

MAASAI SONGS, RIDDLES AND NARRATIVES

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SONGS AND POETRY

Introduction

Songs and poetry are an essential part of life in many communities. In societies where traditional customs are strongly adhered to, there are certain rituals that are observed to the accompaniment of songs, dirges and other poetic forms. Apart from these ritual tunes, there are also songs that are composed spontaneously as the occasion demands. These include lullabies, love songs, war songs and political songs. But whatever function they serve, songs and poetry embody a people's philosophy, beliefs, values and, sometimes, their historical development.

A children's Rhyme and Lullaby

Eetuo nkishu ang' olmong'I arroi
(Eetuo ntariang' olmergeshi)
Narum te lusie nemaipang'aki
Tigirayu iyie monyit e yieyio
Matara olmoruo otapashipasha
Oota surutia neeta mairina

Inyio olkipapa maishira empuoto
Kainyioo eishiruni metii le papa?
Parmuat le yieyio lilchoni ronkai
Ong'or iltatua neing'uari eitashe
Kintederritailcholo le nanga
Nedo enang'a enye ilmoshomporeta
Pororongos, entalala, mutaangai ai
Enterepenyi ai naijo orupante.

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Our cattle have come with the oxen with buffalo-shaped horns
(our sheep have come with the rams)
I peep through the window but will not meet them
Keep quiet my beloved little one
Let me thrash the spoilt old man
The one dressed in coils and beads
Get up brother and let us call the alarm
Whom do we alert when my brother is missing?
Parmuat of my mother's with the fair skin
The one whom the iltatua shoot but leave standing
The one fondled by the corners of the gown
His gown as red as the beads

2. osinkolio looltorrobo

Kiti kiti, hooyie pae
Ntoyie olparakuo le kishu, ehooyie pae heeho!
Naaminyiaru manaanng' entawuo tenkaina
Neisulaki inentawuo botor neitu eikau

Ng'oto kilelu miyagiyagu entarasai
Nkeno kishomi ning'uaa elusie patinw
Ena naimu Ole Nkaikoni etarishe
Niar osirua niar entaraku et enuta

Ejo ilparakuo eji mikirisio kirisio
Teneru olkiteng' neru munkarro toldoinyio
Neru osikiria neru olosira marae
Needo olkiteng' nebaiki enkai, olmeut!
Kumok intare neibor kiding'o, nkoiliin!
Kumok inkerra naa nkumot ejing', bitiro!

Amur esuntai olmairroto liauluo
Pee eikieki enkawuo ang' labuny nikirru!

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

A dorobo (Teasing) songs

kiti kiti

The girls of the pastoralists that rear cattle
They that handle the colostrum of the heifer with hands
Especially that of a heifer that is the late giving forth

Mother Kilelu, do not come leisurely
Shut the gateway but leave a little opening
Through which Ole Nkaikoni may come after the kill
Having killed an eland and a pregnant antelope

The pastoralists say we are not equal, yet we are
When the ox lows, the buffalo echoes on the hill
The donkey brays, so does the striped-bottomed!
Tall is the ox, it touches the sky, giraffe!
The goats are many and have white tails, gazelles!
The sheep are numerous and live in holes, warthogs!

I plaster the wall as well as the outside attic

So that our shapely bow could be hung
The one on which we depend!

3. Esuyiore

Maiseyie osinkolio le teipa
Maisisa iltiapukuro
Eima entepesi narresho
Naishayie ilkimula
chorus
Hooe hooyioe hoe hiyioho hooyia
Kainyioo sa naiting'ida koyiombo loolayiok oturia olkokoyoi

Koyiombo mira oltung'ani
Nimira sii enkiteng'
Ira ake enkuyukui napeto
Naishori kule oltiren

Nabo layiok o ilkaseron
Kepiyaya nkidong'o
Nabo olkaisiodi o olayioni
Mang'arie pooki osaroi

Oloolayiok oiguana
Mikiida enkiguana
Neidia enkakenya nanyokie
Naitaeku ilmaai

Nimijo iyie enyorrata kinyori
Ilkimojik loonkejek eing'ori
O ilpuluta loo nkonyek
Peyie elo olmarenke nkadoru
Nchere ekweta olayioni

