



TOURISM IN KENYA AND THE MARGINALIZATION OF SWAHILI

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Abstract: Swahili people in Kenya remain relatively invisible to tourists as they were to colonialists. Their language and culture is sidelined politically and economically while the *idea* of Swahili helps foster nationalism and economic growth. Swahili and the position of its speakers *vis-à-vis* other languages and groups in the country is described as marginal, despite Swahili's role as the national and an official language. Standardized Swahili appears in *formal* contexts, but in business, government, and industry is used as an urban mixed-language form quite different from coastal Swahili and its literary and ethnic association. As Kenya undergoes nationbuilding and economic change, Swahili-speaking people are acquiring an ethnicity where perhaps none existed before. **Keywords:** mass tourism, language, national identity, economic development, cultural displacement.

Résumé: Le tourisme au Kenya: la marginalisation des Swahilis. Les touristes, tout comme autrefois les colonialistes, ne remarquent guère les Swahilis au Kenya. Leur langue et leur culture son politiquement et économiquement secondaires alors que l'idée du swahili favorise le nationalisme et la croissance économique. Le swahili et la position de ceux qui le parlent sont perçus comme marginaux en dépit du rôle du swahili comme langue officielle et nationale. Le swahili standardisé apparaît dans des contextes *officiels*, mais dans le monde des affaires, du gouvernement et de l'industrie, il est utilisé dans sa forme urbaine mixte fort différente du swahili côtier et de son association littéraire et ethnique. Alors que le Kenya entreprend la restructuration du pays et des changements économiques, les Swahilis acquièrent une ethnicité qui n'existait peut-être pas avant. **Mots-clés:** tourisme de masse, langue, identité nationale, développement économique, déplacement culturel.

INTRODUCTION

As an anthropologist and a linguist who has visited Kenya off and on since 1965, the author was invited on a luxury safari in 1992 as an expert in Swahili language and culture. This chance to visit the country as a tourist allowed her to gain some understanding of the misfit between Swahili language and culture and Kenyan tourism. The history and status of coastal Swahili as a language and culture may be seen in the context of nation-building in Kenya and in relation to various ethnic and linguistic groups of the country.

Both national and coastal cultures invoke Swahili as a symbol and both play havoc with historical facts. For the nation, Swahili represents Kenya as an African country. It also has the aura of adventure on

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safari and a link to African-Americans in the United States. For coastal Swahili-speakers, it represents ethnicity and ties to an "Arabian" past. On the coast, Swahili has a glorious history of trade and interaction with the Middle East. At the same time, coastal dialect speakers are caricatures of members of the Middle Eastern merchant families who migrated there from Shungwaya—a site that eludes historians and even early Arab geographers (Willis 1993). It is the descendants of these families that one sees on the coast, modern remnants of some mysterious past.

From February 13–27, 1992, the author went along as a guest lecturer on an air and balloon safari to various game parks and game lodges in Kenya. The tour was arranged through a large Western US state university alumni association and an international touring company. The author was invited on safari because of her expertise in Swahili, the fact that she had visited Kenya for research numerous times, and her status as a faculty member at the university sponsoring the tour. As a lecturer-participant on this tour, she was provided with a first-hand look at the way Kenya's dominant ideology is expressed politically, economically, and linguistically. Interestingly, she found that Swahili in any form had almost nothing to do with the tourist experience. For the most part, the author was indistinguishable from the other 29 tourists in this group led by an American tour guide. Once inside Kenya, a team of Kenyan guides joined the tour party.

The tour company, in accord with its own promotional materials, believed its own illusions about Kenya. It thought this Swahili expert could translate for the tourists as well as give lectures about Kenyan language and culture. The author knew that English would suffice for most things but did agree that she would be able to talk to most of the Kenyan tour guides in Swahili and have some useful things to tell people about Swahili language and culture. From previous visits and work in Kenya, she had the impression that efforts to spread Swahili throughout the nation had been successful and that the language would be commonly used by people employed in the tourism industry.

