodpecker in the story represents the witch doctors and their insidious vows to tanzanite traders that they will be met with success and money if they carry out the witch doctor's prescriptions. The birds that died prior to the swallow's revelation of the woodpecker's trickery represent tanzanite traders who blindly follow through with the witch doctors' demands and end up losing their wealth and/or their lives. Meanwhile the astute sparrow (who does *not* represent a successful tanzanite trader) does not fall for the woodpecker's hoax and is rewarded.

Sipitek's story of the birds, coupled with other stories such as that of Kois, show how people are attempting to deny tanzanite traders' power through the witchcraft narrative. These stories represent how unscrupulous behaviors are punished and further illuminate the notion of laana. Moreover, these stories communicate a moral code and warn against mingling with witch doctors for the type of success tanzanite traders seek. The threat of ruinous consequences looms large for those who make pacts with witch doctors, and therefore, people are encouraged through narratives such as these to make decisions that will not violate blatant social codes.

These narratives also reveal how both tanzanite traders and tanzanite trading as a new livelihood strategy challenge social norms and moral principles within Maasai society. Thus, the witchcraft narrative plays a role in supporting and reinforcing appropriate behavior among individuals and realigning moral principles and social codes of action. While I was acquainted with several successful tanzanite traders who had not suffered devastating losses or calamities, the steep consequences described for men who have

acquired their success through witchcraft deny their power and undermine their success. Tanzanite traders may also experience laana on a different level through social ostracism and alienation.

### ***Social Consequences of Witchcraft***

Stories that a certain wealthy tanzanite trader used magical means to make his sister or favorite wife crazy, kill his mother, or steal body fluids have also unleashed recent fears of strangers among Maasai. Maasai characteristically offer their homes to other Maasai they may not know and generously feed them or give them a place to sleep. As one woman explained,

In the past we welcomed each other no matter where someone came from or if you knew him or her or not. As Maasai, someone might come to your door and call you in the middle of the night and without knowing who it is, you open the door and let them in to sleep. Now we are worried about strangers, we build strong doors with locks. If you don't know someone well, you don't welcome him or her into your house. They might be outside and they may stay cold for a long time if you don't recognize their voice until someone from another house can look out the window and recognize who they are and tell you it's ok.

The emergent fear of strangers represents a significant shift in Maasai social relations on a societal level. The following story of Paulina and her well shows how Maasai social relations are also affected on a more personal level.

Paulina grew up in a village in Simanjiro. She and several of her siblings attended formal schooling. She currently works for an NGO in Arusha. With her salary, Paulina built

her house in a neighborhood in Arusha where she and her children live. She is an independent woman, a single mother, and is excelling at her duties with the NGO. She has also traveled internationally to further her education. Paulina is Christian and is raising her children according to Christian doctrine by encouraging them to participate in sacramental rites such as baptism and confirmation. Paulina's house in Arusha had no water and she was constantly burdened by the chore of hauling water for her family's needs. The one item she needed to call her house project complete was a well.

One day Paulina was chatting with Kato, the well-known and successful gemstone dealer who is mentioned throughout this dissertation. Kato is a relative of Paulina by marriage. She causally brought up her problem of not having water at her house, and told him she wanted to dig a well. Because of their relationship, Kato generously offered to lend her his well-digging machine for free. While Paulina considered this an extremely kind offer, after a few days of deliberation, she politely declined. She told Kato she had reached water already and did not need his help. Paulina later confided to me that she lied to Kato because she was afraid of him. She did not want to accept free help from Kato because of the stories she heard that he had a zombie and was involved with witchcraft. Paulina's education, international experience, and religious practices did not situate her beyond the reach of witchcraft, and she feared that inviting Kato to her house or using his machine would position her and her children as potential victims of witchcraft.