Koyiombo obolibolo olorrok
Ijo ololchata otoyio
Koyiombo le mbaash enteipa

Erreshore oosirkon ilo

Eilepa enkalem inkokua
Memurata koyiombo
Nikijo kiashu toltarge
Negila lala toltarge

Nikijo kinang'u torinka
Neng'urrorri endukuya
Nikijo kisuaku te kule
Neisuaku Enkai osarge

Esira enkomerei enkong'u
Nesira olodo – kasha
Neyia olkirapash inkipa
Neyia Sikitok entawuo
Nemaisho ilkaisiod een

Koyiombo oitadoikio enkeju enkumoto
Nashula lasuria o ntarai
Naning' olorrishet peyie ejo karurum
Nikijo sere meishuro elattimi
Lenkaji e ng'oto koyiombo

Ero tenikweta teneitu
Kira ake iyiook olkinyor
Kiti kiti mikiok osaroi olili
Lenkang' nakwetie olayioni

A Teasing Song to Taunt Uncircumcised Boys

Let us sing the song of the evening
And praise the covered ones
They have passed through the thicket
That has taken all the covered ones

Chorus

What on earth makes Koyiombo arrogant
If he has feared the Kikuyu

Koyiombo you are neither a human being
Nor are you a cow
You are only a dirty puppy
That is given milk off the hearth

The boys are one with the brown birds
They both have rolled-up tails
The flincher is one with a boy
I share osaroi with neither

You councilor boy
May your counselling fail
There comes the glowing morning
That brings the hordes

But it is for the love of you that they come
They come to observe the toes
As well as the eye-lids
And rumour spreads far that
The boy has flinched

Koyiombo whose legs peel
Like a dry tree bark
Koyiombo who leaves at the evening time
And goes hunting for the asses¹

The knife has risen up to the pleades
Before Koyiombo is circumcised
When we tried to hook it down

The hooks got broken

When we tried to throw it down with a club
Its head broke off

When we tried to splash it down with milk
God splashed down blood

The pied wagtail has printed eyes
And superb starling is the colour of the birth fluid
As well as that of the heifers milk"
None will I let the flinchers wear"

Koyiombo has plunged his foot into a hole
Where snakes and cobras reside
We heard his leg being chewed
And we said "May the ritual trees die
Those of the house of Koyiombo's mother"

Boy whether you flinch or not
We like it either way
No, no, we will not drink the smelly osaroi
Of the home where the boy has flinched

Explanation

As already stated, circumcision is an essential operation in Maasai society. This song is sung to the candidate on the eve of the operation, and is accompanied by spitting, pinching and exposing the nakedness of the initiate. This is to make him build up courage, so that he can go through the operation without flinching, an act that not only shames him, but also dishonours his parents. Every movement he makes is closely observed, and the slightest movement such as flipping the eyelids is enough to make one be declared a coward. This is what the hordes mentioned in stanza four come to witness, in order to spread the rumour accordingly.

As is evident from this song uncircumcised boys are said to be dirty, incapable of holding council, and are generally despised. Notice how they are compared with dirty "brown birds" and "puppies", and their skin is said to peel like "the bark of a tree". If they flinch during circumcision, their osaroi is not shared by their age-mates and they are not permitted to wear the choice birds' feathers that are worn on the crown. The operation is performed normally by hunters or other agricultural groups such as the Kikuyu (see chorus). The song shows how bravery is worshipped by the Maasai.

4. Osinkolio Loonkituaak

Emuto kinyamal esupat
Esupat nairi nkukurto
Neiri nosarge o ne kule

Etaekuo enkaji ang' enaleng'
Etaekutuo kule neyeku olker
Enkolong natumi nosim ai
Netumi neng'ida olmarei lang'
Neng'ida enainosa o enaele
Neng'ida ng'otonye enoto osim
Neng'ida ilpayiani ear intoto

Enkai ai miking'orie olmoruo
Miking'orie olekekuno moitie
Oloshomo rukoro o njing'eta
Nelotu etang'asa eliyio enkaji ai
Etang'asa nchasho oltiren o nerruat

Miking'orie man-enkop loltarin
Olapa oidipie ng'otonye ntaleng'o
Enkiponu lomon neiperno
Nejoki pa-ntare, pa-supen
Pa-supen lai akaji ade ijing'?

