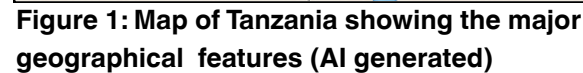


I am from the Maasai tribe that **originated** from Tanzania and its neighbouring country, Kenya. The geography of my country has had a great influence on my culture. Over time, I have witnessed many changes to my culture which has had a significant impact on peoples' daily life.



Our semi-nomadic lifestyle

Housing

A photograph of a small, dilapidated building with a corrugated metal roof and a wooden ladder leaning against it, situated in a dry, dusty environment. The building appears to be made of mud or adobe, with some sections missing or crumbling. The roof is made of corrugated metal sheets, some of which are rusted or damaged. A wooden ladder is leaning against the side of the building. The ground is dry and dusty, with some scattered debris. In the background, there are trees and a clear sky.

Figure 2: Enjakis with corrugated iron roofs

Tanzania is a spectacular country with flat, open grasslands, stunning lakes and both dormant and active volcanoes (Figure 1). The magnificent East African Rift Valley extends through the whole of East Africa, including through Tanzania. This amazing geographical feature extends through multiple countries, as well as Tanzania. The environment within the Rift Valley changes a lot. There are lakes, active volcanoes, rainforests, and areas where snow falls and open savannah.

Rain is highly seasonal and we have long rains from the end of March until May and the short

Mountains cause regional variations. Mount
 's highest mountain, reaching almost 6 000 m in
 much more rain than the Northern and Western

The Traditional Maasai Diet

A traditional diet for my tribe would be high in meat as they would **slaughter** and consume their own cattle and goats. In fact, the *morans* (young men) would only consume meat and milk!



Figure 3: My livestock

Many Maasai people, my family included, have **abandoned** their semi-nomadic lifestyle as a result. Instead, we have become **subsistence** farmers, growing enough maize and vegetables to feed ourselves when it rains. This has meant that our diet is more varied now, eating foods such as *loshoro*, a mixture of maize and **fermented** milk, as well as *ngararumu*, a mixture of maize and beans. Women tend to eat *kitalolo*, a mixture of maize and vegetables, rather like soup.

Pressures facing Maasai culture

My culture has changed significantly in my lifetime. Competition for land with farmers, other tribes as well as land being allocated to national parks has all had an impact on many aspects of Maasai culture. Buildings have been constructed where I live and there is no land for grazing cattle.

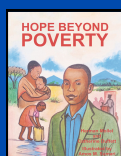
My family now only keeps a cow and a few goats because of the loss of land due to **urbanisation** (Figure 3), meaning that they are now hand-fed husks from maize (corn) after it has been harvested (Figure 4).



Figure 4: Maize husks stored for use as animal feed

I believe that change is unavoidable for all cultures and isn't necessarily a bad thing. Increased urbanisation has meant that we have had to move away from our traditional way of life, but it has also brought an improved quality of life. Schools built nearby mean that children can now receive an education rather than spending their days herding cattle, or completing household duties. More families have access to electricity and running water, reducing the need for women to walk many hours to collect water. There is also now a hospital, meaning women no longer have to give birth at home.

As my Maasai culture shows, geography has a significant impact on culture and way of life. Yet, access to modern technologies brought about by urbanisation also means that geography may not have such a big influence on culture as it has done in the past.



Read more about:

Traditional Maasai houses ♦ Clothing ♦ Oral storytelling ♦ Herding cattle