Paulina's narrative reveals how regardless of her background she still felt vulnerable to witchcraft practices. More important, her fear of Kato indicates the power Kato holds as a successful, wealthy tanzanite trader. However, this power appears to serve Kato as a double-edged sword. On one hand, Kato's power enables him to improve his

village-level political status and influence (described in chapter 3), and on the other hand this power alienates him from other Maasai, even those who are family. The ambivalence surrounding Kato's power indicates that successful tanzanite traders may teeter on the verge of social prominence in some arenas and social ostracism in others. Thus it becomes obvious how relations between people are shaped as a result of the witchcraft narrative in Simanjiro and how social ostracism can work as a mechanism for denying a successful tanzanite trader power. But not all people in Simanjiro subscribe to the telling and retelling of the witchcraft narrative. Some people, primarily successful tanzanite traders themselves, impart an alternative narrative or a counternarrative, and through it they attempt to reclaim their power.

### **The Counternarrative: Reclaiming Power**

Wealthy tanzanite traders are aware of the witchcraft narratives throughout Simanjiro and are cognizant of the allegations posed against them. However, rather than submitting to the stories they hear, they express their reaction to these narratives through a counternarrative (Bamberg and Andrews 2004). Counternarratives are typically viewed as a resistant force against a dominant narrative (ibid.). In Simanjiro the counternarrative acts as a resistance of sorts and shows how tanzanite traders make an effort to salvage their power in the face of the witchcraft narrative. The counternarrative successful tanzanite traders tell proclaims their devout Christianity and denies their involvement with witchcraft.

### ***Christian Interventions***

Ngula is a wealthy tanzanite trader whose reputation preceded him. Before I met him, I heard his name mentioned as the subject of several witchcraft stories. People explained how he and members of his mob had gone to Nigeria to see powerful witch doctors, and subsequently all other members of his mob had died because of the contract they had made with the Nigerian witch doctors. One story told of how Ngula's tractor, loaded with people going to the market, ran over and killed a Korianga. This incident solidified people's beliefs that Ngula's belongings were cursed due to his engagements with witchcraft. People also asserted their belief in Ngula's dealings with witch doctors by implying that his recent ill health was symptomatic of HIV and was brought about due to his dealings with witchcraft. Consequently, they concluded, he would soon die.

One morning I was conducting interviews in the subvillage Ngula lived in and was cut short by my interviewee's request that I drive him to Ngula's boma to attend a meeting. Offering people rides was one way of reciprocating the generosity I was consistently granted in Simanjiro, and admittedly, I was curious about this meeting, so I gladly agreed. As we pulled the vehicle into the area surrounding Ngula's boma, men, women, and children scuttled around under a large white tent. I recognized several people in attendance and knew they were ardent members of the Catholic and Pentecostal churches that thrived throughout the region. One end of the tent was undoubtedly designated as the focal point, complete with microphones, amplifiers, and musical instruments. Ngula had invited a well-known preacher from a church in the Kisongo ward, near Arusha as the guest

of honor for what promised to be an invigorating revival meeting.<sup>101</sup> The meeting soon began and three hours later, after countless beckons to the Holy Spirit in Swahili and Maa, a musical tirade of magnificent proportions, and a cacophony of prayers and singing, the participants feasted and returned home to complete their evening chores.

A few months later I sat with Ngula at a restaurant in Arusha. I referred to the revival meeting at his boma and asked him about the seemingly contradictory allegations that he had gone to a witch doctor for his success at tanzanite trading. He responded frankly,

I think it is stupid that people believe that tanzanite traders who have been successful went to witch doctors. Success at tanzanite trading really depends on luck and God. I think that when you find your *riziki*<sup>102</sup> others are jealous. I have heard that people say I have been to Nigeria to see powerful witch doctors. I think people say this because they are narrow minded. Since I was born, until now, I have not been to Nigeria. I once went to Nairobi for gemstone related business, and I also went to Dubai for pleasure—I had a lot of money and wanted to see what it was like. But for me, it is not true that I have been involved in witchcraft.

Well, I did get into trouble many times. One time, I got six million shillings from selling gemstones. I was sleeping in the same room as my driver and the driver stole the money. In the morning I woke up and noticed the money and the driver were gone, and I went to see a witch doctor. The witch doctor said to me, ‘You will not get this man, he has disappeared.’ The

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<sup>101</sup> The church in Kisongo is well known for its evangelical preaching and the large crowds who gather there for services on Sundays. On our way to and from Simanjiro from Arusha, we frequently passed the church—designated by an enormous white tent and hundreds or even thousands of white folding chairs. Banners are often posted around Arusha advertising a guest preacher and listing the dates and times for worship.