Ekalo nanu enkaji enoshi ake

Enkaji emugie nasioki enkong'u
Enkaji e kishirtit olchoni
Nemeeta enkurrukur naitiamie
Enkaji e kilulung'a olepet
Kilulung'a oloyeku oleteipa

Enkai ai nasai aatasayia
Enkai irrugu nkonyek abori
Enkai ai nimintayu ntabo
Aitayu ilmurran lang' le polos
Ileme layiok neme selenken
Impurpurri meidimari nchoki

Nchoo ntomonok inkera
Nchoo pooki miiliar
Metii enamakua itejo aisho
Metii enkiberie enkoshoke
Neleku endia nainosa enenye openy

Neisho ina kinguranie nkera
Nedoiki naidaikie enkusaka
Inaatejo erropil iltaikan
Inaatejo emelok intare
Nejo olmuriang' peyie ejo olkuluk

Ndiain naayanyit ilewa
Naajokini tinyiku nejo ayia
Tinyiku mainosie enkiyio enkop
Maitainyie enchonkorro nosim ai

Ntumain nikitejo saing'ang'ie
Naing'ang'ie olkipoket kishomi
Neing'angie ilmosorin ilmoruak
Neingang'ie ilpayiani ilchekuti

Ilili niropil nosim ai

Ilili mikinyim ing'oruo
Ilmurran looltaikan ake onyim
Nimikinyim sii lelo enadede

Patim ai nemeiro nairorie
Tenkae kata mairoro tenkaji ang'
Airo mainosa lomom supati
Sidan lang lemetii enkurrarre.

Women's Prayer Song

Dusk has found us still preoccupied
Preoccupied with the pleasantries of cleaning gourds
The gourds of milk and of blood

The luscious ones have dawned on us
The milk has arrived and so has the ram

The day the beloved one is received
Delight descends on the entire home
She that has eaten and she that has worn (ochre)
Delight fills the mother for the repose obtained
Delight smothers the elders as they play with pebbles

My God, do not leave me at the mercy of the man
At his habitually moody whims
He that rounds the village
Arriving when loneliness has filled the house
Settling on the walls as well as on the bed

Not at the mercy of a wanderer with unsteady affection
He whose mother had completed all rituals due to him
He to whom guests come saying: "My friend, my dear
Where will you spend tonight?"

I am bound to the usual house

The house of the fair one that catches the eye
The house with slippery hide
With no toddler to mess up
The house with the full gourds
Full in the morning and evening

Oh God who is worshipped I beg thee
Oh God lower thine eyes and look down
My God do not make blunders
By creating those that are half warriors
Those who are neither lads nor maidens
The sluggish ones that cannot tend flock

Give children to the womenfolk
Give them all do not disparage them
For there is none that is unsuited once given
There is none whose womb is timid
Excepting the bitch that has eaten her own

Whilst we play with the children
She that mauled her own was gripped with regret
Those who thought the pigtailed were sweet-scented
Those who thought the goats are delicious"
It may have been typhoid or foot and mouth disease

The bitches that adore males
Who comply when asked to go near
Come near and let's destroy the baby
Let's crush him to a pulp

The poor ones we have dubbed 'deluders'
For they delude the gates with wedding gourds"
They delude the elders with beer gourds
And they delude them too with shepherds"

You smell both bad and good my beloved
You smell but the females do not sneer at you
Only warriors with pigtails sneer
But their sneers do not last¹²

My beloved that does not talk yet I talk to him
Let us chat at our house at a later date
Let us talk of good news
The good news without slander

Explanation

This women's song was originally sung when a child was born but it is also often heard in other festivities. It is accompanied by slow dancing with the soloist singing the main part and others the rejoinder. Women take turns as soloists.

The song is basically meant to welcome a new baby with great delight. Everyone is kept pleasantly occupied cleaning gourds, eating, making themselves up and making merry. But as it progresses it becomes a prayer for children by those who do not have them and for those who want more. It also expresses displeasure at husbands for providing inadequate and unsteady affection and at their preference for younger and more beautiful company.

