

Introduction

Oh, baby, I come from the totem of Nine Villages. Warriors—growl—no woman can resist us. . . . I am a savage who understands only blood and strength. Will you save me with your tenderness? Send me money to keep my totem alive: if my totem dies, my sex power dies, baby.—BINYAVANGA WAINAINA, “SHIPS IN HIGH TRANSIT”

In June 2011 in Samburu District, northern Kenya, local radio station Serian FM reported that thirteen young men had beaten up elders of their clan in the highland village of Lorosoro. A man in his early twenties had initiated the fight. His name was Meikan, and he was probably one of the richest men in the area. Like many of his age-mates, he had been traveling regularly to Kenya’s tourist beach resorts along the coast of the Indian Ocean, some six hundred miles southeast of his home district, to perform traditional dances and sell cultural artifacts. Also like many of his age-mates, Meikan often had sex with women from Europe and North America in exchange for money and other gifts. Recently, he had begun a long-term relationship with a Belgian woman in her late fifties. With the money he received from her, Meikan built two houses in Samburu, one in the town of Maralal and the other in Lorosoro, where his family lived. He also purchased five acres of land, opened a restaurant in Maralal, and started a cattle farm in his village. With an alarmist tone, Serian FM reported that Meikan had enlisted the help of other young men to attack the elderly men of his clan.

I learned more about this conflict a few days later, when I visited friends in Lorosoro. People there told me that Meikan had been driving his Land

Rover when he noticed that his neighbor, a relative and respected elder in the village, had built a fence that slightly obstructed the path to his house. People said the young man had been too proud to discuss the issue with his relative, and instead drove his car over the elder's fence, destroying it. Angered by Meikan's act, the elder contacted the area chief. But before the chief arrived, Meikan had summoned his age-mates and, together with them, went to the elder's house and beat him up. They also beat other senior men and women who were visiting the homestead at that time. Neighbors called the police, and the young men were taken to prison. Among those arrested was Meikan's brother, Korendina, also a wealthy young man in a long-term, long-distance relationship, in his case with a woman from Scotland. Others in their group migrated regularly to coastal beach resorts, but had not yet found foreign partners who would support them with money. In criticizing the situation in Lorosoro, Serian FM pointed out derisively that "beach boys are nowadays beating their elders."

In the next few weeks throughout the Samburu highlands, people commented extensively on the incident in Lorosoro. Some had heard it mentioned on the radio, others by way of gossip. They considered the deeds of the young men an outrage, and their lack of respect for elders a sign of eroding moral values. Samburu and other Kenyans saw elders as repositories of cultural wisdom and moral authorities in matters of rural life. Living in rural communities meant, in one way or another, respecting elders and, to some extent, obeying them. But the man that Meikan and Korendina assaulted was not only an elder. He was also a member of their immediate family, the son of their father's brother. In Samburu, patrilineal descent—that is, relatedness traced through fathers—plays a dominant role in how people relate to each other. In this context, the offspring of one's father's brothers (what anthropologists call paternal parallel cousins) are, in fact, one's own brothers (*M: lalashera*) and sisters (*M: nkanashera*). So from a local perspective, these men committed a double affront: not only had they disrespected an elder, but they also turned against the closest of kin.

"They want to show off how big they are," Jackson, a man from Lorosoro, complained to me of Meikan and Korendina. "When these guys were poor, the father of that elder [that they had beaten] had helped them very much. He had been a soldier in the army. He used to give them small jobs to herd his cattle, and he gave them money." Recalling a history of indebtedness, Jackson suggested that young men's sudden access to cash allowed them to forget past debts and, therewith, future moral obligations to their comparatively poor, rural relatives. Some rural men and women I spoke to emphasized that

young men like Meikan and Korendina, who amassed wealth through relationships with foreign women, returned to their home areas with styles and ambitions that others considered undesirable. Not only did these men use their resources to override the authority of elders and kin, locals said, but they also conspicuously consumed the money they had obtained through sex. Some Samburu saw such money as a polluting, unpropitious kind of wealth—money of wrongdoings (M: *shilingini e ng'ok*), they called it. Such wealth, they said, corrupted the character of its owners and threatened the well-being of their families. The fact that such money could buy social influence and authority remained puzzling to onlookers, who often pointed out to me that the prosperity of these men would be short-lived. When locals infantilized these men by calling them “beach boys,” they hinted precisely at the seemingly immature and problematic ways in which they mixed sex, money, and kinship.

Jackson told me that Meikan paid some \$300 in Kenyan shillings¹ as bail for each one of his age-mates. Soon after that, the district court dismissed the case against these men, prompting elders to suspect that Meikan had bribed the judge. “That is just to show that he has money and that there is no law for him,” Jackson emphasized. But residents of Lorosoro did not let the issue rest. Elders imposed their own collective fines. The young men had to pay several cows to those they had beaten, and cash for the property they had destroyed. Even so, some women in Lorosoro thought the sanctions did not measure up to the gravity of the young men’s deeds. Younger women threatened to call up Meikan’s and Korendina’s European partners and reveal to them that the two had secretly married local women. This, they thought, would prompt the partners to end their relationships and cut their financial support. More senior women, however, saw no point in such threats. They were adamant that these men should be cursed to death through a collective ritual.

The scandal in Lorosoro shows how relatively rich young men like Meikan and Korendina positioned themselves in their home communities, and how others positioned themselves in relation to them. When the district court failed to uphold moral expectations of kinship and intergenerational respect by punishing the young men for their deeds, villagers took the matter in their own hands. They reminded young men that being part of the social life of Lorosoro meant abiding by specific expectations of respectability and reciprocity associated with kinship and seniority. However, as I learned during my fieldwork, economic hardships and the scarcity of material resources undermined the ability of many locals to sustain such expectations in their

own lives. In this context, men like Meikan and Korendina, who had significant access to cash, had become patrons of their home villages. Their family members, clan mates, age-mates, and neighbors turned to them for financial help with daily expenses, children's school fees, ritual obligations, and much more. As the money of these men became an important economic and social resource for people in Lorosoro, locals wondered whether they could really use money of wrongdoings to build lasting kinds of material wealth and social bonds. Some elders told me that if this money was directed toward the good of the wider community—rather than consumed individually—it would lose its polluting qualities. By gossiping about beach boys—their seeming sexual immorality, bad behavior, and disrespect for their kin and elders—locals impelled these men to demonstrate their commitment to local values by sharing their wealth with others. Young men who participated in coastal tourism desired to be respected at home. They invested in houses and farms and supported members of their families, villages, clans, and age sets. They desired to be full members of these social groups. But they were also skeptical of how others expected them to redistribute their wealth, worrying that their resources would quickly drain out. Treading a fine line between keeping their money and giving it out, these men then used their wealth to reimagine and shift the terms and conditions of their belonging. Thus, conflicts ensued in Samburu over the nature of morally positive labor, wealth, and consumption; the expectations for sex, gender, age, generation, and kinship; or the significance of being Samburu and the futures Samburu could secure collectively in a globalizing world.

When I began working in Kenya in 2005, I knew little about Samburu men in relationships with European women. Like most foreigners upon their first arrival in the country, I was struck by how often I encountered images of the Maasai and Samburu young male “warrior,” or so-called *morán* (in Kenyan English and Swahili), on Kenyan websites or in public spaces that catered to foreigners. The stereotypical morán was tall and slim, his body only partially covered with a red loincloth and colorful beads, his long braided hair dyed with red ocher, and his sharp facial features accentuated with painted geometric patterns. I encountered this image on postcards, T-shirts, airport banners, and safari vans, or in the form of wooden statues or metal candlesticks in souvenir shops. I also encountered it “live,” as it were, as young Kenyan men dressed in morán attire to welcome tourists in airports, wildlife parks, and beach resorts. The eroticized silhouette of the morán had become a popular commodity of Kenya's tourist industry. I wanted to explore how Samburu themselves used this image to market their traditional artifacts and

dances to foreigners visiting their district. But during my first week in Samburu, something else caught my attention. My interlocutors were debating extensively the moral implications of the growing and controversial trend of young men engaging in various kinds of sex-for-money exchanges with white women. Many of these women, they said, desired morans for their exotic appearance, cultural uniqueness, and sexual otherness. I quickly noticed that in Samburu, this trend generated new allegiances, inequalities, and tensions, raising new concerns over what it meant to belong to the region.

This book explores why belonging comes so saliently into question in northern Kenya with the rise of tourist markets of ethnic culture and sexual intimacy. It shows what happens when postcolonial subjects take their ethnicity and sexuality to the market in order to access resources that would allow them to participate more fully in kinship relations and ethno-regional politics, or in the power structures of the state and transnational circuits of money and goods. I describe how people's everyday struggles to gain recognition and access resources shape and in turn are informed by globally marketable idioms of their race, ethnicity, and sexuality. I use *belonging* to refer to relationships, representations, and practices through which various social actors construct and contest their positions in the world. In this sense, belonging, like citizenship, is a "dual process of self-making and being-made within webs of power" (Ong 1996, 738). Based on "techniques of differentiation," belonging refers to "a set of intertwined practices and collective repertoires for defining, legitimating, and exercising the rights of some bodies against others" (Sheller 2012, 21). Weaving together ties of kinship, ethnicity, civil society, state governance, and market relations, belonging constitutes an ongoing negotiation of who has a right to be included, who may claim such rights, and who might not. I ask: What forms of belonging are possible for Samburu men and women as their sexuality becomes a "hot" global commodity? How does the commodification of their ethnic sexuality shape what it means to be Samburu? What forms of collective consciousness emerge in relation to the marketable sexuality of the moran? How are notions of respectability, prestige, moral personhood, and good life reenvisioned in the conflicts between young men in relationships with foreign women, other men who desire to have such relationships, and their respective kin, age-mates, and neighbors? What everyday activities, bodily practices, and material goods signify belonging and social value? How are relations of gender, age, generation, and kinship reshaped, and what subject positions emerge in the process? And what do these historical developments in Kenya tell us about belonging in today's postcolonial world more generally?

I address these questions through an ethnographic study of what I call *ethno-erotic economies*. I offer the framework of ethno-erotic economies to explore the myriad social and economic effects of the commodification of the moran—his ethnicity, sexuality, masculinity, and bodily youth. These effects reach beyond tourist resorts, as money, goods, and persons circulate between multiple locales to shape desires, social attachments, and livelihoods across all these sites. Starting in tourist resorts and moving outward in ever-wider circles into coastal migrant communities and then into Samburu towns and villages, I describe the reach and depth of such circulations and their social and cultural ramifications.

