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**REPUBLIC OF KENYA**

**MINISTRY OF SPORTS, CULTURE AND THE ARTS**

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**NATIONAL INVENTORY OF ICH ELEMENTS**

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### 3.0 MAASAI ELEMENTS



#### 3.1.1 Ceremonies associated with childbirth

##### 3.1.1 Domain: Ceremonies

#### 3.1.2 Child Birth and Naming ceremonies

At birth the umbilical cord of the new born baby is cut. The sex of the new born is announced through ululation by one of the midwives. If it is a baby boy she will shout four times. In the morning a sheep is slaughtered as a symbol of cleansing all the dirt and as way of celebrating the birth of a baby boy. If it is a baby girl the midwife shouts twice and goes back to house. In the morning the blood of a heifer is drawn and given to the mother to drink. A few days after a baby is born, there is a shaving ceremony. Sheep is slaughtered as a way of cleansing all evil and celebrating the new birth. After the birth of a child the mother will keep her hair for a period of between two to five years during which time she will not engage into any intimacy with the husband. This was a family planning method. During this period, the husband will be engaged with his other wives. After about two years, (This could take up to five years) the child is given a name. The mother shaves her hair and weans the child. This ceremony is accompanied by drinking of alcohol and slaughtering of a sheep. The mother can now get another child. At the naming ceremony the baby is given two names; a nick name and an original one. Boys were named after the rich, successful and prominent men who had integrity

in the society, while girls were named after upright and fecund women who had given birth to many children and reared lots of livestock. After four years, the child's lower front tooth is removed and the ears pierced as a sign that the child is now independent.

### **3.1.3 Significance**

The birth of a child signifies continuity of the family lineage. It is one of the celebrated moments in one's life. Children are a source of happiness, pride and a symbol of wealth and respect among the Maasai. People who never had children were ostracized in society and looked themselves as having been cursed or not lucky as it was put. A happy family was one that was blessed with children. Naming of the child was meant to provide the child with identity and continuity of the family naming rites.

### **3.1.4 Viability**

The element is viable as it forms the daily life of the Maasai as children are born and given names on a daily basis. However the practice of removing the lower teeth and piercing of the ears has greatly diminished.

### **3.1.4 Tangible materials associated with the element**

There are tangible materials associated with the element including livestock specifically the sheep which has to be killed and feasted on. Other tangible materials associated with the element include: alcohol blood from a heifer, human hair which is shaven after the delivery of the baby.

## **3.2 Olkitupukunet – Olkitupukunet**

'the first offering' – This an event that signify the offering of sacrifice for birth of a Maasai Child. A sheep is usually is slaughtered and eaten by the community as sign of a new life in the village. The mother of the child is not allowed eat the meat from the slaughtered sheep and only allowed to drink the fat from the slaughtered. In the evening, the elders are called to offer blessing to the new born which later preceded by the naming ceremony. A child is usually a first 'nickname' which can later be confirmed or give a new one altogether. A mother hair usually remained unshaven at list for 3 or more months and is not allowed to sleep with a man until a child is at least two years old. This custom is rather diminishing as the Maasai community embraces other cultures.

## **3.3 Emowuo Olkiteng'**

Is usually the beginning of the age group and is a part of the larger Enkipaata Ceremony. This is particularly carried out by some of the Maasai Section 'Iloshon'. The Maasai section 'Iloshon'(pl) which practice this ceremony are Ilpurko, Ilkeekonyokie, Ilwuasi-nkishu, Ildamat and Ilootai. Each of the 'Olosho'(sing') has a role to play in this ceremony. The Ilootai holds the ox, ilkeekonyokie and Ilpurko hold the horns of the ox, the Iwausi-inkishu holds the middle while the Ildamat holds the ox hump. While the ox is being held, the leader of the ceremony is identified, who will be responsible for the sacrificial ox and is rewarded by;

- Nine castrated billies who are white in colour and grayish head and neck
- The blue ceremonial clothing
- A blameless heifer as price to allow the delegates of the ceremony to enter the 'manyata'

Two manyattas are usually constructed one for ilkeenyokie and one for the Ilpurko. The Manyatta usually consist of 49 huts and that is where the ox is sacrificed. Nine black heifers are usually taken to this manyatta. The uncircumcised boys arrive at the manyatta for the ceremony. Boys come to the manyatta with honey in the bags. The ceremony involves the making of fire, sacrifice of the ox and blessing.

### **3.4 Olkiteng lobaa**

(The ox with arrows). When young elders children are grown up, and his daughter are ready to be married, the elder has an obligation to offer a bull for slaughter that acts as ticket to perform the 'marriage ceremony' and engage in the marriage negotiation for his children. This usually signified by slaughtering of olkiteng' Lobaa ('ox with arrows' The slaughter of signifies 'readiness to be a father or son in law'. This will allow the performer of this act be authorized to accept an individual as an elder as well as to empowers to receive dowry payments. This is one of the most joyous event in which 'women are allowed to play a mock fight with men and women must defeat the men in this mock fight using slender canes from leaves. It is a very interesting game and most exciting events of the Maasai elements where you both women and men are interactive without fear.