This experience as an "expert" lecturer accompanying this university-sponsored tour group provides a case study of at least one form of the ethnic and safari tourism process in Kenya. Switching roles from that of a scholar of Swahili language and culture to that of a tourist allowed the author to see a Kenya different from any she had seen before. The tourist perspective presented here is based on the author's experience on a specifically luxurious trip to Kenya. The more adventurous tourists who roam around Kenya and other areas of East Africa more or less on their own, or who arrange their travels in Nairobi rather than from abroad, have more contact with speakers of Swahili on the coast and with Swahili used among hotel workers who come from different backgrounds and do not have English in common. For tourists able to access the African-managed and -run hotels (e.g., safari lodges in Maralal and Marsabit), a less idealized and packaged presentation of the country's sights is possible. These lodges cater to the domestic clientele and are not involved in the internationalized aspects of ethnic and safari tourism in Kenya.

In the case of this first-class tour, the author's expectation turned

out to be quite far from the reality the group encountered. As an anthropologist, the author had looked upon language as one aspect of culture, but in the case of nation-building and tourism in Kenya, she came to understand just how separate the two could be. In the case of the Kenyan nation and its tourists, the Swahili language has been magnified in importance while the Swahili people have been marginalized.

THE MARGINALIZATION OF SWAHILI

Swahili and the Perspective of the Nation

For some 20 years now, it has been policy that Swahili is both the national and an official language in Kenya. Kenya's other official language is English. Primary education is in Swahili, with a transition to English in secondary school. University lectures, for the most part, are in English. The government requires forms to be filled out and licenses acquired in English or Swahili. Most bureaucrats, few of whom are native speakers of Swahili, have a decided preference for English. This is a tendency which is likely to continue to expand. Even though Swahili is the national language, it is used only in restricted domains. For example, it is spoken primarily on the coast by native speakers, as a *lingua franca* up country, and mixed with other languages in an urban form in Nairobi (Laitin and Eastman 1989).

Before independence in Kenya, Swahili-speaking people tended to associate themselves with specific towns; and towns often were associated with dialects. For example, people in Mombassa speak the KiMvita dialect, in Lamu the KiAmu dialect, in Vumba the KiVumba, etc. This sense of urban ethnicity permeated the coast and offshore islands. On Zanzibar people speak KiUnguja, on Siu, KiSiu, and so forth. Now, within Kenya, a common Swahili identity is beginning to be invoked among people who speak mutually intelligible coastal dialects. These dialects are hard to understand by people who have learned to use the mixed urban form of the language and to read standard Swahili written in roman script as taught to them in primary school. The business of government and commerce is conducted primarily in English made accessible to people who advance beyond primary grades. Mid-level bureaucracies operate in the vernacular of the bureaucrats who work in them. Even on the coast, where Swahili-speakers live, offices and businesses reflect this English and other-than-Swahili language practice.

With the growth of tourism in Kenya, there is little emphasis put on the role of Swahili or on using the language, despite the fact it is still being promulgated as the language of nation-building. Despite increased emphasis on attracting people to beach resorts on the coast, there continues to be little visibility of Swahili-coastal culture.

In 1930, the Interterritorial Language (Swahili) Committee to the East African Dependencies was charged with selecting a dialect of Swahili to be standardized. The committee was to choose from among the myriad of Swahili dialects on the coast and its efforts occasioned much debate. The choice of the KiUnguja dialect of Zanzibar was a

controversial one and one made with little consultation with Swahili-speaking writers or scholars. Some people felt that the dialect of Lamu in which much poetry had been written in the Arabic script since the 14th century might have served well as a standard form of Swahili. Others thought that the dialect of Mombassa (KiMvita) should be the choice. The decision to develop a written standard form of the language on the Zanzibar dialect has had the result that the language of education in the now independent countries of Tanzania and Kenya is seen by Kenyans as a "foreign" language imposed upon them by the colonial administrators and missionaries who undertook the standardization process without due consideration (Whiteley 1969). It is this standardized import from Tanzania (based on the KiUnguja dialect of Zanzibar) which today is the language of the textbooks in Kenyan schools and invoked for nation-building purposes. This standard Swahili, however, is not at all associated with the emerging sense of a Swahili group identity in Kenya. The choice of Swahili as Kenya's national language and one of its official languages had much to do with the perception of it as a neutral language. It was neither the language of colonial domination nor of powerful factions inside the country, such as the Kikuyu and the Luo. While Swahili has the role of national and official language, the fact that Kikuyu is a particularly important language in business, at universities, and in bureaucracy in general is an open secret. Swahili, though, is the language symbolic of national unity.