<sup>102</sup> *Riziki* is translated by Tuki’s (2001: 279) dictionary as “God’s blessings, God’s providence.”

witch doctor did not give me any medicine to take or magic to perform. So I went back to Mererani and just worked.

In 2006, I got involved with the church in Kisongo. I had big problems. After getting a lot of money I was drinking a lot and was a drunkard. I was someone who would take money and buy lots of drinks for people. I got really sick with bad stomach bloating, and I thought the church would help. I am now a man of God. I have good beliefs, and I am not drinking anymore.

Ngula's story is very telling. While he adamantly admits he did not participate in witchcraft, he does reveal that in fact, he did visit a witch doctor once, but to him it was very uneventful, and so it appears in his story as an afterthought. Ngula's resistance to the witchcraft narrative also mirrors other stories told by wealthy tanzanite traders and their families who contend that they are religious people who would not engage with witchcraft. For example, during a conversation with Kato's mother, she exclaimed,

Yes, we have heard those stories. First, it's not true. We have heard there are some who have been successful because of witchcraft. For us, we don't really believe in witchcraft because we are Christian, although we do believe there are some who involve themselves in that. People say these things about Kato because they are jealous. But look, we are all here and we are all fine, so nobody has done witchcraft.

The counternarrative as it exists and is told in Simanjiro points to Christianity as the antithesis of witchcraft.<sup>103</sup> Tanzanite traders' claims that they are devout Christians stand

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<sup>103</sup> In some ways Christianity has been a counternarrative to traditional Maasai spiritual and religious practices. Pentecostal religions encourage Maasai to shun practices such as polygamy and to not subscribe to the spiritual influence of iloibonok. Catholicism, on the other hand, is more accepting of traditional practices and beliefs but has been viewed by Maasai as associated with "modernity" and development (Hodgson 2005). Christianity has maintained a strong presence in Simanjiro for a long time, and Maasai men and women are active participants and leaders in Christian churches. Thus, I would argue that the modern-traditional dichotomy sometimes attributed to Christianity versus traditional spiritual beliefs is more nebulous in



in direct contrast to accusations that they are involved with witchcraft. In Ngula's example, he exerts his religious agency to recover his reputation and repossess his power.

Nonetheless, while the counternarrative may be considered a reaction to the witchcraft narrative, it does not appear to have any affect on this dominant narrative nor does it absolve wealthy tanzanite traders from being suspected of witchcraft. Perhaps successful tanzanite traders' attempts are in vain. Nonetheless, they further represent the complex structures of power that are characteristic to Maasai involvement in the tanzanite trade and reveal how the realities of a new livelihood strategy are experienced and perceived by Maasai in Simanjiro.

### **Conclusion: Tense Humor and Witchcraft Accusations**

In July 2009, six months after I had completed my dissertation research, I returned to Simanjiro and held meetings with village leaders and community members in the locales where I worked in order to present preliminary research results and garner feedback. In one village, where a number of successful tanzanite traders lived, I described my research findings, emphasizing the fact that fears of witchcraft had surfaced as a direct result of tanzanite trading. The people present at the meeting unanimously agreed. They also laughed and nodded toward, playfully nudged, and teased one of the men present, a subvillage chairman named Kuba, exclaiming, "Yes, we have one of those people right here." While the mood during that meeting in July was jovial and lighthearted, the laughter and joking masked the reality that fears of witchcraft are serious and influence social relations

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Simanjiro. Therefore, the long-standing presence of and Maasai involvement with Christianity has meant that the practices associated with Christianity and Maasai spirituality have become more intertwined and less associated with distinct aspects of modernity on one hand and tradition on the other.

in Simanjiro. This parallels Donna Goldstein's discussion of laughter in *favelas* (shantytowns) in Rio de Janeiro. Goldstein (2003: 2) writes, "This humor was a kind of running commentary about the political and economic structures that made up the context within which the people of shantytowns made their lives—an indirect dialogue, sometimes critical, often ambivalent, always (at least partially) hidden, about the contradictions of poverty in the midst of late capitalism."

