

Historical Background

The National Museums of Kenya has setup a Museum in Narok with exhibitions of pictures and artifacts to preserve the beauty and strength of the rich traditional culture of the Maasai and other speakers of the Maa language.

The Maa speakers in Kenya comprise the Maasai (Narok and Kajiado district), Samburu (Samburu, Laikipia district), Njemps (Baringo district) and groups of Ndorobo neighboring the Maasai.

The Maasai are believed to have originated from North Africa and entered Kenya near L. Turkana, spreading south through the Rift Valley, which provided extensive grazing grounds for their cattle. Today they occupy parts of Kenya and Tanzania.

The Maasai are noble, aristocratic people with an impressive physical appearance and a technology appropriate to the harsh environmental conditions of tropical savannah.

The Maasai live in a cycle constituted by a chain of ceremonies that involve the community as a whole. After childhood (inkera), initiation into adulthood (emorata), and adulthood. Girls marry and boys become warriors (ilmoran). Elders look forward to an age of responsibility and continuous involvement.

Gallery exhibitions include 24 reproductions of Joy Adamson's paintings, depicting the traditional lifestyle of Maa speakers. This collection is selected from vibrant ethnographical portraits, taken from her legacy of over 6,000 painted between 1949 and 1955.

Inside the gallery, 8 black and white photographs taken by Joy Adamson in 1951 in Maasailand (Narok, Loita and Amboseli) add to the historical value of the exhibits. The collection of cultural artifacts forms the heart of the exhibition. The Museum of Maa culture will also be a living museum, a place where contemporary issues receive as much attention as well. Where today's art is exhibited alongside yesterday's artifacts, where the education of young Maasai students is as important as the state-of-the-art research and conservation.