ASPIRATIONS, INNOVATIONS, AND THE BLESSINGS OF BELONGING

Many Samburu found the violent events of Lorosoro noteworthy. They were outraged that Meikan and his age-mates had assaulted elders. But the issue of young men beating elders was not new. Nor, for that matter, did it involve only young men who migrated to the coast. In the few years preceding these events, I had heard men and women complain repeatedly that the young men's age set, or class of age-mates, was very badly behaved. By the time the Lorosoro incident occurred, elders throughout the district already had been trying to find ways to deal with growing conflicts between themselves and the young men who were morans.

In the rainy season of 2010, for example, Samburu elders were busy preparing a set of ceremonies called *mayan*, or blessing. A sense of urgency drove them. All men aged roughly seventeen to thirty years found themselves in a dangerous, unpropitious state. A few young men had recently beaten and killed individual elders throughout the district. Their deeds made their whole age set susceptible to the anger and curses of others. Elders noticed that men of this age set were dying, for various reasons, in large numbers. So they feared that the whole age set might gradually die off. Organizing a collective blessing was therefore crucial. And elders lost no time. In each village, a senior man hosted the ceremony in his homestead and offered a fat ox to be slaughtered. Elders summoned the morans to the home, blessed them, and invited them to feast on the meat. Through this ceremony, they hoped to make a truce with the young men, foreclose further bad feelings between the two generations, and rejuvenate communal life.

“There were many problems with the Lkishami,” Ltarsia, a Samburu man in his late fifties, explained to me, invoking the name of the morans' age set. It was September 2010, and I was visiting him in the highland village of Siteti,

fifteen miles north of Lorosoro. Sitting in his compound, Ltarsia told me about the special ceremony that had taken place in his village a few months prior. When I asked him about the purpose of the ceremony, he began complaining about the morans' age set. "This is a bad age set," he told me in a firm voice, pointing to the ground with his wooden club. "So many bad things have happened since the Lkishami were circumcised. That's why we had to do the blessing."

Age sets and age grades are central modes of relatedness in Samburu. An age set (M: *ntowuo* or *laji*) is a named cohort of age-mates who are initiated together into social adulthood and who move together through a number of "age grades," or stages of life. Every fourteen years or so, elders open a new age set, and throughout the following years, young men aged approximately fifteen to twenty-five years are initiated into it through circumcision. This ritual passage marks their transition from the age grade of childhood (M: *kerasho*) to that of moranhood (M: *lamurrano*). Ideally, morans (M: *ilmurran*; sg. *ilmurrani*) may not marry or rely too much on the resources of their families. Although in the past morans went to war and raided cattle, nowadays many herd livestock, attend school, or work for wages. After fourteen years, elders promote morans to elderhood (M: *lpayiano*) and encourage them to marry.

Ltarsia recalled how, when the Lkishami age set had been ritually opened in 2005, elders had made a few mistakes. Choosing the first novice to be circumcised on the sacred mountain of Nyiro as a forerunner of the age set had proved very difficult. This novice had to be of exemplary moral upbringing, with a history of good deeds and perfectly symmetrical bodily features lest he negatively affect the well-being of the entire future age set. As it turned out, the first candidate the elders chose had killed a person and was therefore unpropitious. The second candidate was ideal. But his mother, an Anglican Christian, refused to participate in the ceremony. So with the ceremony rapidly approaching, elders hastily chose another candidate. After the ceremony, they realized that the candidate had "crooked eyes," and so was inauspicious. Then there were issues with the ritual bull, or the *lmongo*, that had to be slaughtered by way of ritually opening the age set. Like the main novice, the bull had to have propitious physical features and a pure line of descent. However, after the ceremony, people learned that awhile back, the bull had been traded at the market for a donkey. Donkeys, Samburu said, are unclean animals. And people held that something that was traded for another sometimes continued to carry the other's properties. So it was as if, in Ltarsia's words, "the bull belonged to the donkeys." Further, on the day of its slaugh-

ter, the bull had walked toward a donkey and mounted it. In hindsight, then, it was as if a donkey, not a bull, had been slaughtered for the age-set ritual. This was a grave error indeed.

But of all the mistakes that started off the age set on the wrong foot, Ltarsia told me, one in particular stood out. According to custom, only four women were allowed to climb the mountain for the ceremony. All four had to occupy very specific positions in terms of descent and kinship, and had very well-defined ritual roles in the ceremony. At the initiation of the Lkishami age set, however, seven white women, all world-renowned photographers and filmmakers from the United States, climbed the mountain to document the proceedings. They offered money to elders in order to be permitted to attend. A major fight then ensued among the elders. Some wanted to chase the white women away. Others hoped to capitalize on the visual spectacularity of their rituals. Eventually, they allowed the women to attend the ceremony. But a few years afterward, more and more elders concluded that their presence had proved unpropitious for the new age set after all. “That’s why,” Ltarsia said, “so many morans are now going crazy chasing white women on the coast for money.” He laughed. Then he turned serious. “Elders say we should not circumcise any more boys in this age set. We should just close it and move on.”

In recalling mistakes at the initiation rituals of the morans’ age set and criticizing this age set for the misdeeds of some of its members, Ltarsia sought to position himself as a respectable, authoritative elder who defended the moral good of age-set relations. When I first met him in the summer of 2008, however, he was far from being respected. Together with his wife and four children, he lived in extreme poverty. I would often see him drunk on Siteti’s main path, and I also heard villagers make fun of him by calling him a beach boy, though by age grade he was, in fact, an elder. I had learned at that point that Ltarsia had spent twenty years at coastal tourist resorts. The sex economy was less prominent in the early 1980s, when Ltarsia—at that time a moran—had gone to Mombasa for the first time. Nonetheless, at least three men from Siteti who belonged to his age set (the Lkuroro) had met European women and made a good life for themselves. Two of them still traveled regularly to Switzerland to spend time with their partners. Ltarsia, however, had been unsuccessful. He returned to Siteti in 2000 with only enough money to buy a few goats and build a small bark-roof hut. By 2008, he had no longer owned livestock and struggled to make ends meet by selling charcoal.

When I returned to Siteti in 2009, however, I learned that things had taken a positive turn for Ltarsia. He no longer drank and had purchased two

cows. He was very determined to improve his life. By 2010, he had already owned five cattle and was also paying for his son's boarding school education. When Siteti elders organized the blessing ceremony for its morans, Ltarsia sponsored the event and hosted it in his compound. This was a costly affair. He gave out a fat ox and purchased large quantities of sugar, rice, tea leaves, and other foodstuffs to entertain villagers. Only well-to-do elders could sponsor such a ceremony, so for Ltarsia, having been able to do so was an important achievement. "All the elders of Siteti, all the mamas, and the children came to my homestead for the blessing," he recalled proudly. "It was very beautiful."

By sponsoring the blessing, Ltarsia used his otherwise modest material resources to invest in age-set relations, village sociality, and clan rituals. This, he hoped, would grant him respect and secure him the support of his community in the future. Ltarsia and his age-mates were the ritual patrons of the morans, their "fire-stick elders" (M: *mpiroi*; *lpiroi*) (because they had kindled the ritual fire that brought the age set into being). He sought to become exemplary as a member of his age set and a mentor for the morans. By sponsoring the ceremony, he aligned himself with locally recognized forms of relatedness and sought to belong more fully to local social worlds. Through the collective blessings of elders during the ceremony, he had also hoped to propitiate life force (M: *nkishon*) for himself, his family, and his homestead, thereby augmenting their ability to prosper further in the future.

Like Ltarsia, other elders had high hopes for the 2010 ceremonies. Yet not everything went as expected. In the villages of Siteti and Lorosoro, for example, many young men missed the event. The ceremony took place during the peak of Kenya's tourist season, and many of them were at coastal beach resorts, trying to make money. This does not mean that all these young men disregarded age-set affairs—quite to the contrary. Whenever I visited Samburu friends at coastal resorts, they asked me if I had news about the timing of one or another age-set ceremony. They wished to plan their return trips accordingly. But the current ceremony was a spontaneous innovation of elders in the face of new intergenerational conflicts. It was not part of the mandatory ceremonies through which every age set had to pass. Some morans, therefore, did not consider the ceremony sufficiently significant to warrant making the sixteen-hour bus journey back to Samburu and miss out on the moneymaking possibilities of the tourist season. So they simply skipped it.

Parents and relatives of the absent morans were concerned. Attending the ceremony was necessary for the young men to receive the collective blessings of their ritual patrons and claim their rightful place in the age set. In Loro-

soro, Mama Zakayo complained to me that her twenty-year-old son had not attended the ceremony. A locally operating German NGO had assigned her son a sponsorship for his high school education, but he had dropped out of school, determined to make money on the coast. He was good friends with Meikan and Korendina, who were his age-mates and had recently become wealthy. "He was hanging out with these boys a lot," Mama Zakayo recalled. "He started to feel left behind. So one day he just decided to go to Mombasa and try his luck there. But few people who go to the coast succeed in making money nowadays."

Mama Zakayo was the widow of a former soldier in the Kenyan national army. She had raised five children. Four daughters were already married and lived in neighboring villages. The husband of one of them also had an elderly Swiss wife and was quite wealthy. Mama Zakayo understood her son's desire to meet a white woman and have a comfortable life, although she would have preferred that he had finished high school and found employment. As a senior widow, she was now imagining spending her old age caring for her son's future family in Lorosoro. She wanted to help her son to become a respected man, perhaps as his father had once been. To be respected, she thought, her son also had to commit to his age set. A Samburu proverb urges, "God, take away my mother and my father, but leave me my age set," emphasizing the supreme importance of age-set solidarity.² Age-mates, Mama Zakayo knew, must be able to rely on one another unconditionally for support. "If you don't have your age set, who do you have?" she said.

In the absence of so many morans, elders and relatives devised another means to incorporate the young men into the mayan ceremony. Normally, for the purpose of the ceremony, each moran would carry his personal wooden calabash with a bit of milk inside. Elders would use this milk to sprinkle young men during the ritual blessing. But in this instance, relatives of the absent morans walked to the homestead of the ceremony themselves, taking along the calabashes of the absent. When the ceremonies began in both Lorosoro and Siteti, some fifty calabashes were lined up along the fences of the compound for the blessing. Standing in front of them, some 150 or so morans held their own calabashes. Mama Zakayo explained to me that in the absence of the novices, their calabashes took on the blessings for them. Samburu saw individually owned calabashes as extensions of the embodied personhood of their owners.³ As such, a calabash could take on blessings in its owner's absence and could represent its owner in absentia at certain rituals. Thus, as more and more young men sought to make the best of tourism on the one

hand and local forms of relatedness and respectability on the other, the calabash acted as a placeholder that enabled them to be present, as it were, in two places at once.