The presence of tense humor in Simanjiro that day points to the ambivalence Maasai feel toward tanzanite trading as a new livelihood strategy. On one hand, people joke about, laugh with, and tease a successful tanzanite trader, village leader, and friend about his relations with witch doctors, while on the other hand, the witchcraft narrative reveals sober reactions to and perceptions of disparities stemming from a new livelihood strategy. In essence, the witchcraft narrative points to how gross economic and social inequalities can exist in the context of tanzanite trading and provides a critique of those who purportedly succeed in this livelihood.

As I have shown, wealthy tanzanite traders are recognized and feared as powerful individuals, and stories about their illicit engagements not only belittle their power and undermine their success but also perpetuate their power. In contrast, the counternarrative opposes the dominant witchcraft narrative and shows one way in which wealthy tanzanite traders are attempting to gain back their moral ground. Thus, witchcraft narratives illuminate the structures of meaning Maasai ascribe to tanzanite trading and reveal structures of power by highlighting how Maasai are interpreting and reacting to new social and economic inequalities created through tanzanite trading. For these reasons, tanzanite trading represents an unprecedented livelihood that is affecting social meaning and

relations and is having dramatic effects on the ways in which power plays out among Maasai in Simanjiro.

## CHAPTER SIX

### BOOMS AND BUSTS: BROADENING APPROACHES AND QUESTIONING SUSTAINABILITY OF PASTORAL LIVELIHOOD DIVERSIFICATION

Toward the end of my research period, I began to hear that the tanzanite supply was decreasing. Initially I was cynical toward these claims assuming they were reproductions of TanzaniteOne rhetoric emphasizing the rarity of the gemstone to amplify consumer urgency.<sup>104</sup> However, Maasai themselves began to also assert that the tanzanite business was becoming much harder because “tanzanite is not as easily found.” In addition, since I left Tanzania, I continue to hear stories that the tanzanite supply is diminishing and that some Maasai who were successful in the tanzanite trade are now impoverished. Hearing these stories, a conversation comes to mind that I had during my fieldwork with Victor, a lawyer for the Tanzania Mineworkers Development Organization (TMWDO), a Tanzanian-based NGO that works for artisanal miners’ rights.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> TanzaniteOne has been referred to as the DeBeers of tanzanite for allegedly withholding tanzanite and then flooding the market to influence pricing. Since many Maasai told me how they now buy gemstones from TanzaniteOne miners who steal them from the mines and sell them on the streets, in my more skeptical moments I question if the “decrease” in tanzanite could be a function of TanzaniteOne’s manipulation of the market. I was not able to verify recent rates of production because the most recent USGS Minerals Yearbook is dated 2007 (see appendix a).

<sup>105</sup> TMWDO is known locally as Haki Madini or in Swahili mineral rights or rights to minerals. TMWDO was started in 1999 by a small group of local, artisanal miners or small-scale miners who work independently, who recognized the need for advocacy in the face of state mining policies and regulations that favored corporate involvement in Tanzania’s growing mining sector ([www.hakimadini.org](http://www.hakimadini.org)).

Although TMWDO primarily works with small-scale miners, Victor's familiarity with and experiences at Mererani, give him a shrewd awareness of Maasai involvement in the tanzanite trade. He comments,

Young Maasai have come to realize the potential in mining. A lot have been involved with trading. They have made money and invested it back into pastoralism and farming. But they spend more time in mining, [which] doesn't advance pastoralism as a livelihood. Adding more livestock only makes pastoralism a survival strategy. The cultural satisfaction that comes with owning livestock is now disappearing—Maasai sell cows to go to mining. How does this change cultural cognition? Maasai have gone from pastoralism to now mino-pastoralism. What does this indicate about development? Sure Maasai have big houses, good cars, and motorcycles, but is this a measure of development? If we consider sending children to school as an indicator of development this is not happening, as children run away early, enticed by mining. They risk HIV, the old are left unattended, and women are looking after cows. Youthful labor is taken away from communities. As much as working at Mererani is creating wealth, it is also creating less schooled Maasai.