The development of tourism represents an aspect of Kenya's national development plan. The Kenyan tour guides connected with the travel group had been trained in tourism at the Utalii College just outside Nairobi. Despite the fact that first-language speakers of Swahili rarely, if ever, attend the school, its name *Utalii* is the Swahili word for tourism (*mtalii* "tourist," *watalii* "tourists"). It is largely through this college that the government actively promotes the tourism industry, which has become a major aspect of the country's national development plan.

The school does a professional job of training tourism workers, often in conjunction with agencies from both inside and outside Kenya. Some people are trained to drive game park vehicles, others to lecture on and explain regional features (e.g., the equator, Maasai Mara, Mt. Kenya), or to provide information about government policy toward game and park conservation. This safari began at the Nairobi Railroad museum looking at the trains that took Isak Dinesen and her husband around Kenya, and ended at Isak Dinesen's home with a view to the Ngong Hills where her lover Denys Finch Hatton was buried. Within this Out-of-Africa frame, a Kikuyu woman speaking English gave the tour group a talk about Isak Dinesen's life. On safari, the party flew to Amboseli where a Kikuyu man speaking English lectured on the difference between game parks and game reserves, and wished the group well on its first game drive.

During the British colonial era, from the late 19th to mid-20th century, Swahili-speaking people in Kenya found themselves increasingly marginalized. One significant factor in this was the location of the capitol in Nairobi, with the White Highlands as the country's center.

This area of traditional Kikuyu territory fostered the successor state as Kikuyu-centered with some Luo counter-weight further to the west. Marginalization of coastal peoples was further accentuated by post-independence politics. This historical and political situation is the context within which tourism has grown.

For centuries, coastal culture in Kenya has been urban and Muslim. Swahili-speaking people on the coast, until the recent advent of compulsory education, have largely chosen not to take advantage of Western education. Socioeconomically, the Swahili lifestyle does not lend itself to Western style business or industry (including tourism). Traditionally, Swahili families included merchants, traders, and fisherfolk oriented across the Indian Ocean or to immediately offshore islands. They live in walled cities that have seen the beach hotels and holiday business grow up around them. As John Middleton points out, for Swahili today "Most of the commercial *raison d'être* of the stone towns has gone" (1992:53). Though no longer involved in fishing and trade in any productive sense, the internal organization of Swahili society has continued as if things have not changed. As Middleton sees it,

The coast is the scene of intensive tourism controlled by European entrepreneurs and their African partners, who are virtually never Swahili. The profits are shared by them and the national governments, and any "trickle-down effect" is slight. Tourists and their hangers-on are despised by most Swahili as non-Muslims who bring new commercial and sexual mores and have a corrupting influence. This is the final and perhaps the most degrading exploitation of the Swahili coast (1992:53).

A sense of colonial nostalgia, for the Africa of the explorer, hunter, adventurer, coupled with a substantial Out-of-Africa component, has provided a very strong image of Kenya to European and North American tourists. This is being furthered by Kenyan tourist middlemen as well. That the Kenyan presentation of itself marginalizes the Swahili people is due partly to Kikuyu nationalism and partly to foreign images of Africa that are played up to in an effort to gain more foreign exchange. In selling itself abroad, the country has continued to marginalize the Swahili people with whom the author had worked for 25 years. During her tour, the people of the author's "expertise" were rarely to be seen or heard.

Who Are the Swahili?

The very notion of a Swahili culture or of a group of people known as Swahili has been the subject of much scholarly debate. There is agreement now that the idea of a uniform Swahili ethnicity was the product of the very same colonization that gave rise to the urban trade centers to which merchants called "Swahili" would bring their wares and eventually settle. Since independence, coastal people have experienced some pressure to present themselves as an identifiable ethnic group to stave off their fear of marginalization as "non-indigenous" in independent Kenya (Willis 1993).

Since the 60s and 70s, researchers have gone to the East African

coast for a myriad of purposes ranging from archaeology to the study of religion. A number of scholars have focused on the history of the area. All of these people, at the outset of their fieldwork, are confronted with the need to delineate the population their research concerns. The slipperiness of any notion of Swahili ethnicity becomes immediately apparent.