The practice of blessing a calabash in lieu of a moran was not new. In the past, when morans could not attend a particular ceremony, their calabashes were blessed in their stead. What was new was the scale of absenteeism. One elder said that in the old days, some five to ten calabashes stood in for absent morans, whereas now there were about fifty, if not more. Not all fifty morans were on the coast. Some worked in the capital city of Nairobi or in other towns, and could not obtain a leave of absence. But the vast majority of the morans of Siteti and Lorosoro were indeed at Mombasa's tourist beach resorts. At the 2010 ceremonies, the unattended calabashes at once brought forth their absent owners, claiming belonging on their behalf, and made their absence conspicuous to those present.

The intergenerational conflicts, moral dilemmas, individual aspirations, and ritual innovations I encountered in Siteti and Lorosoro speak of shifting forms of belonging. As men and women in rural Samburu tried to craft respectability in the midst of wider social and economic transformations, they pointedly contested relations of age, generation, gender, and kinship. Such relations have long played an important role in how locals related to each other, to the Kenyan state, and to the market economy. These have also been central in defining who is "really" Samburu, and what it means to belong to local worlds. Yet now, imagining belonging to age sets, lineages, clans, and regions also meant dealing with the social and economic ramifications of young men marketing their culture and sexuality in tourism. Most of these men returned to Samburu and, over time, reshaped local livelihoods. Rich young men like Meikan and Korendina sought to override the authority of elders, kin, and age-mates and produce new forms of privilege and patronage. Poorer men like Ltarsia sought respectability by turning to ritual and pursuing the egalitarian ethos of reciprocity and mutual support associated with clan and age relations. Meanwhile, women like Mama Zakayo crafted respectability in part as mothers, mothers-in-law, wives, and sisters by engaging, in various ways, men's desire for both the cash of coastal tourist resorts and the recognition of their home communities. And so in Samburu, the conditions, meanings, and potentials of belonging came sharply into question.

Why, when more and more young African men and women sought to migrate to Europe or North America for better economic opportunities, did

Samburu men only very rarely follow their foreign partners abroad?⁴ Why did they return to the economically marginal areas of northern Kenya? Why did they choose to pursue belonging through local worlds of culture and kinship when they often found themselves excluded or exploited by elders and kin? Why did other Samburu work so hard to incorporate these men—if sometimes through their calabashes—in their local ties of relatedness and mutual support when they often disapproved of their making a living through sex? And why did social ties in Samburu rely so strongly on older expectations of kinship, age, and personhood when, in the absence of resources, it was increasingly difficult for many to sustain such relations?

Patrilineal descent, age sets, and village life speak of a particular kind of belonging. They reflect a desire to sustain ethnicity, culture, and autochthony as primary sites of attachment and good life. In Samburu, as I will show, such collective representations gained renewed importance with the advent of global markets of ethnic culture and sex. Many locals turned, in new ways, toward kinship—for them, a kind of guarantee of durable wealth and worth—precisely as they mobilized to seek rights, recognition, and resources through the Kenyan state and the global market. Yet amid conflicts that involved young men, elders, women, age-mates, and kin, relatedness and belonging also took on new, unexpected forms.

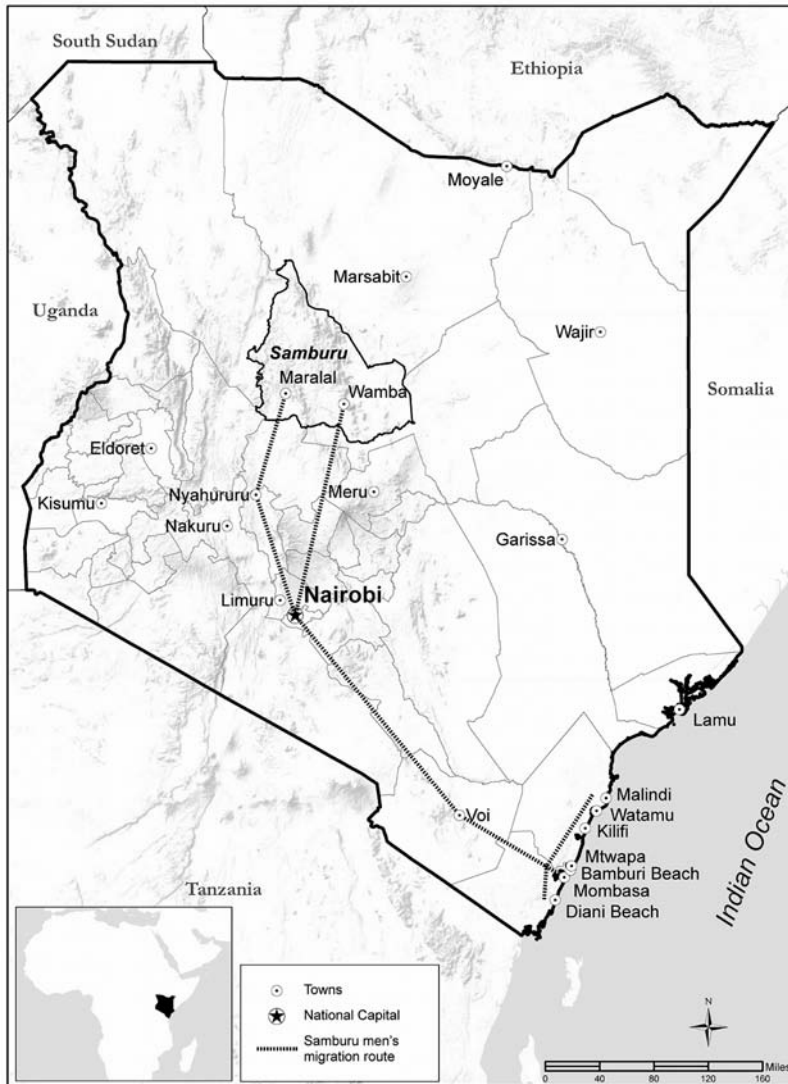
SAMBURU MEN IN KENYA'S COASTAL TOURISM

The Kenyan tourist industry has grown spectacularly over the past four decades.⁵ In this context, being Samburu moran has become a way of embodying substantial economic value. According to a tourist ad on the website Kenya Cultural Profiles, “the Samburu are a proud warrior-race of cattle-owning pastoralists, a section of the Maa-speaking people, amongst whom the Maasai are the best known.”⁶ “Proud of their culture and traditions,” the ad continues, “the Samburu still cherish and retain the customs and ceremonies of their forebears, unlike most other tribes in Kenya who have been influenced by Western civilization.” Many of my Samburu interlocutors, echoing such ads, described themselves as “people of cattle” who inhabit the semiarid savannahs of northern Kenya. They also gestured to the fact that they shared a language and customs with Maasai people of southern Kenya and northern Tanzania, and emphasized that—unlike the Maasai and their other southern neighbors—Samburu “still kept their old culture.” I felt uneasy about what to me seemed like essentialist descriptions of ethnic identity. I occasionally pointed out to my interlocutors that such descriptions

occluded, for example, the fact that in recent decades, cattle economies declined, a town-based Samburu middle class burgeoned, and many Samburu relocated elsewhere in Kenya. My interlocutors would nod. All that was true, of course. But as one man pointed out, what being Samburu is “really about” is “keeping this old culture.” I gradually learned that such descriptions of ethnicity were more than simple attempts to bank on stereotypes that state officials, NGO workers, and tourists readily recognized. They were also strong affective claims to a particular cultural identity and to specific genealogical and territorial attachments.

Morans figured centrally in tourist ads of Samburu culture. The Kenya Cultural Profiles ad details, “The moran, or warriors, are the most striking members of Samburu society and are inevitably attractive to young girls. They enjoy a convivial and relatively undemanding life with permissive sex for roughly 14 years. Most of them will at one time or another have many lovers who demonstrate affection with lavish gifts and beads.” The sexualized moran became emblematic of the traditional heritage of the Samburu and other Maa-speaking ethnic groups (such as Maasai and Chamus). For foreigners, he also congealed fantasies of sexual freedom and erotic enjoyment. Moreover, the moran became a core brand of East Africa as an international destination (Bruner 2005, 35; Kasfir 2007, 280).

Beginning in 1979, faced with the challenges of rapidly declining cattle economies, scarce access to land, droughts, rapid population growth, and rampant unemployment, some Samburu men migrated seasonally to coastal tourist resorts. There, they lived in different small towns to the south and north of the city of Mombasa, including Diani, Mtwapa, Watamu, and Malindi (fig. 1). During the day they sold spears, bead necklaces, and bracelets at the beach, and in the evenings they performed dances in hotels (Kasfir 2007, 286–88). Many hoped to meet foreign women for sex or long-term relationships. Most women who had intimate relationships with morans were from Germany, Switzerland, England, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, France, and Belgium (cf. Kibicho 2009, 102). Fewer came from the United States and Canada, and only a very few from Australia and Japan. While some of the women sought the company of morans for one-night stands or for the duration of their vacation, many others desired lasting romantic relationships or even marriages. In the latter case, women visited their partners regularly and, on occasion, paid for these men to visit them in Europe. Only a few women moved permanently to Kenya, and I know of no more than six or seven Samburu men who moved to Europe to live with their partners on a more per-



1. Map of Kenya, with Samburu men's migration route and the place-names mentioned in the book. (Map created by the author.)

manent basis. Although most of the women were ten to forty years older than their male partners and a few had children with them, they often sponsored one or more children of their partners' lineages. Most women arrived to Kenya as tourists. But many returned to work for NGOs or start their own businesses. By visiting their partners regularly and establishing affective ties with their families in northern Kenya, these women hoped to escape the apparent artificiality of tourist resorts and foster ties of love and care with local men and their families. Often, but not always, relationships ended when women were no longer able to finance their partners or when they found out that their partners had married local women.

Samburu men desired relationships with tourists for several reasons. They enjoyed spending time with these women, drinking and having a good time in nightclubs, in bars, or on leisurely trips in Kenya or abroad. Many developed strong bonds of friendship, love, and care with their partners. They also eroticized white women as uninhibited sexual partners who often engaged in sexual behaviors—such as kissing, oral sex, and foreplay—that were more rarely practiced in Samburu. But for most men, relationships with foreign women were also pleasurable and desirable in another sense. They held the possibility of rapid wealth. Some women sent their Samburu partners money regularly, through bank transfers or Western Union. With this money, men bought motorbikes, cars, and livestock or built businesses, houses, and farms. Some men also used this money to support Kenyan girlfriends or to pay bridewealth and marry one or two local wives. Others invested in electoral campaigns and secured positions in the government administration. Indeed, during my fieldwork, some of the richest men in Samburu were those in relationships with foreign women. By the same token, however, some of the poorest men were those who had waited unsuccessfully for years to find white partners at beach resorts before returning home without any savings.