5 Osinkolio Loo nkituaak

Parsae tadamu ena sile
Esile nemelak nkishu
Nemelak enkikuei natudung'uo
Nemelak enkare naokoki
Nemelak olumbuani atadoikio
Enkerai oltung'ani nalak

Chorus

Hoyiayio ehoo, hoyiayio
Ayok ayooki Enkai ai

Enkai nasai atasayia
Nasai toonaishi o te kule
Toning'u naanare etuumate
Enare nedung'i olmasi onyil
Osidai odung'i te kule

Patim ai maaru naing'odeu
Nkatampo e Nkai aimariri
Pee aaisho tendorrop nosim ai
Nosim ai natijing'ie enkutu
Natijing'ie oloikarri anaa ilmurran

Nayieng'ie ololtuala osekeno
Oloseken olopeny neimany
Meeta enkirotet nkishu ang'
Aisho nosim indaiki supati

A Women's Prayer Song

O thou who is worshipped remember this debt
The debt that cows do not pay
Tree branches that I cut do not pay it
The water that I fetch for him does not pay it
If I go inside the well it does not pay
It is only the human child that would pay it

Chorus

I come early to my God
O God who is worshipped I pray to thee
Thou who is prayed to with beer and with milk
Listen to what best suits womenfolk
It suits when long greasy hair is shaven
The beautiful one that is shaven with milk

My beloved one whom I pamper is never scolded
I look up at God's clouds
So that he could in short grant me repose
The beloved one of whom I have fed
I have entered the meat-camp like the warriors

The distinguished ox with the bell have I slaughtered
The one the owner swears by
There is none among our cattle that is favourite
I grant my beloved one the best of foods.

Explanation

This too is a prayer song, but it is more of a lament, that may have been sung first by childless women at one of their meetings. It expresses the sorry state of childless women in the Maasai community, the sorrow and the pains they go through. It goes to prove the truth of the proverb: "Children are the bright moon"

6 Osinkolio loo nkituaak

Aasai aomon Papa lai le Nkai
Aasai aomon Iltuati oltareto

Nchooki ntokitin kumok naomon
Nchooki sialibi olcholo lematum
Nikincho oloigari opiyaya lonkulak
Le nkeseni e yieyio naitore sikitok
Nchooki enkukuri naisamis enkerai
Nchooki eleketiet empolos nemelak

Etejo naisho kiyieu entomono
Etejo nkera inono kiyieu entomono

Women's Prayer Song

I plead and pray to thee, my father of the heavens
I pray to thee through the Iltuati and Iltareto

Grant me the many things that I ask of you
Grant me the cloak with the corners"
Grant me the rolled up skirt with urine
Of the beloved one that I suckle
Grant me the smelly gourd of the infant
Grant me the waist belt that I shall not unfasten

The producers of children say we want maternity
Thy children say we want maternity

Explanation

This prayer song, like the two before it, requests God to grand children to the womenfolk. But notice how indirectly this request is put in this song. It talks of all the things associated with babies.

7 Irrepeta Oolkamaniki Loolpurko Errep Noolkidemi Onkulie

Enyor Emusunkui olodua
Neisulaki enenkare narok
Eirragie Pareron tioriong'

Enoonkurman metudung'i
Siriri naata ilasho mankek
Naigilie olmari ole Nesenke
Laleyio ehoo, hoo iyio laleyio ehoo (Chorus)

Ore eranyisho mampai e sirit ai
Nagira amuk nanu enkutuk
Mme ntoki nalimu maata

Nkatampo Enkai aomon
Meinyiaku Enkai te sipitali
Ololtaika orru Naitiku

Yieyio lai ng'oto Naitiku
Enalepito isiruai olwuampa
Nimioshie enchata nairoishi
Siriri olong'u tenelotu

Maitieu aikilikuana ntae
Enkop naitipat Pukoret
Ootu enosa ilomon peyie aning'
Te suntai enkaji ang' tara

Aning'ito eji olchurrai orresho
Eitipatita Reyio nalepo
Enaigilie ilmepunya emunge
Illookishau emparinko

Atiiaaka ole Kipuri owuasa
Misuj ilturua mikisul
Tijing'a enailuda maruate
Nainosie oltir ilong'oi

Eshomo olosioki iloipi
Neito ilkeek ilakedok
Neing'uari olopheny enara
Loltuati opi metisiri

Ilmolelian loosikitok
Oishiru ntawua neponu
Nadung'ie ololming'ani Rripo
Nadung'ie ole Ntiako kusaka