One cannot read a scholarly book or article about East African coastal people or about the Swahili language without seeing reference to efforts to define the people and the language as somehow associated with a discrete ethnic or tribal group. Efforts to deal with the "Who are the Swahili?" question make it clear that the purpose various researchers have for asking often have an effect on the answer (Eastman 1971, 1975). Researchers begin to use caveats whenever confronted with the need to use the term Swahili. For example, people are considered to move in and out of the *core* of a Swahili cultural pattern (Strobel 1979; Swartz 1991). Though people on the coast have a number of social identities salient at various times and for various purposes, it is still clear (even to the relatively new observer) that there are insiders (*core* Swahili) and outsiders. In addition, insiders have a clear understanding regarding who is at the center of a Swahili system of ethnicity and who is not. An emerging sense of Swahili ethnicity may be discerned arising in the context of countervailing pressures toward nationalism in Kenya. Coastal Swahili-speaking people in Kenya are calling upon language, expressive culture, religion, economics, kinship, and education to identify themselves ethnically as Swahili rather than nationally as Kenyans.

The form of Swahili that functions symbolically in nationalist and tourism contexts is actually foreign to coastal speakers, many of whom still live in ancient walled towns wherein they practice the Arabized Muslim lifestyle only relatively recently touched by tourism. Perhaps partly for their own cultural and religious reasons (as well as because of colonial policy), the Swahili-speaking people of Kenya's coast for the most part have opted out of participation in the service economy (e.g., working in hotels, lodges, serving as tour guides, etc.) that has grown up around their towns. They have also opted out of participation in the kind of education offered by Utalii College. Whether by choice or design, the Swahili people were not part of the tour. The author came to realize on this trip that the expertise that had brought her back to Africa was marginalized as well. She had come to speak of the language and culture of the Swahili, to give the tour group a feel for Africa based on her knowledge and experience, but they already had their images. For them, Swahili was not the language of a particular people but a symbol of Africa, of the safari and its related images of romance and adventure. Their non-Swahili African guides would see that their expectations were met.

Swahili may be used by Kenyans who know English in interaction with people in menial positions assumed not to know English to deny them entry into the high status English-linguistic domain. The default use of Swahili in some sense is an idiom of colonial and neo-colonial domination. The Swahili phrase books and pamphlets available for the safari-goer may be seen as the linear descendant of settler phrase books

replete with ways to order servants about ("Boil the water," "Pay attention," "Faster, faster," "This isn't clean"). Phrases in Swahili used by tourists in a sense form a *register* in and of themselves. It is "cute" for the tourist to be able to indicate that food is too spicy by grinning up at a waiter and saying *pili pili*, or to go around saying *jambo jambo* to greet everyone they meet and to talk about what they see on *safari* using Swahili words for animals. It is less cute for tourists to refer to a waiter as *bwana*.

When the author would try her Swahili with tourist personnel, or when members of the group would try out phrases she had taught them, they were always met with encouragement and good humor, as well as with reinforcements of the meanings of the words as appropriate to the safari context. When the author, for example, would use fully grammatical sentences rather than simplified forms, she would be "corrected." The greeting *jambo* is used on safari as both salutation and reply to a single individual or group. In coastal Swahili, one greets *hujambo* (sg.) or *hamjambo* (pl.) "How are you?" and answers *sijambo* (sg.) *hatujambo* (pl.) "I/We am/are fine." On safari, it is *jambo jambo* everywhere.

The View of the Tourist on Safari

The safari in Kenya has both people and animals on view. Nowhere on the trip did the tour party have contact with the aspects of Swahili language or society the author had come to know and expect after years of study and research. Even when the group ventured to the coastal area and stayed at Samburu lodge, there was little hint of coastal culture. When lodge personnel lectured about the people of the area, they talked mostly about the Maasai and Samburu and their nomadic lifestyle. The impression clearly conveyed by the tour guides and lecturers at hotels and lodges was of a nation where everyone spoke English or something one might conceive of generally as "African" and assume to be Swahili.