The migration of Samburu men to coastal resorts increased significantly throughout the last three decades of the twentieth century. If, in the early 1980s, there were some one hundred Samburu on the coast during the tourist season, by 2010, according to my own estimates, their numbers had risen to over one thousand. This remained a relatively low percentage (approximately 2.23 percent) of Samburu District's total population (approximately 223,947 people in 2009). However, the economic, social, and cultural effects of men's migration came to reverberate far beyond tourism to engulf many other social actors that were not directly involved in the tourist industry as such. Throughout the 1990s and the early 2000s, circulations of people, money,

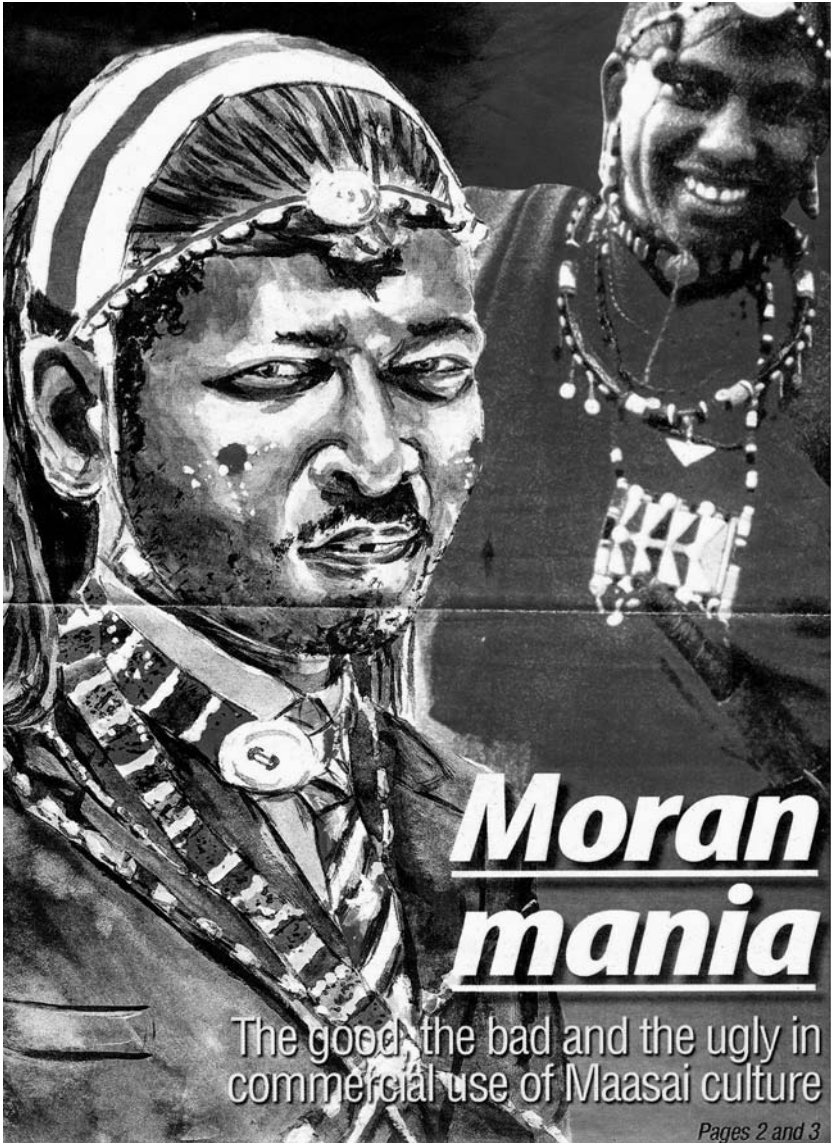
and goods associated with Samburu morans who sold ethnic culture and sex intensified spectacularly.

“MORAN MANIA”: MARKETS OF ETHNOSEXUALITY

On December 12, 2004, the Nairobi-based national newspaper *Daily Nation* announced, on the first page of its Sunday magazine, a booming “moran mania” among tourists in the country. In the accompanying article, journalists Oscar Obonyo and Daniel Nyassy note that the moran has become one of the “bestselling images in world tourism,” and that now, “numerous young men . . . have embraced the *moran* image to charm and win the hearts of tourists visiting Kenya.” “You know,” a young man told the reporters, “if you hook up with a white woman, you say goodbye to poverty.” According to a local researcher interviewed by the journalists, “some tourists believe that the moran is primitive, unexposed, untouched and therefore a safe and valued sex partner.” “Other reasons advanced for the moran’s sexual attraction,” the journalists say, include “that he is young, tall, athletic and strong.” The article points out that “this has become a lucrative business, and scores of morans—genuine and fake alike—flood the coastal beaches to make a living from the trade.”⁷ But the article also decries the potential effects this touristic “moran mania” would have on Maasai culture and on moran masculinity. As the cover of the special issue illustrates (fig. 2), the journalists find the touristic moran corrupted, devalued, and “ugly,” a mockery of what had once been a noble, heroic masculinity (represented here, in the background, as a fading image).

In a similarly sensationalist tone in 2013, New York’s news web Vocative announced in a short video feature that “in many ways, the Maasai and Samburu warriors, known collectively as the moran, still live like their tribes have for centuries. But these days, they are hunting very different game: white women from all over the world, who travel here in search of the *moran*’s legendary love-making powers—their sexual prowess.”⁸ In 2014, AfkTravel—a website devoted to travel within Africa—noted that on the Kenyan coast,

along the waterfronts and shorelines fringed with coral reefs, it is not unusual to see Samburu and Maasai men dressed in red and black traditional garb and beaded jewelry walking and evidently flirting with foreign women as old as their mothers. The mystique of African men, especially ‘warriors’ from the Maasai and Samburu tribes, has long drawn European women of a certain age. Some are lonely, while others are looking for a distraction. Many have found ‘love’ in the strong arms of these warriors.⁹



Moran mania

The good, the bad and the ugly in
commercial use of Maasai culture

Pages 2 and 3

2. "Moran Mania": cover of *Daily Nation's Sunday Lifestyle* magazine, December 12, 2004.

By coupling an anachronistic view of Samburu and Maasai lives with the warriors' "mystique," "legendary love-making powers," and "sexual prowess," these news reports assign radical cultural and sexual alterity to morans.

Romance on the Road (Belliveau 2006), a touristic guide for women traveling in search of sex and love, lists what is specific about Kenya as a sex destination: "Unlike in the Caribbean, where men regale visiting tourists with romantic speeches, [in Kenya] some Masai [*sic*] warriors apparently just stand around looking beautiful while women fall at their feet" (157). Among chapters with titles such as "Caribbean Men: Ready, Willing and Able" and "Instant Sex, Amazon Style," the guide points out that "relaxed views [on sex] make Africa the world's sexiest continent" (167). "Africa," it says, "is where . . . two sexual freedoms from the beginning and end of history converge: the license of the modern Information Age woman and the polygamous, cattle-herding man" (153). What drives white women to Africa, it says, are "the exotic good looks and warrior mystique of many African men, notably the Masai [*sic*] and Samburu in Kenya, the Wollof [*sic*] in the Gambia and Zulus and Xhosa in South Africa" (*ibid.*). Placing Africa at "the beginning of history" (as Georg Hegel once did) and associating it with stereotypical images of polygamy and cattle herding, the guidebook addresses—we can safely assume—a primarily white global audience. It entangles erotic appeal, sexual freedom, and "warrior mystique" with racial and ethnic difference and ascribes them commodity value. Time figures centrally herein. The further back in time the sexual subject is located, the more authentic and appealing he is (cf. Fabian 1983).

The assumption that people of particular African ethnic groups are radically different—culturally and sexually—informed growing sexual economies in Kenya and elsewhere on the continent (Ebron 2002; Jacobs 2010; Kibicho 2009; Nyanzi et al. 2005). But such assumptions also fueled a certain fascination in newspapers and magazines, on talk shows and reality shows, and in documentary films, blog entries, and social media. African warriors who have sex for money, elderly white women as "sex tourists," and intimacies that cross seemingly natural boundaries of race and culture were indeed the perfect ingredients for a true media sensation. Such discourses produced and imbued with value specific instances of *ethnosexuality*. Drawing on the work of sociologist Joane Nagel (2003), I take ethnosexuality to refer to a homogenous set of sexual drives and erotic qualities assigned in discourse and practice to particular racial, ethnic, or cultural categories of people. In a growing global market of commodified ethnosexualities—for example, Hawaiian hula girls, Amazonian indigenous women, or Rastafarian men on

Caribbean islands—morans also came to occupy positions of essential difference. They embodied fundamental racial, ethnic, and cultural otherness for mostly white, middle-class consumers. Discourses of moran ethnosexuality, as I show in chapter 1, go back to the reformist ideologies of British colonials and missionaries and the development projects of postindependence political leaders. But in the present, such discourses emerged in new ways as some Samburu took their ethnosexuality, as it were, to the market.

A wide range of texts and images focusing on the moran and his sexuality now circulate globally. Since the early 1990s, for example, several European women who had relationships with Samburu men have published their memoirs. The most famous, perhaps, is Corinne Hofmann's best seller *The White Masai* (2005). In this book, the Swiss narrator details how she met a Samburu moran while on vacation in Mombasa in 1986, and how, after selling her business in Switzerland, she moved to northern Kenya to live in her partner's village. *The White Masai* describes the challenges the narrator faced in building a life across cultural difference or dealing with poverty, illness, and the birth of a daughter in "the bush."¹⁰ After its publication in German in 1998, the book became an international best seller and was translated into over eighteen languages. In 2005, the German company Constantin Films released a movie based on Hofmann's memoir. By 2009, the book had also sold in tourist shops, hotels, and airports in Kenya and Tanzania, having become—along with Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa* (1937)—a touristic souvenir emblematic of East Africa. It also became a mythical narrative that enabled tourist businesses to depict East Africa as a place for romance and adventure. Later, Hofmann published two more books about her ties to Samburu, drawing on her fame for being the "white Masai" (Hofmann 2006; 2008).

Hofmann's book was part of a wide genre of texts that eroticized and sexualized Samburu and Maasai morans for global audiences. Less famous and written in a somewhat different vein, the memoirs of British author Cheryl Mason—*White Mischief: The True Story of a Woman Who Married a Kenyan Tribesman* (1995) and *No Ivory Tower* (2001)—are well known among women in relationships with Samburu men. Mason narrates how she sought to escape her deep trauma from having been repeatedly abused and raped as a child and teenager. Through her relationship with Samburu moran Dikola, she hoped to reconnect to the essence of life. Likewise, German author Christina Hachfeld-Tapukai (2004, 2009) describes traveling to Kenya and building a home with a Samburu man as a way to seek new meaning in her life endeavors. White women in relationships with Maasai men authored similar books. Consider, for example, Catherine Oddie's *Enkop Ai (My Coun-*

try): *My Life with the Maasai* (1994), Samantha Kimambo's *The English Maasai and Other Truths* (2007), Robin Wiszowaty's *My Maasai Life: From Suburbia to Savannah* (2010), or Mindy Budgor's *Warrior Princess: My Quest to Become the First Female Maasai Warrior* (2013). Overall, these texts speak to a white audience fascinated with radical cultural otherness and with how sex and love may or may not overcome cultural barriers. Rarely, if at all, do the authors reflect on contemporary politics, poverty, or inequality. Rather, they derive authenticity and market value from the white subject's ability to embody and speak for the cultural difference of racial and ethnic others. The Other figures here as the raw material to which the author then adds value through her experience and writing.