Elangilang'a ololming'ani
Lenkaisi edung'i suya

Olchani li auluo otukurre
Oinosie ntasati enchenche
Milo enchankar ng'oto kisimpol
Ng'otonye olmurrani le sayiet
Olorikito Malancha enkereri
Ntashat naaudio esinko

Eiririunye emutiy enchan
Nang'as arrep nabo sirit
Atang'asa arrep naing'asia osioki
Najulito olorru Kimeriai
Neoiki ole mpoke oloing'ang'e.
Le nkitipai oo nkujit
Taoiki enkitipai e kule
Naibung'ie nchilalo ilaimutia

Praises for Ukamaniki Age-Group sung by
Noolkidemi and others

My gall loves the Mzungu
Especially the one from Enkare Narok
For laying bare Pareron of the ranch
To be shared among the warriors
Siriri with the ornamental calves
That ole Nesenke returned for (to the raid)

Chorus

Whilst those of my age are dancing
I sit with my mouth shut
Not for want of what to say
I am praying to God's clouds
For God to return from hospital
The pig-tailed one brother to Naitiku

Oh mother, mother to Naitiku
The one milking the beige ones (from the raid)
Do not hit the spotted siriri
With a heavy stick when she comes

I dare not ask you
The country from which pukoret originates
Come and talk news against the wall of our house
Tonight so that I may hear

I hear that from the narrow olchurrai
Comes Reyio with milk aplenty
Compelling warriors with well-fitting legbands" to return
playfully to Emparinko (country)

I have told the proud Ole Kipuri
Not to keep embarrassing company of the lazy
Go along with the brave ones
Whose shields are dented

The quick one has run to the shades
The climbers have taken to the trees
Leaving the owner of the fight
Whose father is oltuati to be branded"

Those of the Ilmolelian clan"
That come when the heifers call out
I share out Rripo" with Ololming'ani
And Kusaka" with Ole Ntiako

The Ololming'ani criss-crosses
As we share Suyu'
The shade outside has grown bare
As the ladies chat below it
Don't you argue mother of Kisimpol
Mother of the favourite warrior

Led by the striped Malancha
From the nine ridges of sinko

The dusk and the rain have together descended
As I sing praises of one group (of warriors)
I start with the one that is first to wonder
Among whom is he of Kimeriai's mother
Ole mpoke leaked on the atmosphere (air)
At the lush drizzly country
Do leak on the drizzle land where milk is plenty
And where spears have developed gaps.

Explanation

This is a praise song that was composed by a young woman called Nolkidemi for the Ilkamaniki age-group of Purko (Kajiado). This is the age-group of men who were warriors in the mid-fifties. She sings praises of warriors, cites names of their relations, and recounts their accomplishments during raids, the names of cows that were obtained, and their sources. Notice that she also mentions the warriors who are known for their cowardice.

There are tunes that gain popularity in time and are copied and sung as they are, but often the names and places are substituted for others, depending on the area and time.

8 Irrepeta Esiankiki

Etukusho olmoruo tiauluo
Neyau enkushoto oltiren
Akiti enkushoto olpayian lai
Mirra ilmoru le nkima
Amu iyie otiaaka oloo Namerae
Ino irraga enkaji e mampai
Neme enkerai nang'arie kina
Neme enaikau pantawuo
Niyiolo kibirok inkabur

Meiba nkiri tenetumo

Lopayian irragie matata
Mairoto sirkon pee kipuo
Airoto nempirdai ashipa
Naitoki airo Noolmong'i
Ayioalo ajo oloika ade alo
Namanya emarti enkurrarru
Namanya enkurrarru ole Kaigil
Laashomie nkiri bata
Elong'o sampu oo Mosomba
Naikuso Ilkokoyo le Nteyia

Chorus

Laleyio ehoo, hee hiyioo laleyio eho

A Woman's Song

A man went into a fit outside the village
Coming to the hearth with it
Calm down my husband
Crush not the firestones
For you are the one who told Namerae's brother
To go and spend at the young woman's house
And he is neither a child with whom I have shared the breast
Nor is he the first born of my co-wife
And you know the flesh of petit-ribbed ones
Do not mind coming together

Lay down your fury old man
Let us load the donkeys and move on
I have loaded Nempirdai' with merry
Have done the same with Noolmong'i
Knowing that I am going to the high ground
Where he with the fluffy ostrich headdress lives

Where Ole Kaigil's head-dress resides
The place where my flesh felt unsafe
The dapple spear, brother to Mosomba
Who wiped out the Kikuyus of Ndeyia

Explanation

This is a kind of song that is sung in festivities when each woman takes time to express her experiences and thoughts. The composer seems to have had rather dramatic experiences although she takes them with good humour at the expense of her jealous husband.