In general, "ethnic tourism is marketed to the public in terms of the 'quaint' customs of indigenous and often exotic peoples" (Smith 1989: 4). Decisions are made as to who should be put on view and who should be the people to provide services to the viewers. Where the ethnic tourist visits local villages, watches ethnic dances, and buys traditional handicrafts, the safari tourist goes on game drives and experiences the natural habitat of humans and animals juxtaposed. In Kenya, the romance of the safari pairs the "Big Five" (lion, giraffe, elephant, rhino, and hippo) with nomadic peoples such as the Maasai and Samburu all roaming together in Maasai Mara. The guides, hotel employees, and restaurant workers come from families with agricultural backgrounds brought into a service economy through interaction with colonial bosses.

Swahili-speaking people and their cultural practices are left almost completely out of the tourist picture. Indeed they participate in it neither as entrepreneurs nor are they put on view in the same way as the Maasai or Samburu. The one partial exception to this in Kenya is in the area of recreational tourism. Amidst the "sand, sea, and sex"

(Smith 1989:5) that characterizes visits to Kenya's coastal beaches, Swahili people provide an exotic backdrop. According to Willis ". . . a particular subvariety of Swahili culture has bloomed" (1993:6) in this context. A stereotype of the traditional Swahili urban mercantile society has been "forced by the glare of cultural tourism and tended by a steady flow of social anthropologists" (Willis 1993:11). People sunbathe on the beaches as men and women in *kanzus* and *buibui* (traditional forms of Muslim attire) go about their daily lives. Tourists are able to swim, sunbathe, dance, drink, gamble, and shop oblivious to the people in whose midst they have come knowing in some vague sense that they are "Swahilis" and believing them to be still living a medieval Arab-style existence.

In spite of efforts by the government to have drivers trained from the areas in which the game parks/reserves were located, most drivers were Kikuyu and spoke Kikuyu to each other on the job. This was a real blow to the author's credibility as an "expert" with the group. At each lodge, group members were dispersed in six vans for the game drives. As the six drivers would talk about where to take the group and what to see, the alumni tourists—thinking Swahili was being spoken—were eager for the author to eavesdrop and tell them what was being said. The author was severely disadvantaged, able only to catch the gist of the discussions since they were mostly in idiomatic Kikuyu with only an occasional Swahili word here and there. All the talk meant for the group to hear, of course, was in English. All the talk not in English, the tourists assumed to be Swahili.

Having seen *Out of Africa*, or having heard of the Mau Mau movement, many tourists embarking on a photo safari or beach holiday in Kenya have come to associate the people of Africa with the Swahili language and assume without question that what they hear while in Africa will be Swahili. The novels they read in preparation for their trip may give this impression as well. The display of Swahili words in novels, films, television programs, and the like conveys the impression that all African people are somehow Swahili speakers (e.g., the Robert Ruark novel *Uhuru*, the former television series *Daktari*, the Bing Crosby and Bob Hope movie *Call Me Bwana*, and the very word *safari* itself). Such words, common in a colonial and neo-colonial setting, are part of the vocabulary of the explorer, the district commissioner, and the tourist. Each of these words has cultural meaning in English and are in effect cultural loanwords, which cannot be directly translated without losing some of their meaning. *Uhuru* means "freedom" (i.e., specifically African freedom); *safari* means "trip," specifically one in Africa; similarly, *daktari* refers to the Western medical practitioner in Africa, as opposed to the traditional healer or witch doctor, the *mganga*. *Bwana* is "master" in a starkly East African colonialist sense more severe than "boss," less familiar than "mister" and without the respect of "sir." Swahili speakers on the coast do not generally use these words, at least in this way. *Bwana*, in fact, has come to be a term used by Swahili girls to refer to each other, a greeting among peers.

That the phrases and words in tour books and brochures promulgated by travel companies represent a rather colonial form of Swahili is, perhaps, a reflection of the way Swahili has been idealized to repre-

sent Africa. In the 1960s and 1970s, Swahili was even seen to be a language of African-American identity. African-American college students urged that the language be taught as a foreign language option along with the usual courses offered in French, Spanish, German, etc. Some high schools began offering Swahili as a course choice as well. Swahili names were adopted by people of African-American descent or who wanted to associate themselves with African culture. This continues today. One notable example is the contemporary playwright Endesha Ida Mae Holland, author of *Mississippi Delta*, who has taken the name Endesha, which she translates as “driver,” using it to indicate that she is a motivated person. This name is adapted from the Swahili verb *ku-endesha* “to drive” literally meaning “to cause something, someone to go.” The Swahili word for “driver” referring to, for example, someone who drives a car is *mwendashaji*, one who makes something go.