Through these books, the experiences of a few European women in relationships with Kenyan men circulated throughout the world, fueling the growth of Kenya's sexual economies. Many of my European interlocutors in Kenya had read several of these books and were familiar with other forms of media that covered the relationships between foreign women and Samburu men. Imaginaries of the sexual moran certainly anchored the market value of such texts. But it is important that we do not think here of moran ethnosexuality as preexisting "raw material" that these texts packaged for consumers. Rather, as I will show, ethnosexuality, like culture itself, is—to use Kamala Visweswaran's (2010, 3) words—"an effect of the circulation of its descriptions." In the 1990s and 2000s, the circulation of such texts intensified and promoted growing markets of moran ethnosexuality.

SEXUALITY AND ALTERITY IN GLOBAL AFRICA

Africa has long been at the center of global imaginaries of ethnosexuality. From the western European fascination with African bodies during the slave trade, through colonial obsessions with reforming African sexual lives, and to more recent global health responses to the AIDS pandemic, the continent figured as a hub of promiscuity and perversion. Achille Mbembe (2001, 2) argues that "it is in relation to Africa that the notion of 'absolute otherness' has been taken the farthest." Sexuality—understood in the modern sense of an innermost quality of the self, or an orientation or intensity of desire—made a salient argument for such "absolute otherness." "African cultures and sexualities," according to Sylvia Tamale (2011, 19), "were always framed as different, less urbane and inferior to those of the West," thus "justifying racist and imperialist policies." Desiree Lewis (2011, 201) notes that "the legacy of colonialism endures in essentialist attitudes toward African sexuality and corporeal difference." Says Lewis, "Contemporary forms of othering are not always

explicitly and recognizably racist,” and “might often be presented as positive and ennobling celebrations of the black body” (200). But such “celebrations” of Africinity may also work to naturalize race and ethnicity as categories of pleasure, desire, and subjectivity and sustain hierarchies of global white supremacy.

The idea that people of different races, ethnicities, or cultures embody different sexual drives and practice different sexual customs has long appealed to Western scholars and popular audiences. Earlier generations of anthropologists studied how non-Western people constructed and approached sex differently from Europeans.¹¹ They often used cross-cultural comparison to problematize Western moral precepts of sex and sexuality and imagine a wider terrain of erotic possibilities. Consequently, they also coupled different sexual mores with specific cultures and ethnic identities. Anthropologists were not alone in this regard, however. Throughout the twentieth century, a certain fascination with the sexual inclinations of others (particularly those marked by race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, class, region, and more) spread globally—albeit with varying implications—through media and commodity consumption. What anchors such fascination is a widely shared premise that sexuality designates a universal realm of biological life; something that we all share in our bodily existence and that revolves, broadly, around genital pleasure. Taking sexuality as a human universal, we then compare and contrast bodily intimacies across lines of social differentiation with various political implications. In a global context structured by white hegemony, the idioms of race, ethnicity, and culture more readily facilitate social classification and moral hierarchization (Chanock 2000; Pierre 2013; Ratele 2007).¹² Thus, the universalism of sexuality and the essentialism of difference represent conditions of possibility for each other. It is more helpful, then, to think of sexuality, but also of race, ethnicity, and culture, not as explanatory analytics but rather as social, historical, and political constructs that act on the world in ways that require explanation.

Anthropologists and historians of colonialism and globalization argue that discursive invocations of sexuality are central channels for drawing and policing boundaries of race, ethnicity, culture, or class (McClintock 1995; Najmabadi 2005; Somerville 2000; Stoler 2002). Drawing on the work of Michel Foucault (1978), they refute the idea that sexuality is a universal realm of bodily and psychic experience that can facilitate straightforward cross-cultural comparison. Sexuality, Foucault argues, is a modern domain of discourse that posits a universal, biological realm in the human body in order to serve modern forms of power. Precisely because it provides a universal

criterion of comparison, sexuality works to produce and normalize hierarchical orders of sameness and difference. It draws lines of exclusion and embeds them in desire and disgust, purity and pollution, morality and depravity, normativity and alterity. Under late capitalism, the global circulation of discourses of science and development in matters of health, education, and rights made sexuality an important category of intervention across the world. Yet since globalization, systems of oppressive power also have produced difference through sexual ideologies (Boellstorff 2005, 7). As an object of knowledge, for example, sexuality represents a variable for mapping “ethnocartographies of sexual practice” (Pigg and Adams 2005, 6–7). “Ethnicity and sexuality,” Nagel (2003, 1) argues, “join together to form a barrier to hold some people in and keep others out, to define who is pure and who is impure, to shape our view of ourselves and others, to fashion feelings of sexual desire and notions of sexual desirability, to provide us with seemingly ‘natural’ sexual preferences for some partners and ‘intuitive’ aversions to others, to leave us with a taste for some ethnic sexual encounters and a distaste for others.”

Africanist anthropologists and historians have recently struggled to dismantle paradigms of sexual alterity that have compromised conceptualizations of intimacy in African contexts. As Desiree Lewis (2011, 200) argues, “To explore African sexualities carefully means first exploring how they have been thought about; it requires what Kwame Appiah describes as a ‘discursive space-clearing,’ a way of both acknowledging and analyzing how others have historically been imagined.” Reflecting on sexuality in Africa, Signe Arnfred (2004, 7) suggests, means “thinking beyond the conceptual structure of colonial and even post-colonial European imaginations.” For these reasons, Africanist scholars critique extensively essentialist invocations of sexuality in Africa and provide deep empirical evidence to counter paradigms of sexual alterity (Arnfred 2004; Epprecht 2008, 2013; Hoad 2007; Lewis 2011; Tamale 2011). Avoiding stereotypes of African sexuality altogether, many anthropologists now explore how dynamics of globalization intersect with sex, intimacy, and love throughout the continent.

But what happens when postcolonial subjects, in Africa and elsewhere, claim and perform sexual otherness in order to access money and power? How do they imagine and act on their identities and attachments? And how do they claim and craft belonging in relation to their ethnosexuality? To find and understand the answers to these questions, it is not enough to critique othering representations of sexuality. Nor can we simply look past such stereotypes. Representations of sexual alterity, far from being only simple

*mis*representations, must also be interrogated as mechanisms of surveillance, marketization, subjection, and empowerment (Lepani 2012; Lorway 2014; Nagel 2003; Stoler 2002). It is important to ask how such representations shape the lives of those they claim to represent. This does not mean that researchers must attend exclusively to people's own meanings of their sexual practices. As Neville Hoad (2007, xxii) argues, "It is not enough to describe the diversity of African sexual practices on the ground," because "description alone, no matter how scrupulous, still produces African sexuality as the object of a prurient Western gaze." While rich ethnography remains invaluable, researchers must also detail how oppressive paradigms of ethnosexuality work on multiple scales at once. We must pay attention to how people come to live *as* Others or *through* and *around* their Otherness in specific contexts.

Samburu District, its people, and its history offer an opportune context in which to study the relations between belonging and ethnosexuality. Here, paradigms of sexual Otherness played a significant role in how the colonial and postindependence administrators and reformists governed Samburu, shaping most intimate aspects of people's lives. Attending to the production and outcomes of ethnosexuality and cultural alterity constitutes, for me, an ethical commitment to the subjects of this book. At the same time, my interlocutors' concrete ways of inhabiting the contradictions of lives lived with alterity offer important insights into the workings of oppressive notions of ethnosexuality—their limits, gaps, and possibilities.

BELONGING, ETHNICITY, AND SEXUAL MORALITY

With growing markets of moran ethnosexuality, many Samburu struggled to imagine how they could claim belonging through the recognition of others—whether the state, NGOs, or foreign donors—when others recognized them precisely for their sexual excesses. In a 2013 blog post, a Kenyan writer, publishing under the pseudonym Obsurvative, decries how "the recent highlights on the news about old white women settling in Kenya and marrying young Samburu men has [*sic*] tarnished the image of the Moran. The new Moran is not supposed to be a lazy young man sitting reluctantly to wait for the woman to provide!" Rather, the blogger says, the "new moran"—having abandoned actual war and cattle raiding—should remain a heroic figure "waging war against the adversities of life's struggles." "Unfortunately," he notes, "taking short cuts has become the order of the day and the new Moran, mischievously has run away from his responsibilities and invested his manhood into a god-forsaken business. The young warrior has resigned to . . . have sexual relations with women of far much old[er age]." The writer worries

that morans who sell sex undermine not only their own respectability but also “African” ideals of assertive, independent masculinity that morans had once epitomized. Defending values that he sees as essential to being African, the writer addresses a conservative middle-class audience that is likely to share some of his views. “How then,” he asks, “do we accept this heinous act of a young African man evading his duties to marry a white woman 20 years older (a whole generation mark you) than he is, then sit, languor and be provided for?” He concludes (echoing the title of a 1990 novel by Maasai writer Henry R. ole Kulet) that “the Moran is no more!”¹³

Samburu men and women I spoke to invoked, if in different ways, the rhetoric of such criticism when they complained that “men are no longer men,” family values have eroded, and that instead of hard work, youths now chose “shortcuts.” In their view, morans who had sex for money jeopardized the respectability of Samburu more generally. What happens, then, when young men seek respectability and moral recognition primarily through the commodification of ethnosexuality, that is, through ways others deem immoral? What happens when, in the eyes of others, men selling sex couple their ethnicity with sexual perversion? And how are Samburu to gain recognition in a wider world when the global media coverage of the “moran mania” relies on stereotypes of their sexual immorality?