9 Irrepeta e Saetuan tuan

Nkuapi naamanya iltiyan lang'
Ino nkena mincho kilang'

Oyiayio hoo laleyio ehoyiaayio (Chorus)

Emanya ole kipuri owuasa
Le ng'oto Nakae Ilmotioo

Nemanya ilmeori eiriamari
Lololkatira Embirika

Nelo amanya enkerai oolmurran
Leng'oto kitai oltepesi

Nemanya ole Esho lolgisoi
Le ng'oto Ntitai eneika

Nelo amanya ologeli osur atua
Enting'ida naishuyie Nkunyinyi

Amen isiankikin tena kop
Neisulaki inoonkidong'i

Sasin ilmurran lirorierie
Neima nkiri enkuretisho

Era kulo tualan okuni
Linkodo nkg'i nikiya

Kinkonyaitie oltuala oikodo nkumok
Lole Sampurri loolpapit

Kiwaita temanyata ole Ping'ua
Isototo nkayioke erashe

Kiwaita ole Rakua lolgisoi
Oishuyie Naingolingola

Enchira naanetu nkidong'i
Ole Ping'ua lempere olkiteng

Praise song of Saetuan*

Count the locations where our bamboos' live
And miss not any

The proud ole Kipuri of Nakae's mother
Lives at Ilmotioo

The identical twins of Ole Olkatira
Live by the waterhole

The warrior's son of Kitai's mother
Lives at Oltepesi

Ole Esho of the ring of Ntitai's mother
Lives at the high ground

The thicket of ologeli
Holds the proud one of Nkunyinyi

I despise the young women of this country
Especially those of the Nkidong'i

The warriors with whom you talk are thin
And their flesh is drenched with cowardice

Three bells have you decorated
But we have taken them

We have repatriated the highly decorated bell
of Ole Sampurri³ with long hair

At the manyatta we have taken Ole Ping'ua
While you the diviner boys are gathered

We have taken Ole Rakua with the ring
The one who lives by fighting

You the Nkidong'i may cry bitterly
For Ole Ping'ua with the spear that is worth an ox

Oyiayio hoo laleyio ehoyiaayio
(Repeated after every verse)

Explanation

This song praises the same group of warriors as those in song 7 but this one only refers to their relatives and their home areas. It also teases and provokes the Nkidong'i warriors (these are from another olosho or section) for being too

cowardly to defend their group from the adjoining Purko section. Their girls are, therefore, despised for the cowardice of their warriors.

10 Irrepeta e Mopoi

Kaji Kirrepieki Ololtibili
Meishoru enkolong' olupurkel
Mikirrepi te saa sita
Nailiarie oladalu nkishu
Nimikirrepi etadoyie enkolong'
Meya irrepeta oldalati
Enkolong' ake nalotu ene wueji
Nerrepi olodoru ng'amaro

Eitu ashurtaki entilata ino
Olalaa ooki naishi
Atanapa enyorrata olchore lai
Ebaiki apa ara enkiti kerai
Atanapa entilata tolodua
Metubulu anaa nkolong'i

Mapik enyorrata olchore lai
Elukunya natii ilbeli
Etirisha ilkimojik ondapi
Nerish entanun o emoinyua
Nedoyio enyorrata olchore lai
Alo eneirragie ng'aturan
Enenapieki nkera ake apik
Metubulu anaa nkolong'i

Oltung'ani oiba nanyor ilmurran
Ng'oru nabo nagol nias
Tikirrie obaribara iltuli
Meshomo aipang' te Nairobi
Tipika emuatata olng'ojine
Nipik olowuaru ronkai

Ore pee ekenyua eserian intare
Napal Ole ng'oto Talash
Tang'orokoki oloibor kume
Maitashalunyie loolpapit

Love song by Mopoi

When could thy praises be sung, Ololtibili?
For this scorching summer heat prevent it
They cannot be sung at midday
For then, the sun weakens the cattle
They cannot be sung at sunset
For the sun will set with the praises
Oh, when the sun gets to that point
(pointing to the position of the sun about 9 a.m.)
Praises of he with the scarlet one will be sung

I developed admiration for you
Not at the drinking hall
I have stored the love of my love
Since I was just a little girl
I have stored it at the gall bladder
To nurture it day by day

I dare not store this precious love of my love
At the head, for the mind abounds with changes

It has edged between the fingers and the palm
As well as the spleen and the liver
The love of my love has gone down
To where the infants lie
I store it where the infants are carried
To keep it growing day by day.