Victor draws out the worst-case scenario—that Maasai are losing traditional knowledge associated with pastoralism. Victor questions the future of Maasai as pastoralists and also in terms of their development trajectory within national economic and social spheres. He suggests that Maasai are no longer advancing (and perhaps even abandoning) the cultural knowledge associated with pastoralism as they focus their energies on the gemstone trade. Victor further indicates that while Maasai gain ground economically, they also lose out with potentially serious implications for their traditional life ways. In some ways, Victor's perspective reflects static notions of culture change

through his claim and concern that Maasai are no longer so dependent on and defined by their pastoral livelihoods. While his vision may be extreme, Victor does lend insight into some of the transformations that are occurring due to Maasai involvement with the tanzanite trade.

In this dissertation, I aimed to address these changes by exploring how different dimensions of Maasai economies, culture, and politics drive and are shaped by livelihood diversification through the tanzanite trade. As outlined in the introduction, my goal was to move beyond an exclusive focus on economics and approach livelihood diversification as a social process. In doing this I proposed the following broad, yet intersecting questions: (1) How do various individuals and groups of people take advantage of livelihood diversification strategies and how do they differentially experience the outcomes? (2) What forms of privilege and exclusion do livelihood diversification strategies perpetuate and produce? (3) Why do tensions surface in the context of livelihood diversification strategies and how do people attempt to mediate these tensions? Each chapter revealed the answers to one or more of these questions and allowed me to explore various aspects of livelihood diversification. The following discussion summarizes some of the most important patterns.

### **Heterogeneous Livelihoods**

Livelihood diversification brings out the heterogeneity that exists within Maasai households and communities. This is apparent among and between men and women in the different ways they participate in the tanzanite trade. Among men, participation in the tanzanite trade is influenced by age and social position. Young men maintain their role in securing important resources, and fathers and elders exert their control over household

and community resources. Showing how a social structure is articulated in a new context, I revealed how each group of men uses their status and social position to vie for resources. Differences in participation in the tanzanite trade also occur between men and women, bringing the gendered characteristics of livelihood diversification to focus. Compared to the majority of men, very few women go to Mererani. In addition, men and women work different jobs, as tanzanite trading is a male-dominated activity and few, if any, women actually trade gemstones. Variation also exists among women in terms of their participation in livelihood diversification strategies. The majority of women have small business at local markets, some do not pursue businesses outside the home at all, and fewer go to Mererani.

The reasons for going to Mererani also vary according to age and gender. Undoubtedly, young men's, fathers', and elders' motives are economic in nature as they attempt to secure their access to resources and benefit from the profits; however, young men especially, may be also driven by the potential for social and political gain. Central to this analysis is an understanding of the different forms of capital young men attain from their work in the tanzanite trade, and how these types of capital articulate with notions of success. On the other hand, the few women who do go to Mererani are mainly driven by economic hardships at home, again suggesting the gendered characteristics of livelihoods. Women's apparent lack of choice stands in contrast to some of the reasons other women pursue livelihood diversification strategies within the village. It appears that women are engaging in small businesses close to home less out of need and more for an increased sense of empowerment and control, as evidenced by the wealthiest of women's desires to have their own businesses.

Different individuals and groups do not experience the outcomes of tanzanite trading in the same way. These differences further point to the heterogeneous nature of livelihood diversification. Some men who work in the tanzanite trade are able to reposition themselves within economic, social, and political institutions through their creative uses of capital, while other men's roles in these institutions are involuntarily reconfigured. Women who go to Mererani generally experience the negative affects of social ostracism and denigration. Essentially, the experiences and rewards experienced by different individuals and groups of people vary greatly.

### **Perpetuating and Producing Forms of Privilege and Exclusion**

The different ways individual and groups of men and women participate in and benefit (or not) from the tanzanite trade naturally evolve into a discussion about inequality. From the reasons people go to Mererani to the outcomes of their work, every step of the process perpetuates and produces forms of privilege and exclusion.