Such concerns emerged from specific political aspirations in the present. Around 2010, many Samburu suddenly began talking more intensely of ethnicity or tribe (S: *kabila* or M: *lorere*), anticipating new political possibilities. Throughout the previous decades, some Kenyan leaders and civil society groups had advocated for the devolution of the state into a form of ethno-regional federalism called *majimboism*, hoping that this system would allow for a more just distribution of national resources. Then, following promulgation of a new constitution in 2010 and its implementation after the 2013 elections, Samburu District became a self-governing *county*. That is, for the first time, locals rather than the central government appointed their leaders through elections. In anticipation of this moment, in 2010 a growing number of Samburu politicians hoped to turn the county into an ethnic corporation of sorts and market wildlife safaris and ethnic cultural heritage to foreign tourists. Others hoped to open NGOs and attract foreign donors to invest in regional development. Many rural Samburu had long been marginalized by leaders of more powerful ethnic groups who considered them primitive and backward. Now, they hoped that once their district leaders were Samburu, they would benefit more directly from government resources. As they envisioned autonomy, Samburu sought to rearticulate what it meant to be-

long locally, who was really Samburu, and who was therefore entitled to partake in forthcoming political and economic opportunities. In this context, some spoke out more vocally against Turkana and Somali refugees or against Kikuyu, Luo, and Kamba migrant settlers, who were minority groups in the area. Others inspected more closely who had sustained ties of patrilineal descent and age set in the region and who did not. Ethnicity and morality played important roles in their attempts to define belonging.

In recent decades, a preoccupation with belonging and autochthony has been common throughout the world. In *The Perils of Belonging*, Peter Geschiere (2009, 6) argues that in Africa, for example, “democratization and decentralization, the two main issues on the neoliberal agenda, have the paradoxical effect of triggering an obsession with belonging.” Questions such as *who belongs?* and *how can one establish belonging?* become central concerns as communities reorganize themselves continuously in relation to new flows of global capital. In this context we witness, among other things, a “return to the local” or a rise of “localist thinking” (6, 27), varyingly expressed through the idioms of autochthony, ethnicity, indigeneity, or culture. In a similar vein, a central paradox of localist belonging is that it promises primordial, natural, and therefore safe and durable membership, while at the same time heightening concerns over who is *really* entitled to belong and who is not (38). So as new economic opportunities arise, Geschiere argues, “local communities are tending to close themselves and apply severe forms of exclusion of people who had earlier been considered fellows” (21). The stakes are high, for “struggles over local belonging are closely intertwined with the desire to be recognized as a citizen of the world” (27).

In Kenya, ethnicity represents a dominant mode of autochthonous belonging. Since the country’s independence in 1963, ethnic categories that the British colonial administration have solidified through its politics of indirect rule now shaped competitions over state resources, access to land, and political authority. Larger ethnic groups, such as Kikuyu and Luo, but also Kamba and Kalenjin, dominated state governance and the distribution of national resources and development (Lynch 2011; Oucho 2002). Patron-client relations along lines of ethnic belonging as well as between the leaders and populations of different ethnic groups partly dictated the geopolitical distribution of wealth. Hence, electoral practices—as well as, for example, the election violence that took place most recently in 1997 and 2008—have been anchored in networks of patronage based on ethnicity (Mwakikagile 2001; Ouchu 2002). Janet McIntosh (2016, 6) argues that in Kenyan public discourse, “entitlement to belong and to own land increasingly hinges on having

deep ancestral roots in local soil.” Ethnicity is a dominant mode for claiming such “roots” of primordial attachment through descent.

Kenya’s ethnicities were, however, anything but equal. National and international development discourses concurred with colonial and postcolonial hierarchies of identity to depict some ethnic groups as modern, developed, and entrepreneurial, and others as traditional, underdeveloped, and backward. In this ideological order, Maasai, Samburu, Turkana, Pokot, Rendille, and other “pastoralists” figured as culturally conservative Others of the nation. Political leaders in Nairobi often saw these groups as undeserving of modernization, development, and national resources, and thus denied them the benefits of full citizenship. In Samburu, for example, the government had long invoked cultural backwardness to postpone building infrastructure and incorporating locals more fully in the labor economy. Yet since 1980, as populations grew rapidly, livestock holdings declined, and the effects of structural adjustment programs further limited government spending, some Samburu (and Maasai) have found new ways to subvert Kenya’s ethnic hierarchy. Whereas in Kenya they occupied a basal and marginal position, on the global market, they soon found out, their identity was highly valued as more authentic and more exotic than those of other Kenyans. With otherwise limited access to resources, they consequently turned their marginality into a new source of capital.

In the past three decades, an increasing number of postcolonial subjects have found new venues to wealth through their ethnicity, in the process rediscovering the value of their identity and belonging in new ways. In *Ethnicity, Inc.*, John and Jean Comaroff (2009, 1) argue that following the effects of market liberalization, in Africa and other parts of the world ethnicity does not disappear but rather becomes “more implicated than ever before in the economics of everyday life.” Seeking new ways of accessing resources, people commodify ethnicity or turn it into corporate enterprises. This trend, the Comaroffs argue, has raised new challenges for belonging. On the one hand, it “opened up new means of producing value, of claiming recognition, of asserting sovereignty, of giving affective voice to belonging” (142). On the other, the commodification and incorporation of ethnicity “may also entrench old lines of inequality, conduce to new forms of exclusion, increase incentives for the concentration of power, and create as much poverty as wealth” (52). As ethnicity offers new entrepreneurial possibilities, “the question arises . . . of who benefits from ethno-branding, the incorporation of identity, the accumulation of capital. And what impact it has on belonging” (108). Herein, ethnicity is increasingly anchored in hegemonic imaginaries of genetics, an

imagined immutability of blood (38–46).¹⁴ But questions of morality are also key in establishing the right to belong.

The commodification of Samburu ethnicity through moran ethnosexuality brought sexual morality to the forefront of struggles over belonging. That sex and sexuality are central sites of moral anxiety and uncertainty over belonging is nothing new. This has long been the case. But in the present, this also plays out in new ways. Paul Amar (2013) describes the emergence of a new obsession with sexuality throughout the global South with the rise of “human-security governance,” a form of power sustained, among other things, by moral rehabilitation and the policing of “perverse” sexualities. In East Africa, the allegedly perverse sexualities of gays, lesbians, transvestites, prostitutes, and beach boys have been made, in recent years (if to different extents), to *both* congeal *and* bear responsibility for the failures of hegemonic expectations of family, kinship, and community. And this at a time when market reforms and social transformation often rendered such expectations unsustainable. Legal reforms and violent suppressions targeting homosexuals in Uganda and Kenya since 2008, more recent attacks on “loosely dressed” women in the capital cities of Kampala and Nairobi, and the daily police harassment of prostitutes and beach boys exemplify moral battles fought in the name of citizenship. Under these circumstances, invocations of the sexual immorality of morans directly challenged the belonging of Samburu to the nation-state and made their entitlement to national resources and state security questionable. Sexuality, as we shall see, increasingly defined entitlements to belonging and ethnicity, albeit in contested ways.

ON FIELDWORK, ITS ATTACHMENTS, AND ITS DETACHMENTS

I carried out a total of twenty-five months of field research in Kenya between 2005 and 2015. My shortest research trips were of two and three months’ duration, and my longest (in 2010–11) was fifteen months. Most of my fieldwork was based in Samburu, in Maralal town and in two highland villages that I call Siteti and Lorosoro.¹⁵ I also paid shorter visits to two other highland villages and two lowland villages. In addition, I undertook three months of research in the districts of Kwale and Mombasa at the Indian Ocean as I joined Samburu men in their seasonal migration to coastal beach resorts. There, I rented an apartment in the town of Mtwapa and also visited Samburu in Bamburi, Watamu, and Diani.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, I carried out a total of seventy-four household surveys in Siteti, Lorosoro, and two other Samburu locales. I

wanted to understand the social and economic context of life in the district. I asked men and women about their family's economic pursuits, genealogy, and kinship relations, as well as about their plans for the future. These conversations also allowed me to learn about struggles and desires that preoccupied my interlocutors. Gradually, I began to sit down with them for longer, open-ended interviews about their life trajectories, their challenges, and the kinds of respectability and belonging that they desired. I recorded sixty-six such interviews with Samburu men and women and European women. Throughout my stay in Samburu, I helped organize and also participated in formal events such as clan ceremonies, weddings, funerals, disco parties, political rallies, and tourist shows. I also followed up through informal conversations on things I had seen or heard. Between scheduled interviews and formal events, I spent much time socializing with men and women while herding cattle, working in gardens, selling in shops and bars, or hanging out on street corners or at the beach. Having become part of my informants' lives over the years, I had the opportunity to document their oftentimes rapidly shifting life trajectories.

Most of my interlocutors knew that I was from Romania, an Eastern European country with many political and economic problems that were quite similar, in some regards, to those in Kenya. But they also knew that I lived, studied, and worked in the United States, and that I had more money than most rural Samburu families. Consequently, numerous interlocutors sought to anchor me in their own relations of kinship and care as a patron and sponsor. Over the years, I have agreed to support several close friends with gifts in cash and kind. But I also resisted numerous such demands so that I could sustain my research and living budget. A Siteti elder, for instance, was quite upset that I refused to marry his daughter (whom I did not know) or help him rebuild his mother's house. To him, it was clear that I was, in fact, refusing not only his gift of affective kinship but also his economic clientage that would have been intrinsic to such a relationship. Working in coastal sexual economies proved even more difficult, as I had to figure out how to politely divert requests to participate in sex-for-money exchanges while spending many hours talking to people about such transactions. Although in many of these circumstances I preferred to remain unattached, these were key learning experiences. After all, many of my interlocutors—both Samburu and European—shared similar daily dilemmas.

In a context in which sex, ethnicity, and belonging were highly controversial topics, one of the greatest challenges of my field research was to navigate between groups of people who had strong and divergent views on

these issues. Men who traveled to the coast, their European partners, village elders, and urban middle-class youth and traders did not always share similar aspirations and goals, and at times distrusted one another or kept one another at a distance. During my first trip to Kenya, I lived near Lorosoro in the house of a Samburu elder named Francis. Francis was an Anglican missionary who was fluent in English. I had met him in a roadside restaurant in the town of Maralal, when I had just begun to learn Maa language and was making little progress with my research. We became friends, and he invited me to stay in his homestead. His sons, who were the same age as I was, introduced me to herding cattle and to life in Lorosoro. Locals quickly associated me with Francis's family, with his clan (the Lorokushu), and with the age set of his moran sons. That would have been alright with me if locals hadn't also assumed, as they did at first, that I, too, was a missionary, probably from the American church that sponsored Francis. Furthermore, as I became more interested in working with young men who migrated to the coast, Francis disapproved of my being friends with beach boys. He considered them disrespectful, sexually promiscuous, and vain in their pursuit of wealth. This he told me frankly. While we remained on friendly terms, I gradually detached myself from him and made other, closer friends in Lorosoro. Making friends across such lines of distrust and disregard, without really belonging to any one category of people as such, was difficult. But my socioeconomic status doubtless allowed me to attach or detach myself more or less as I pleased, while many of my informants did not have this privilege, at least not to the same extent.