For tourists, the language is being promoted as a symbol of adventure and fun in the sun in Africa, as a symbol of the continent despite and apart from its being a vehicle of communication for any group of people. As certain Swahili words are becoming familiar markers of the safari adventure, Swahili language and ethnicity have little association with the African experience of the tourist.

There’s a kind of tourist talk to Kenyans much as there had been settler talk to servants in the past. In Nairobi, the tourist wishing not to be disturbed could hang a sign on the doorknob reading *Usisumbue* under bigger English letters saying “Do not disturb.” On the other side of this sign is the alternative *Tafadhali nitengezee nyumba yangu* under the English “Please make up my room.” Both Swahili phrases are direct translations of English rather than any Swahili equivalents. The first means literally “don’t bother” and the second is the stilted “Please fix my room for me.”

Swahili words are used to mark focal aspects of national and tourist culture. In Kenya where tourism is a major source of economic exchange, the visitor might never hear a full sentence of Swahili—after having, perhaps, memorized phrases and listened to tapes getting ready for the safari. Few notice that their Swahili efforts are often met with replies in English or perhaps in an African language other than Swahili. On one game drive, a member of the group exclaimed, “Look, *simba!*”, to which the driver replied, “Yes, lions, m’am.” At Samburu Lodge, the group was taught to sing a Swahili song by a Kikuyu woman who was the Utalii-trained lodge social director. During a buffet supper served later that evening, the group was entertained by a coastal guitarist—ethnically from one of the Mijikenda groups living near the coast—singing songs in Swahili. Everyone was encouraged to and did join in on the refrain in Swahili. The song *Jambo, jambo, jambo, Bwana. Habari gani? Mzuri sana* (Hello, hello, hello, Sir. How are you? Very well) ended with the refrain *Hakuna matata* (No problem). *Hakuna matata* became a kind of catch phrase for the group throughout the rest of the safari.

In order to present tourists with the “Africa” they expect (i.e., to provide “authenticity”), coastal beach hotels and tours may hire personnel to represent local culture. Instances of this are seen in the Miji-

kenda “Swahili” guitarist and the Kikuyu “Swahili” song leader the group encountered at Samburu Lodge. A very nice first-class restaurant overlooking Mombassa Harbor (and featuring prawns *pili pili*) has waiters dressed in traditional Swahili houseboy formal garb, white robe, and gold-braided red *fez*. Some of the African “Swahili” tour guides who show people around Mombassa, Malindi, and Lamu come from various ethnic groups in the area (e.g., from Mijikenda groups such as the Pokomo or Digo and from other tribes such as Kamba). Though Bantu-speaking and, in many cases, Muslim, such people do not see themselves as Swahili and are not perceived as being *core* Swahili by Swahili themselves (Swartz 1991 and Middleton 1992). Yet, to the tour group, they came across as the appropriate people to the place—as representatives of coastal culture, and as far as the group was concerned, as Swahili.

The illusion of Africa and Swahili as exemplified by Kenyan tourism information is affirmed by what tourists see during their travels. The tour guides, too, know what the brochures lead people to expect and their job is to see that those expectations are met. On the rare occasions when two van drivers did not have Kikuyu or another language in common, they would use the mixed form of Swahili. In this case, on safari the author was of some help to the alumni tour group. Unfortunately, the language mix in outlying park and reserve regions had more Kikuyu or Maasai or Samburu in it than the author could handle. Her interpretive ability was restricted to the Swahili mixed mostly with English and some Kikuyu or Luo spoken near Nairobi and to bargaining at curio shops. A modicum of success was achieved in such markets where she was able to indicate that she knew the language and to jockey for advantage in English and leverage with Swahili. As reported in a story in the alumni association newsletter that appeared after the group returned, the author could translate the Swahili messages printed on colorful cloth *kangas* so that the tourists could buy material with messages they thought were suitable for friends and family back home. Some shopkeepers and street vendors actually knew less Swahili than the author did (and enjoyed her translations as much as the tourists did).