He that detests my loving the warriors
Find one tough thing to do

Scrape the road with your buttocks
Until you have reached Nairobi
Put a hyena at the sheep pen
As well as the slim beast (cheetah)
If by the morning the sheep are safe
I will give up the brother of Talash
Then you can bleed the white-nosed one (donkey)
To purge me from the long-haired one

Explanation

This romantic love song was composed by a woman from Matapato section in praise of a man called Ololtibili whom she loved. She provokes her husband to do the impossible before she can end her relationship with this man.

11 Enkipolosa (Ilmatapato)

Ajul Ole Siamito olmeing'atie enkop ilonito
Le enaloki e yieyio natii enkutoto
Tonyoku larridaki lai enkaina ematua
Tiaatua ilmirisho looltaikan likincho

Abuaaki emutiy o endaruna
Olmurrani lai lenkila enkopiro
Pee mejo Enkai nemejo enkop
Kalo ting'idai ele lemebuak ebuaki

Najoki mara nanu oltingidai le toki
Ara ake oibeloyie emurt osina
Loonkishu naitong'or enkonom
Naatemena entito elepito
Nemenu enkayioni nairritita
Nememut entonata olchani etaleng'o osupatei

Atayieua nanu olmurrani le nkila enkopiro
Ine likae mayiapi naashal olopheny naponie

Kurruk kurruk oibor enemuati nig'oroyiok
Neme tenkop ang' eiborrie
Nerok enkila naishopito
Neme tenkop ang' eishopo
Tolikioki ake ilkiushin irruka
Loosiria likituata enkaji oonaapi ronkeni king'oru

Abuaaki emutiy endaruna
Olmurrani lai loonaapi ronkeni
Mejo Enkai nemejo enkop
Kalo ting'idai lido lemebuak ebuaki

Mara olmurrani loonaapi ronkeni
Olting'idai le toki
Ara ake oibeloye emurt osina
Lonkishu naitong'or enkonom
Naamen entito elepito
Nemen eji enkayioni nairritita
Nememut entonata olchani etaleng'o osupatei

Atayieua olmurrani lenkila enkopiro
Naashal olayioni le likae mayiapi naponie

**Enkipolosa War Song
(Ilmatapato, 1977)**

Ole Siamito's colour is changing¹
As he fails to lift the tough hides from the ground²
The shields of our large manyatta situated between ridges
Do struggle on my beloved
With thine arm strapped against thy side³
For thou art with the winning party

I call out loud at twilight as well as in the morn
I the warrior with the black cloak

So that neither the heavens nor the earth can say
I am arrogant, for not calling out loud enough like the others

My answer is that I am not at all arrogant
But a humble being whose neck is weighed down by poverty
Poverty of a herd that barely numbers fifty
A herd that is despised by the girl who milks
As well as by the boy who herds
A herd that does not finish a mere foot of a tree
When it is lush with vegetation

I the warrior of the black cloak
Now require those of the weak owner
From foreign lands to boost my herd

Crow, crow who wears a white band
On the place where women wear coils
You have not just worn this band in our country
You wear a black cloak
But not just in our country
Tell me where those of the Siria are
Whose humps are like anthills
For we of the thin spears are dying for them

I call out at twilight as well as in the morn
I the warrior of the long thin spear
So that neither the heavens nor the earth should say
I am arrogant for not calling out loud enough like the others

I the warrior of the long thin spear
Am not at all arrogant
But a humble being whose neck is weighed down by poverty
Poverty of a herd that falls below fifty
A herd that is despised by the girl who milks
As well as by the boy who herds
A herd that does not finish a mere foot of a tree

when it is lush with vegetation

I the warrior of the black cloak
Now require those of the weak owner
From foreign lands to boost my herd

Explanation

This is a common war song. This particular version was recorded in 1977 during Eunoto, a graduation ceremony from warriorhood to elderhood, for the Matapafo section in Kajiado district. It is often sung very early in the morning, or at dusk, and it is meant to give the warriors the spirit and courage to enable them to fight and raid other sections. It is sung with a very high pitch by one main soloist; other warriors sing the chorus.