On another occasion, I lived for a few months in the compound of a rich Samburu man married to a woman from Germany. Although many of my friends and research interlocutors disregarded my landlords for various reasons, I liked my apartment and explained to others that I was merely a tenant in that homestead. Soon, however, my landlords told me that they did not want me to receive visits from beach boys or "paupers" from town (I explore this incident in chapter 4). So, contrary to the old anthropological lore on the value of deep fieldwork immersion through kinship, I decided that the best way to sustain companionships with people of different backgrounds was to live on my own. I rented a small house with a garden and a chicken coop on the outskirts of Maralal. From there I traveled by foot or motorbike to spend the day or the week in different villages.

MONEY, LOVE, AND DILEMMAS OF INTIMACY

“If you want money, you should go ask my co-wife,” Denise, a woman from France, recalled telling her Samburu father-in-law. “Just go to her,” she said, her voice trembling with anger. “She’s the one who has been eating all my money, all these years.” Then she took a deep puff from her cigarette and looked at me. “These people are impossible, *bwana* [S, man].”

It was July 2008, and I was visiting Denise at her house on a hilltop outside Maralal. Over a cup a tea, she told me of what had occurred in May that year. Journalists from a Nairobi television station had asked her and her husband, Masian, to appear in a feature about marriages between Samburu men and white women. Denise and Masian had separated four years prior. But the journalists did not know that. Because they offered to pay, Denise and Masian concealed their separation. They took the crew to Lorosoro, where Masian’s family lived, and pretended to be happily married in the “bush.” That, they thought, was what the journalists wanted to see. “We drove to the village with different cars,” Denise recalled. She was laughing. “We got out of the car and played the greatest lovers ever. We held hands, walked around. . . . Then we got back in our cars, drove back, and never spoke again since.” What angered Denise was that after the crew had left, Masian’s father followed her to the car and asked her for money. “I can’t stand it,” she said. Then, referring to Samburu elders more generally, she explained, “For them, the *mzungu* [S, white person] means money. Behind your back, they tell their sons, ‘Where did you find this one? She is so old. She is so fat.’ And to your face, they will say [endearingly], ‘Oh, nkerai ai, nkerai ai’ [M, oh, my child, my child]. I hate it.”

I had met Denise in 2005. A friend from Maralal recommended that I interview her. So one day, I went to her house to introduce myself. She lived in a spacious, luxurious villa with three bedrooms, fully equipped kitchen and bathrooms, and a beautiful flower garden. Denise was very talkative and outspoken, but also funny and welcoming. She had a passion for business and was quite entrepreneurial. (I was not surprised to learn later that she performed for the Nairobi TV crew in exchange for cash.) But she was also very contemplative, and spent long hours reading romance novels, writing poems, and listening to Leonard Cohen’s music. Over the years, we became friends. We visited each other, exchanged books and movies, and had long conversations. “Here is another contribution for your research,” she would preface the spiciest of her stories. “This one is perfect for your book,” she would say.

Denise moved to northern Kenya in 1996, after she married Masian. She

had met him on her first visit to the country in 1991, while on vacation at an all-inclusive beach resort in Malindi. Before moving to Kenya, Denise visited Masian once or twice per year. One time, she also paid for him to visit her in Paris, where she worked in the administrative office of a transportation company. "I cannot say that I had a bad life in France," she told me. "I had a secure job, I was living in the capital. . . . If I have chosen Kenya, it is first of all because of my relationship with Masian. Perhaps, if I had fallen in love with a man of another country, I would have moved somewhere else." Denise spent much money to buy land and build a house and commercial spaces to rent. She wanted to live a comfortable life. She also financed Masian to start a cattle farm in Lorosoro. Things went smoothly at first.

"He seemed to be a very quiet man," she recalled. "He was ready to discuss any decision with me, to listen to my advice. . . . He considered me more educated. And he was very concerned with the financial aspects of our life. He was not willing to spend money for stupidities or to listen to the requests of the members of his community or those of his family. Also, he was spending a lot of time with me. It was very romantic."

But money quickly became a matter of conflict between them. Said Denise, "My ex-family always had reasons to ask me for money: the children were sick, the animals were sick, they needed medicines for the livestock. . . . Also, the family was not limited to the father or the mother, which I could accept and understand. But the brothers, the married sisters, the uncles, and cousins were all at my gate almost every day to request my help. I couldn't help them all. So Masian became very aggressive and abusive with me." She sighed. "I realized that to be a white woman in this community meant that I was there to solve all their problems."

Denise was concerned about the extent to which money enabled or corrupted, for her, the possibility of genuine love, intimacy, and affective attachment. Ongoing requests of money prompted her to question her ties to Masian and his family. She was aware, of course, of the discrepancy between her wealth and theirs. So, early in her married life, she had decided to pay for the education of Masian's younger brother and to bring into her house and care for a young boy of his lineage. This she enjoyed doing. But she was hurt to think that Masian and his family saw her primarily as a source of money. For her, love, friendship, and family did not foreclose material support. But the frequency and quantities of others' demands troubled her. Denise often told me that "Samburu beach boys ripped off sex tourists in Mombasa." But, living in Kenya, she did not see herself as a tourist—much less a sex tourist—nor did she think of her marriage as a commodified exchange.

So she struggled to understand why Masian and his family felt entitled to her resources.

Eight years into their marriage, Denise found out that Masian had married a second wife, a young Samburu woman from Lorosoro. She felt cheated. In her view, Masian and his family had lied to her, because they were interested in her wealth. “The power of money has affected my marriage,” she told me. “Masian bought the silence of the elders, forcing them to hide the second marriage he made without my consent. This is in total contradiction with the rules of the Samburu community. Polygamy exists, but the first wife is always aware of the arrival of a co-wife, and she is supposed to give her consent.” Denise and Masian separated immediately. When Masian’s father intervened to settle the dispute, Denise accused him of concealing his son’s second marriage. Then, four years later, Denise was hurt once again when the elder came to ask her for money during her visit to his village. She now thought that for her father-in-law, her money had always meant more than her affection and kinship.

Unlike Denise, most European women I met in Kenya continued to live abroad and maintained long-distance relationships with local men, but they shared some of her struggles with money and love. Was the money they gave their partners appreciated as a *gift*, or was it expected as part of a *commodified* exchange? Did their desire for intimacy imply material obligations toward their partners? And if so, did they also have to support their partners’ families? And what could they expect in return? Preoccupied with the authenticity of intimacy—whether it was “real” or “false”—these women tried to figure out proper boundaries between money and intimacy. Their concern was part of what Viviana Zelizer (2005, 3) describes as a wider Euro-American obsession with “finding the right match between economic relations and intimate ties.” Love and money could mix, but only in specific ways.

European women were not the only ones struggling to understand the monetary requests of the ones they desired and loved. Kenyan men and women faced similar challenges, though they dealt with them differently (Mojola 2014). In many African contexts, love and intimacy have long been imbedded in material exchanges (Cole 2009, 2010; Hunter 2010; Magubane 2004; Nyamnjoh 2005; Thomas and Cole 2009; L. White 1990). What, then, was distinct about such entanglements of sentiment and cash in the present? Certainly, commodification, or the process whereby exchange value is assigned to an object or service, was no longer about straightforward market exchanges. Rather, the logics of exchange value, investment, and risk now inflected domestic relations and familial attachments more intensively.

European women might not have always purchased ethnosexuality explicitly. There wasn't always something one can easily recognize as "sex work" or "sex tourism." For this reason, I also do not find such categories analytically productive for my purposes throughout this book. But the underlying exchange value of ethnosexuality shaped, in myriad ways, women's attachments to their long-term partners and husbands, and to their families. With the commodification of moran ethnosexuality, as we shall see, money infused intimacy and affective attachments, while the logics of kinship and belonging shaped how money circulated in both intimate and public domains.

ETHNO-EROTIC ECONOMIES

This book describes how the money and wealth produced at tourist resorts circulate in coastal migrant communities and farther, to Samburu District, in the north of the country. I offer the framework of ethno-erotic economies to conceptualize how the commodification of ethnosexuality is deeply entangled in processes whereby postcolonial subjects craft belonging. In the global economy of the late twentieth century, fantasies of ethnosexuality defined more intensively the exchange value of sexual labor, pornography, tourist destinations, and popular culture (Jacobs 2010; G. Mitchell 2015; Nagel 2003; Steven 2007; Stout 2014). Such fantasies, in turn, shaped postcolonial subjects' various forms of belonging and their claims to recognition, rights, and resources (Partridge 2012; Sheller 2012). I imagine ethno-erotic economies as extensive circulations of money, goods, and desires that, while anchored in the commodification of ethnosexuality, move far beyond sexual transactions as such to shape subjectivities, identities, and social worlds. Mapping ethno-erotic economies means showing how wider historical and political domains produce the kinds of eroticized and sexualized forms of Otherness available in tourism. It also means showing how such forms of alterity condition the ways in which those deemed Other can craft collective futures and carve out for themselves positions of political recognition and economic profit in the current world order.

Thinking through the framework of ethno-erotic economies, I problematize classic Marxist conceptual divisions between realms of economic production and social reproduction, an *inside* and an *outside* to the market (e.g., tourist market). For this reason, it is important to bear in mind that what I call ethno-erotic economies is not to be reduced to the tourist industry or, for that matter, to explicit sex-for-money transactions. Ethno-erotic economies entail both familial moments in rural homesteads and public encounters on tourist beaches, both intimate affairs of kinship and trans-

actional affairs of sex—all inflected more and more by the logics of commodification. Ethno-erotic economies are therefore a specific instance of *intimate economies*. Ara Wilson (2004) coins that term to show how private spheres of life that we usually think of as noneconomic are central sites of capitalism. Wilson points out that although “modern capitalist systems of production and marketing are considered less embedded in social life and less inflected with local cultural meanings and identities,” in fact they “are predicated on, and continue to interact with, these local social realisms” (20). Ethno-erotic economies are, then, intimate economies anchored in the production and consumption of ethnosexuality.

A study of ethno-erotic economies moves beyond an anthropology of tourism that is focused mainly on the relations between “hosts” and “guests” in tourist sites. Such a narrower focus, I argue, occludes larger social arenas of exchange, intimacy, and belonging that shape and are shaped by the ethnosexualities marketed in tourism. While focusing primarily on how ethnicity and culture are matters of representation, performance, and commodification, anthropologists of tourism and cultural commodification paid little attention to how representations of alterity materialize their effects, over time, outside the immediate contexts of their performance and transaction. In stark contrast to this trend, some anthropologists recently began exploring how the tourist commodification of sex shapes intimacies outside tourist resorts. Noelle Stout (2014) shows how, with market liberalization in post-Soviet Cuba, queer youths draw on tourist ads and international pornographic productions that eroticize their bodies in order to commodify sex and intimacy in tourism. As some Cubans sell sex and intimacy, Stout notes, domestic relations between family, friends, and dependents are increasingly framed like commodity exchanges, giving rise to complex moral dilemmas. Stout understands these moral struggles as intricately linked to sexual commodification and as part of an “erotic economy” that entails tourist sites along with domestic arrangements, consumptive practices, and more. I build on Stout’s work to show how ethno-erotic economies intensified the commodification of intimacy, ritual, and kinship in Samburu; how they generated paradoxical temporalities and subjectivities; and how all these came to transform notions of respectability and good life inherent to belonging.