CONCLUSIONS

The reality is that “Swahili” is being promoted as a symbol of “Kenya” without any regard for indigenous Swahili speakers and culture bearers. This situation contrasts with that of the Maasai, who have had their pastoral life encroached upon by tourism. The tourism industry in Kenya has highlighted the Maasai as the typical “African” the tourist expects to (and does) see. Again, this representation of what is exotic Africa *par excellence* has colonial roots in the British having created the game parks and glorified the Maasai. The ignoring of Swahili culture and glorification of the Maasai has led to the situation in which Maasai people have come to seek incorporation within the tourism industry, and to protect their traditional hunting rights in the face of “[g]ame management for viewing” (Dieke 1991:289). As far as tourists are concerned, coastal Swahili language and culture is mostly un-

known, while Maasai herding practices, dances, songs, and so forth are widely displayed—on view with the animals. It is worth noting that Karen Blixen opens *Out of Africa* with an explicit comparison of animals and Africans. The framing of this luxury safari in terms of the film version of that book, which depicted Kenya during the colonial era is indicative of the utility of seeing Kenyan tourism as an outgrowth of representations of Africa produced during that period. The image is one of Kenya as if it were Africa as a whole with Swahili its language and Maasai its people—on hold, frozen in time, for the tourist to see.

On safari, the tourists were given a list of useful Swahili phrases by the tour company. Kenya Airways instructions for takeoff and landing were in Swahili (and English). Public events and movies in theaters were all preceded by the national anthem in Swahili. Tourists may be entertained with Swahili songs and even given a song sheet in Swahili with which to sing along. This was the extent of the Swahili to come into the group's purview.

The tourists had acquired the Swahili needed to convince people back home they had been to Africa. This use of Swahili as language display has symbolic value only and represents the language of no one in particular but of African tourism in general. It authenticates a trip to the "real Africa" (Eastman and Stein forthcoming). The signs they could hang on their doors saying "Do Not Disturb" in Swahili were fun to bring home and use to authenticate their experience. The song sheets meant they could sing aloud in the language to their friends and their safari words could be used at appropriate intervals as they showed the people at home their photos and slides. There would be no need to admit to friends and family that just about everywhere on safari they were fine in English. There also was no need to admit how inane some of what they learned may be. This would make the experience somehow less real and enviable to others. With the growth of the tourism industry in Kenya, there seems to be less emphasis on the Swahili language within the industry despite the fact that it is still being promulgated as the language of nation building. Despite increased emphasis on attracting people to beach resorts on the coast, there continues to be little visibility of Swahili-coastal culture. In 1980, while in Kenya on sabbatical, the author noticed some effort was being made to highlight Swahili cuisine on the coast, but the number of restaurants serving such food appeared to have dwindled substantially by 1992, but for the one successful effort at Mombassa Harbor.

At *Bomas of Kenya*, an attraction in Nairobi, where traditional songs and dances and costumes of the various ethnic groups of the country are presented, Kikuyu, Luo, Kamba, Maasai/Samburu, and even Mijikenda groups are highlighted. It is clear that there are agriculturalist, pastoralist, and nomadic societies in the country and that it is in the national interest to display these to tourists. But evidence of a long-time literate Muslim urban coastal culture is absent. That Swahili poetry and song and dance goes back to the 14th century is not considered to be part of the tourism picture of Kenya, just as it had little relevance to colonial activities earlier.

Everywhere the tour group went, trained staff from the Utalii Col-

lege provided lectures having to do with the places the tourists would visit and the places they would see, often relating what they said to their knowledge that these were American tourists. The group would be told that "William Holden built this hotel, Cheryl Tiegs slept here . . ." Kenya packaged itself for the tour group, who then toured through what was presented. The author's own surprise at how different the "field" of the anthropologist or linguist can be, once seen through tourist eyes, actually made her slide shows and lectures during the trip more interesting. She talked about Swahili people, the nomadic Gabbra, the Boran and Samburu, she discussed issues surrounding nation building and ethnicity and cited the literature. She talked about the rich oral traditions of Swahili women and the long history of written epic poetry dating back as far as the 1400s on the coast. The group would then go for a game drive and everything she talked about was elsewhere. Her audience was most interested in her lectures, and they had animated discussions often centering on the disjunction between the lectures and what they were seeing. The disjunction was more than the author anticipated.