### **3.5 Olasarr – to pray for rains / sacrifice to end calamities.**

Olasarr means an altar for sacrifice. When there is a serious drought, the community and agree for a time offer sacrifice to please God and pray for rains. Usually elder, good and men without blemish are chosen to undertake this exercise. A sacrificial sheep or ox is slaughtered, prayers made for this occasion mainly under the fig tree 'oreteti' (Maasai). The raised altar is where meat is roasted, prayers are made to God and meat eaten and nothing is left. No bones shall be broken in the event and nothing is left. Any left-overs are all burned to ashes. The community usually belief after the prayers they expect rains.

### **3.6 Olkiteng le Ntomono**

Killing of steer in preparation for initiation and introducing the adolescent to initiation or circumcision. These are preparatory stages to prepare for circumcision.

### **3.7 Entomononi**

Un-shaving of hair by women – signify the lactating period of a mother. The mother remained un-shaven for at least not less than three month. The un-shaven hair is signed she has a baby and still lactating. No man including her husband can sleep with her until the baby child is

grown up. The aim of these tenets was to ensure babies have enough time for breastfeeding and birth control planning process.

### **3.8 Enkipataa**

Preparation ceremony for introduction into moranhood: Enkipaata is the induction ceremony performed when boys attain the age for initiation/circumcision, when an age set for morans is open. A new age set, incorporating adolescent boys is formed only after every eight to twelve years. After undergoing a vigorous mentorship exercise with selected elders in the bush, is now time for the boys to return home. On the D-day, the boys, referred to in Maasai language as 'llyaiook' are awakened by the elders very early in the morning and smeared with a white substance 'Enturoto' on several parts of their bodies to enhance their outlook. The boys then strides in lines chanting and singing war songs as they head towards the Manyatta where they are to be met by singing men and women. At the entry of the Manyatta, they are blessed by the elders by sprinkling with milk from calabashes whose lids are of green grass. The 'Enkipaata' starts immediately after the 'closing' of the preceding age set and the 'opening' age set by new patron elders. These new patrons first bring new age-set to life by kindling a fire; whence the term 'fire-stick' (olpiron). Enkipaata involve the surge towards moran-hood by boys through dancing festivals in which fire-stick patrons formally kindle fire to bring the new age set to life and lift the ban on circumcision. The new age-set converge on this village and continue their incessant dancing, while their patrons supervise the arrangements. The climax of the festival occurs when their sponsors lift their curse on further circumcision and kindle the fire that brings the age-set to life. The boys then perform a special dance (aipak) after which the festival is named Enkipaata. Infertile women are encouraged to attend this final blessing squatting ceremony as is the only period where special prayers are made for fertility of women and their livestock.

### **3.9 Eunoto**

Moran dreadlock shaving of the moran hair and end of moranism: Eunoto ceremony is celebrated 8 years after the first initiation and is popularly regarded as a spectacular climax of moranhood. It is a huge ceremony that lasts for more than one month at a ceremonial Manyatta which hosts people from far and wide. The 'Ilkisonko' Maasai of Oloitoktok, for example share this ceremony with their kin from interior Tanzania. During Eunoto, a sacrificial ox is held by the morans by the horns and the one who holds it first receive most blessings.

The ox is consecrated by anointing with medicine in Maasai language 'emasho' from tail to head. The following day the ox is sacrificed at the centre of the kraal once the group leader, known as 'Olotuno' has been identified. The meat is roasted while the morans are made to sit in a wide circle, surrounded by nominal enclosures of green branches. Elders then offer the morans four cuts of the meat, each cut is smeared from the morans forehead down to the bridge of his nose four times then held for him to bite off the morsel. The climax of Eunoto is the shaving of the moran dreadlocks - all the morans must have shaven within four days. At the Eunoto ceremony, a ceremonial 'Manyatta' is constructed consisting of between 29 to 49 huts selected from a representation of the age set. This part of the ceremony is only performed by graduating morans and their fire-stick alliance as well as preparation to disband the Manyatta. Eunoto ceremony is a symbol of the moran graduating to young elders and taking a significant role in decision making and slowly shading off the moran responsibility to family and community responsibility and transitioning power to the upcoming age-set. These Maasai ceremonies are designed in such a way that there is a symbiotic relationship between people and cattle

### **3.10 Olng'esherr**

Meat eating ceremony – introducing to young elders: Olngesherr is the final festival in the series of promotions from initiation to senior eldership. It is performed in one Manyatta for the whole age-set. At this stage, the morans are now mature and married. Each participant should have his wooden stool, a thick bamboo tube for tobacco, a walking stick cut from 'esiteti tree tipped' with green leaves. The fire-stick patron blesses the stool in the evening. The next day the ox is sacrificed at the center of the kraal, and the celebrants accompanied with their wives are served with meat as an oath to test their moral integrity. If either have stooped below their age set in adultery, it has to be confessed here or else the consequences emerge in the open. It is then followed by blessing that unites the age-set and this is pronounced by the fire-stick patron after the test. This then transforms the morans of the forest into established elders of the village. They have to leave for their homes immediately before the freshly cut walking stick dries up. The morans are then bestowed the authority of elderhood and from then onwards they display certain privilege symbol of elder hood and signifies a symbolic sign of respect. With Olngesherr, the fire-stick patrons transfer their responsibilities and authority to their wards who are now full elders, a practice referred to by the Maasai as 'lying down'.