Ethno-erotic economies are not closed or static systems of exchange but complex *circuits* that can be mapped in different ways, from different vantage points. In this book, I choose to explore how the commodification of moran sexuality shapes the lives of Samburu. However, one can take other routes by following, say, Maasai of southern Kenya and northern Tanzania or even non-

Maa-speaking Kenyan men as they commodify moran sexuality and imagine futures; Kenyan women who make lives performing different ethnosexualities—Kamba, Kikuyu, Giriama—for African, European, and, more recently, Chinese and Russian men; Kenyan men and women who move with their partners to Europe; and so on. At different times throughout this book, I offer glimpses of some of these diverse bifurcations of Kenya's ethno-erotic economies. However, I focus mainly on how Samburu craft belonging.

MY POSITION IN ETHNO-EROTIC ECONOMIES

During my fieldwork, I often found myself to be the object of erotic speculation and the subject of ethnosexualization in ways that are significant to understanding the somewhat odd position from which I began to map ethno-erotic economies. Take the following example. It was in the midst of my fieldwork, sometime in January 2011. The dry season had begun with a torrid heat that rapidly paved the way for a short but harsh drought in the Samburu highlands. It was late afternoon, and I was resting in the shade of my house in Maralal, exhausted from a six-mile walk to and from an interview. I found myself looking indifferently in the direction of my chicken coop. There, a rooster was mounting chickens. That was when Mama Jacinta, a neighbor, walked into my compound. Mama Jacinta and I had been good friends for many years. She was a widow in her fifties who enjoyed cooking at my house, chatting, or relaxing when she had too much trouble with her teenage children. Over time, we established a joking relationship of sorts, laughing about things that people would normally not discuss across gender and age divides. She caught me by surprise watching the rooster.

"What are you seeing that is so interesting?" she asked with a smile.

"Well, this shameless rooster has no boundaries," I joked.

Mama Jacinta laughed, embarrassed by what I had said, and yet, feeling licensed by my vulgar joking, proceeded to joke further.

"You know something, George?" she said with a playfully harsh tone. "Go in the house, work on your studies, and let the rooster have his fun. You must not get angry with him, just because you're not getting any."

Although Mama Jacinta's remark made me feel uncomfortable at that moment, it caused me to reflect on how my friends and research collaborators sexualized my presence in ways I had not anticipated. For many of my interlocutors, it was inconceivable that a white man with more money than many of them and with the status of studying and working in North American universities would travel alone without also consuming sex. What is more, during my fieldwork I was in my twenties and early thirties, an age

span when men were expected to be sexually active, often with multiple partners. In the case of the young men I worked with in Samburu, their access to money was sometimes made visible to others through the conspicuous consumption of expensive goods and sex. However, as neighbors and friends like Mama Jacinta carefully observed my every move, it soon became clear to many that even my rooster was having more fun than I was.

I preferred to maintain an asexual presence during my research; as a person who identifies as queer, my choice had to do with issues of safety at a time when outbursts of homophobic violence had become more common in Kenya than previously. In addition, I was hoping to avoid gossip that could affect my ability to move between different social categories of interlocutors. Yet gossip proliferated nevertheless. Locals saw my emerging friendships—if in different ways at different times—through stereotypes that were anything but new. Mama Jacinta, for instance, avoided going shopping in town with me, anticipating that people might read sex into our otherwise platonic friendship. One time, when I stopped to greet her in town and took a few steps along with her, another woman called out in front of others, “Mama Jacinta, you got yourself a *mzungu* [white person]?”

Mama Jacinta and I often joked about this incident, even though from then on we avoided walking together. However, my research assistant, Anna, was less concerned about what people said when they saw us together. Anna was a teacher, wife, and mother in her midthirties. When the elders of her native clan began addressing me as *lautani*, a kinship term meant for in-laws, or when her husband became very jealous of our friendship, she kept dismissing them to me as “backward people” who could not see that nonsexual friendships could exist between nonrelated men and women. Anna earned good money from her salaries and several businesses, and she also paid for her husband’s education, somewhat undermining his claims to authority as a husband. So she kept working with me even after her husband expressed his dissatisfaction. Anna and I were close friends. We walked together to interview women, we ate in local restaurants, and we spent long hours discussing local social issues. Soon our friendship came to be understood by others as an adulterous affair. That I liked a married woman was okay. Many young men did. But that she was a married woman spending so much time with an unmarried younger man was not. Her husband became very jealous, and elders of their community had to intervene to calm him down. Eventually, he said, he understood that we were just friends. But the town did not. When, before I left for the United States in 2011, Anna organized a surprise party for me with over a hundred guests and cried uncontrollably at the end,

people had no doubt that this had been a passionate adulterous relationship. Mama Jacinta, too, with her usual expressive smiles, was happy to realize in the end that, like my rooster, I did have my share of fun on the side, even if it was with other men's wives. Although I remained uncomfortable with such sexual speculations throughout my fieldwork, I also realized that they were not only inevitable but—more important—central to how people imagined and shaped the circulations of sex, desire, and money that characterized the wider ethno-erotic economies I was exploring. In this context, the anthropologist and his interlocutors did not come onto the social scene with fully formed subjectivities, but as they positioned themselves with each other, they claimed and contested subject positions in countless ways. Notions of race, class, gender, and sexuality played an important role in the articulation of such subject positions.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

Ethno-erotic Economies is divided into six chapters. The first two chapters provide the necessary background for understanding the contemporary effects of the commodification of moran ethnosexuality. Chapter 1 offers a historical overview of how the moran emerged as a figure of discourse in government, missionary, and developmental reforms, from the early colonial period until the present. Representations of the moran and his ethnosexuality played an important ideological role in the growing geopolitical and economic marginalization of Samburu regions and population in Kenya. Since the mid-twentieth century, the moran congealed the ambiguity of a central contradiction: on the one hand, he embodied a morally problematic, excessive sexuality; on the other hand, his eroticized bodily appearance became emblematic of nationalist ideals of assertive masculinity and tourist imaginings of exotic African warriorhood.

Chapter 2 outlines the social and economic conditions that gave rise to various practices of cultural and sexual commodification since the 1970s. I introduce the reader to how Samburu imagined respectability, and to how kinship, age-set relations, and ethno-regional belonging, more generally, have been strained in various ways by economic and social transformations. As the effects of landownership reforms and structural adjustment programs intersected with the outcomes of droughts, declining cattle economies, and rapid population growth, people devised all kinds of new ways to make a living. In this context, some men and women increasingly sold both culture and sex—either separately or together—to earn money.

Relationships between Samburu men and European women became

common in this context. Chapter 3 explores how men and women imagined and negotiated intimacy and the authenticity of moran sexuality at Kenya's coastal resorts. Detailing how Samburu men performed moranhood and ethnosexuality, what European women expected from their relationships with morans, and how partners negotiated their respective expectations with each other, this chapter maps a set of paradoxes of intimacy and commodification. Women desired both the cultural difference for which morans stood as well as the possibility to transcend that difference and live out romantic fantasies. Men sought their partners' financial support at the same time that they perceived their partners' attempts to control their whereabouts as undermining their masculinity. And partners contested how money threatened the authenticity of sex, intimacy, and romance, thus producing new configurations of intimate commodification. Situating these encounters within the wider sexual economies of coastal Kenya, I show how such intimacies were inherently slippery, prompting social actors to fix and stabilize racial, ethnic, and cultural difference as a condition of their ethnoerotic exchanges.

The following three chapters return to Samburu to show how circulations of money, styles, and desires generated in coastal economies shaped belonging in northern Kenya. Chapter 4 describes how men who returned with wealth from Mombasa became the object of salient gossip and moral criticism; how these men reevaluated their life trajectories and produced new subjectivities; and how local men and women contested what they saw as morally dubious forms of production that involved sex, sorcery, theft, and AIDS and that polluted wealth and, through it, the social world. So-called Mombasa morans, or men who return from coastal towns with money, wanted to convert their wealth into local recognition and respectability. Meanwhile, locals desired the material support of these men while deriding the sexual pursuits in which their wealth originated. What ensued was a complex dialogue—often indirect exchanges through the performance of style, consumption, gossip, songs, and everyday encounters—through which Mombasa morans and local men and women renegotiated the meanings of reciprocity, sociality, and kinship.

In chapter 5, I describe how, as men involved in tourism tried to convert their wealth into the social value of ethno-regional belonging, they often subverted its cultural logics. Representations and practices associated with descent, age sets, age grades, marriage, and bridewealth promised to anchor moral persons and collectivities in local social worlds. But some of these men invested money in weddings, elderhood rituals, or polygynous families way

ahead of time, while others struggled to catch up on meeting expectations associated with their life course. This prompted people throughout the district to reimagine the meanings of specific social attachments. Exploring salient subject positions such as the young big man, the beach-boy elder, and the madman, this chapter demonstrates how subversive events and desires worked to transform respectability and belonging, sometimes in unexpected ways. These transformations then opened new future-making possibilities.

Chapter 6 details how impoverished rural men and women in Samburu used clan rituals as the means for challenging their growing alienation and marginalization as well as the patronage and authority of new local elites, including men enriched in tourism. The *lopiro* ritual complex, organized once every fifteen years, dealt with the effects of adulterous sex and foreign commodities on everyday life in Samburu as well as with the myriad effects of ethno-erotic commodification. Because rural families understood new dynamics of sex and commodities as undermining ideals of morality, respectability, and propitious life, through the rituals of *lopiro*, they hoped to anchor sex in lineage relations and to domesticate foreign commodities. In this context, “being Samburu” became a matter of also positioning oneself morally in relationship to recent historical dynamics of sexual commodification.

Ethno-erotic Economies claims that a dialectical relationship exists between the global commodification of moran ethnosexuality on the one hand and the ways in which Samburu craft belonging in northern Kenya on the other. It describes how men and women struggle to reconcile older expectations of respectability, morality, and good life with the social and economic transformations that have arrived with tourist markets of ethnosexuality. It shows how, as these struggles unfold, new forms of exclusion and empowerment, inequality and respectability emerge, along with new ways to belong and build a future.