By the time the trip was over, the author was fully aware that what has occurred is that, in opposition to the state, Kenyan coastal Swahili speakers (perhaps for the first time) are now seeing themselves as belonging to a unitary Swahili ethnic group. In essence, *core* Swahili are uninvolved in business, much of government and most of tourism in Kenya. Tourists, at the same time, are unaware that they are missing anything based on the illusion they have been taught. Swahili, to them, is the language of the "African" experience.

This is a reflection of both tourist expectations and the way the tourism industry in the host society responds to these expectations and packages itself. Like many parts of sub-saharan Africa, Kenya relies to a great extent "on foreigners to provide skilled labor for the hotel industry . . . [and] for planning development of the tourism industry." (Ankomah 1991:435). Efforts to address this problem include the establishment of the Utalii College. The nationalization of tourism and efforts to train in-country skilled labor for the industry, nonetheless, is having the effect of representing certain groups in the tourism context much as they had been presented in a colonial one. This is particularly the case with the Swahili and the Maasai/Samburu.

That the "African" experience is presented to tourists amidst an aura of "Swahili" is not the only illusion encountered by them. While this group was being given its packaged view of Kenya, the *International Herald Tribune* (Travel Update) had word that other tourists in Kenya were not being treated as well. From *Reuters*, the February 28, 1992 edition reported that bandits disguised as police killed a Kenyan tour guide and robbed the Austrian tourists he had been guiding at the coast. That happened on February 25. On February 24, right where this group was, at Maasai Mara game reserve, seven British tourists were beaten and robbed. The author and her group were blissfully unaware of any of this. They had some inkling when they returned to Nairobi on February 25 that a hunger strike had begun in Nairobi, leading the *New York Times* to report on March 4, 1992 (p.A-3) that

“ . . . police in Nairobi tried to drive a group of several hundred hunger-striking women and their supporters out of a city park. Riot police officers clubbed three women unconscious, including Wangari Maathai, a leader of the country’s May opposition group. The protesters were demanding freedom for political prisoners.” This was accompanied by a photo captioned “Women Clubbed by Police in Kenya During a Protest.” This happened while the author’s group was being feted in the nearby Nairobi Hilton.

Tourists are offered the Kenya they pay for (calm and peaceful), with the Swahili language and the Maasai people used to lend an air of African authenticity to their game viewing and sunbathing. Time has stood still since animals roamed freely and in great numbers and since Isak Dinesen had her farm. The danger that tourists face, the reality of poachers, and the reports of political repression in the country contrast with the fantasy and sense of security offered by a luxury tour. The “package” tour keeps other contradictions that underlie tourism under wraps as well. In addition to the fiction of Swahili representing some united Kenyan linguistic reality, the facts that the *safari* rests on foreign investment and that there are vast differences among ethnic groups and in political and economic strength are not revealed. When the itinerary calls for seeing people, the Kenyans *par excellence* brought forward for the tourists to see are the Maasai/Samburu. They are talked about not unlike the animals—their ways need to be valued, understood, and protected. There is little information available about a complex Swahili culture and a rich set of coastal dialects still extant on the coast. The reality is that Swahili as the national and an official language (regardless of any culture or society associated with it) has received little effective elaboration. Whatever the actual grammatical form and lexical content of conversations, people in Kenya who interact with groups other than their own fully expect to use a standardized or mixed form of Swahili or English. But the domains in which these expectations can be met are rather restricted. Either Swahili or English is legal in official contexts and people may sing the national anthem in either language whenever they attend sporting events or go to the cinema. In other arenas, people assume that what they hear matches expectations. Tourists arrive in Nairobi ready for *safari* with the expectation of Swahili in place.

The way Swahili language and culture is regarded for political and economic purposes in Kenya bears little resemblance to the way Swahili people themselves see things. Swahili-speaking people are in a situation where there are two Swahilis—one representing their ethnicity, the other symbolizing their nationality. Ironically, Swahili ethnicity has little play in the emerging national culture. Ambiguity enters the picture where the state helps perpetuate the fiction that Swahili is an important component of nation-building. The author’s experience as a participant observer on *safari* made it quite clear that Swahili language and culture *per se* has little meaning in the tourism economy. In Kenya, people who are native speakers of Swahili have become increasingly marginalized (wittingly and unwittingly) in both a nationalizing and touristic context. A version of their language, however, has become, for many, a symbol of all of Africa. □ □

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