One of the most poignant examples of how inequalities are perpetuated is in the way that tanzanite trading reflects and instills gendered subjectivities. Men's domination of the tanzanite trade gives them greater access to more lucrative business opportunities, while women are relegated to less profitable jobs that are arguably not as important. Also, men are encouraged to go to Mererani and are heralded in their home villages for doing so, and women are cautioned against going and are stigmatized and alienated by both men and women. The reproduction of women's unequal access to means of production reinforces their marginal economic and social positions within their households and society.



Among men, inequalities surface between and within age groups. As young men assume control over their profits from tanzanite trading, they become more invested in their own futures and restrict their fathers and elders access to economic benefits. In addition, they exert their agency in important social decisions, such as whom they will marry, and some gain political power. Thus fathers and elders are increasingly economically, socially, and politically marginalized. Within the group of young male tanzanite traders, new forms of privilege and exclusion are also produced. Some men have been able to buy a cow or a few goats or sheep, while others drive expensive cars, fund community development projects, and are being elected to political position. The process through which forms of economic and social status and power are perpetuated and produced does not occur without tension.

### **Reasons for and the Mediation of Tensions**

The tensions that surface in the context of the tanzanite trade erupt as a response to the reconfigurations of economic, social, and political status. Tensions between young men and their fathers and elders arise out of young men's ability to circumscribe their fathers' and elders' economic and social control. Tensions between women surface due to the way women who go to Mererani defy embedded Maasai notions about the way women ought to be. Finally, tensions between successful tanzanite traders and others emerge due to the undifferentiated wealth and power successful tanzanite traders access as a result of their work at Mererani.

The way these tensions are alleviated is varied. Young men respond by justifying their actions and behaviors as necessary to the business of tanzanite trading and

appropriate for the social and economic atmosphere of Mererani. Fathers and elders express their anxieties through discourse that condemns young men's disrespect and lack of obedience, but this is their only resource. Women and men mediate their apprehensions regarding women who work at Mererani by attacking the morality and sexuality of these women.

Perhaps the most obvious example of how tensions are mediated is through the witchcraft narrative. By addressing economic and power disparities characteristic to occult economies, the witchcraft narrative rationalizes financial success and expresses the anxieties surrounding the power tanzanite traders are perceived to have. Essentially, through this narrative, people attempt to undermine tanzanite traders' success and defy their power while at the same time, I argue, giving them power. Nonetheless, tanzanite traders' production of a counternarrative represents their efforts in reclaiming power. As the witchcraft narrative demonstrates, the tensions inherent to a new livelihood strategy can have far-reaching consequences.

### **A Broadened Approach to Pastoral Livelihoods**

In light of the changes that are occurring in the context of a new livelihood strategy among Maasai households, communities, and society in Simanjiro, I return to Birch-Thomsen's livelihood strategies framework that I outlined in the introduction to this dissertation. To review, Birch-Thomsen (2001) advocates an approach to studying livelihood diversification that incorporates the following three modes of investigation: (1) The examination of how wider social, economic, and political changes impact, are influenced by, and relate to local change; (2) An emphasis on how social differentiation and agency

determine outcomes of social change; and (3) the understanding of how individuals and households employ physical and social resources in shaping livelihood strategies. The case I present of Maasai involvement in the tanzanite trade incorporates Birch-Thomsen's conceptual framework and provides an ethnographic example of the diverse ways in which people navigate, make sense of, and respond to new livelihood opportunities.

While my application of this framework to understanding pastoral livelihood diversification is unique, it has important implications for research and policy. By incorporating a broad perspective on livelihood strategies, like I have provided here, social scientists can uncover the complicated processes through which people engage in and experience livelihood diversification. Looking at how history, culture, economics, and politics converge within a livelihood strategy adds new dimensions to understand the important role livelihood diversification plays among pastoralists. Research incorporating this approach will better inform policy aimed at reducing poverty and improving pastoral well-being. For example, the recent upsurge of microfinance programs in supporting women's small business ventures will arguably be more effective if the programs are designed and implemented on the basis of solid understandings of the historical and social contexts which drive and constrain women's participation in livelihood diversification. Also when evaluating the outcomes of such a program, a broad scope of analysis can capture the nuanced, unpredictable impacts of livelihood diversification that transcend the boundaries of household economies. As pastoralists continue to diversify their livelihoods either out of necessity, by choice, or through the encouragement and support of NGOs or development agencies, understanding the full set of issues that constitute people's experiences in livelihood diversification strategies is pressing.