### **3.11 Marriage**

Marriage was allowed for men who had undergone Initiation and had passed through the moran stage. Brides were sometimes identified when they were still young girls. The boy's father would look around the families and identify the girl his son would marry. Sometimes the boy's parents would be asked to offer the boy to herd the animals of his prospective in-laws until the girl intended to be married has grown of age. This strengthened the friendship between families whose children would eventual marry.

After the girl had undergone the initiation rites, the boys' parents would pay dowry after "engaputy" (dowry negotiations) between the two families. The girl stayed in seclusion for some time. After recovery the boy's parents will take a fat animal for the girl.

As part of the dowry, different gifts including animals, blankets, tobacco etc were presented to the girl's parents.

On the wedding day, the boy and his parents would sleep in the girl's home. At this time, the girl would come back from seclusion. She is shaved and properly dressed. The girl is blessed by old men using the shukas before she leaves for the brides grooms home escorted by the best man.

When she gets to the groom's home she is rewarded with a cow that will be given to her mother before she unloads whatever she is carrying. There is a brief welcoming ceremony to induct her to the new family is given a family name. A special sheep is prepared and eaten by the women.

Marriage is determined by clan and age. It is taboo to marry the daughter of your age set. No one is allowed to marry from the same clan. Related clans were determined by the kind of animals they kept. Related clans had animals with similar tattoos. Cleansing rituals are performed in the event of relatives marrying.

#### **3.11.1 Significance**

Marriage is a social bond that strengthened relations and friendship between two families not related by blood. It promoted unity and social cohesion and enhance wealth of the bride's family through the acquisition of livestock from the groom. Marriage as an institution in traditional Maasai community ensured that the family lineage would be strengthened through procreation.

#### **3.11.2 Viability**

The element is still viable as young Maasai warriors get married always after the Eunoto ceremony. Though modern religion has permeated the element and many marriages are conducted in religious places such as churches and mosques, the need for a traditional marriage ceremony has persisted and its common practice to find the Maasai elites undergoing traditional marriages and weeding ceremonies.

#### **3.11.3 Tangible materials associated with the element**

The element is associated with various tangible materials. These include dowry, animals, blankets, shukas (a piece of cloth) and tobacco. A special sheep is normally killed and given to women to eat.

### **3.12 Death (En-keeya)**

Death is believed to be caused by 'Enkai Na-nyokie' red god who is bad, vengeful and master of life and death, personified by thunder and lightning. When he strikes and there is death in the community, the entire community is affected. Death is feared among the Maasai community and its occurrence brings along a sorrowful dark cloud that envelops all those who hear of it.

There are no elaborate mortuary practices among the Maasai and no explicit beliefs in life after death. The Maasai community believes that once life has come out of the body, the body has no use anymore and that's why they do not bury the dead but rather throw them away in the forest to be devoured by wild animals.

The Maasai determine if someone was a good person or not depending on whether the body will be devoured the first night or not; if the body is devoured, then the person was determined as good. However, if the body was not eaten, then there had to be an animal sacrifice to cleanse the evil associated with the deceased. For those considered good, prayers were invoked and thereafter a sacrificial animal was eaten.

In fact the dead would be smeared with fat so that they could easily attract wild animals to devour the bodies. Death was one thing no Maasai wanted to encounter. Because of this fear of death, when it was suspected that a person was about to die and had no chance of surviving, the person was taken away from their 'enjang' (homestead) to some bush nearby. A string was tied on one of the victims big toes which would occasionally be pulled to see if he or she was alive. When they pulled the string and the person responded then they knew he or she was alive. If they pulled again and there was no response then they knew that the individual was dead. When a person died at the homestead, the Maasai would vacate that 'enkaji' (house) and move to another one. They would pay a stranger to remove the dead, smear it with fat and take it for disposal in the forest. For a woman, life ended with death. For the man, after death, there was 'En-jung'ore or En-jung'go' inheritance. A widow has a choice on who to remarry after the death of her husband. A brother or close relative cannot marry the woman.

#### **3.12.1 Significance**

It is through death that administration of the estate of the deceased would be determined. The deceased property can only be shared to his children after his death. Inheritance of the wife of the deceased was only possible after death.

#### **3.12.2 Viability**

The element is still viable as death is a common occurrence in society.

#### **3.12.3 Tangible materials associated with the element**

The element is associated with various tangible materials. These include: animals, animal fat, ropes and meat.