## **Sustainable Livelihoods?**

When I convey to family, friends, and acquaintances the one-sentence cocktail party phrase about the topic of my dissertation—the socio-economic impacts of tanzanite trading on Maasai—people usually respond, “Well, are the impacts good or bad?” The short answer to this question, and the one I usually respond with to avoid explaining the details of my entire dissertation, is that the impacts are mixed. Indeed I believe they are. While many of the discussions contained in this dissertation address the negative effects of change, such as the creation and reinforcement of inequality, there are indeed some positive outcomes. Undoubtedly families, households, communities and societies are benefitting from profits garnered through the tanzanite trade. But is this livelihood sustainable?

According to Victor, who opened this conclusion and coined the term *mino-pastoralist*, tanzanite trading is far from sustainable as Maasai are not advancing as a society and the tanzanite trade is derailing children from attending school. This coupled with the diminishing availability of tanzanite suggests a solemn future for Maasai.

However, I maintain that tanzanite trading is having some positive outcomes by breeding optimism among Maasai regarding their futures. When I asked one young Korianga what a successful Maasai will look like ten years from now, he responded, “All children will have gone to school, and we will have modern houses, cars, livestock.” Who would argue that the lives Maasai long for are necessarily bad? The visions they have for educating their children and obtaining the conveniences they associate with modernity mirror people’s desires for improved lives across the world.

In conclusion, the luster of tanzanite has not blinded Maasai to the realities of their socioeconomic status within the national and global spheres. But it has offered them a

glimmer of potentiality. While the tanzanite trade may merely be seen as a vehicle through which some have attained the type of success Maasai aim to achieve, it is no less important because of what it reveals about the social, economic and political context in which livelihoods play out. Thus, as Maasai continue to strive to improve their lives, whether by engaging in the tanzanite trade or another livelihood strategy that captures their interest, livelihood diversification will continue to play an important role in shaping Maasai futures.

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## APPENDIX A

### TABLE OF TANZANIAN PRODUCTION OF GEMSTONE COMMODITIES FROM THE USGS MINERALS YEARBOOK (2007)

(In kilograms unless otherwise stated)

<b>Gemstone</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
Amethyst	270	270	270	270	270
Aquamarine	278	280	280	280	280
Cordierite (iolite)	310	310	310	310	310
Diamond (in carats)	236,582	303,920	219,639	272,204	282,786
Garnet	5,911	5,900	5,900	5,900	5,900
Ruby	2,675	2,700	2,700	2,700	2,700
Sapphire	1,338	1,300	1,300	1,300	1,300
Tanzanite	4,490	3,400	3,400	3,400	3,400
Other	1,520,000	1,600,00	1,920	2,480,000	2,050,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,531,547</b>	<b>1,613,848</b>	<b>1,936,618</b>	<b>2,493,133</b>	<b>2,063,272</b>

Other precious and semiprecious stones produced include alexandrite, chrysoprase, emerald, kyanite, moonstone, opal, peridot, quartz, spinel, and tourmaline. Does not include smuggled artisanal production.



## APPENDIX B

**TABLE OF PRICE RANGE PER CARAT OF U.S. CUT COLORED GEMSTONES IN 2006 FROM  
THE USGS MINERALS YEARBOOK 2006**

<b>Gemstone</b>	<b>January</b>	<b>December</b>
Amethyst	\$7-15	\$7-15
Blue sapphire	675-1,250	700-1,375
Blue topaz	5-10	5-10
Emerald	2,400-3,500	2,400-4,000
Green tourmaline	45-60	45-60
Cultured saltwater pearl	5	5
Pink tourmaline	60-125	60-125
Rhodolite garnet	18-30	18-30
Ruby	900-1,225	1,725-2,000
Tanzanite	275-425	300-450