12 Eoko (Ole Pere)

Oyie majo duo kalotu ena nabanji
Eitu ajo yieyio Kores o Makooi
Namishiri ntauua sidain ole Ping'ua
Namishiri ilotot enyori enkop
Neimie oloing'oni kirapash lemaal oltili

Maroroi naata emua reko nakurito oleng' ileleru
Nkarash olkiteng' lai oishopito buluu
Naitaa elang'ata euapata teneilepaki Ole Polos
Omanya yiook ilmeiseyieki lole Dikir
Otamoo nchoo ogela ilaramatie

Ke enaiding'a ai oolmong'i shiloin ena ana kakua?
Ayiolo ajo enkinyoti ai sidai oolmong'i shiloin
Maikodo lemekenyu eirragita te ndikir
Nanyokie ilpayiani nkutukie etoni aakes enkurma

Aininche nekwa kulie ana kakua?
Ayiolo ajo ninche nekwa olaram odo enkitipet lekiripa

Nedo ntaua meela neitoki ntaua enkiborra nanare ilorikan
Ilmutende lemeisho enkaripo eisiadu penyo

Aininche nekwa kulie ana kakua?
Ee pae oleng'oti lai oolmong'i lemepono arroi
Lemaikunja eseshata napuku ilkumok aa wuasin
Neyupuyup loleraimeidimu irruka are

Aininche nekua kulie ana kakua?
Nayiolo ajo ninche nekua sandikon ilaing'ok e Meirurae
Naibung'a ilera encheapati nedar enkorui amanu tentim nasur
Neriku enkashe nashuroi ilepeta sapuki mouarak oo namba e sogo

Aininche nekua kulie ana kakua?
Nayiolo ajo ninche nekua napiroki nangan olkiu obo
Ijo nangan emusis eilepaki nairobi enkiyang'et
Naijorie olkiteng lai lenanga nakuyiana ilkurreta

Aininche nekua kulie ana kakua?
Ayiolo ajo ninche nekua olamayio lai oru nkorkorri
Naibayioki emuti iloshon naning'o olumbuani
Lembene eyiogiyiogu enoompisai nememira e Mwangi

Translation

I would never have thought I would come this far
Before telling you that I am Ole Kores
The legs of whose beautiful heifers are branded
As they move on the green landscape

There goes Maroroi' with the spotted ochre colour
Then that ox of mine that is dressed in blue
Who takes a quick flight up the high country of Ole Polos
Where we, the brave sons of Ole Dikir live
Whose cattle are used to paddock grazing

Is that it or is it another?
My selected herd whose settlement is crowded
Let us decorate those for whom the morning
Will not find as they lie in high country
Where the elders' gums are red as they harvest flour

Are they the ones over there or are they not?
I know it is they the red heifers with brown ears
Though they have not been smeared with ochre
Ones that are well suited with patches
And whose hearts are too soft to permit them to delay

Are they the ones there or are they not?
Yes those are my unbranded oxen with buffalo-like horns
Of which the majority are glittering grey
As they march through Olerai unable to carry two humps

Are those others mine or are they others?
Indeed they are the mighty oxen of Meirurae"
Whose bells echo through a dense forest
As they are accompanied by the heifer with milk aplenty
And with mighty horns obtained from a country that I dare not say.

Are those others mine or are they not?
I know they are the ones all of the same colour
Looking like the Kanga cloths as they ascend
The country of cool air
And where my patterned ox stretches his legs

Are those over there mine too, or are they not?
I know they are a part of our army with loud bells
From a country where devastation is not permitted
And from where the Lumbua comes carrying a bag
Of money for those of Mwangi's that have not been sold¹

Explanation

This is a poem that is half sung and half spoken and is known as Eoko in Maa. It is spoken (or sung) by men, mainly warriors, ilmurran, to relate their accomplishments. They are normally highly poetic and rhythmic. Note the repetitions and the imagery.

Ole Pere, the composer is from the Purko section of Narok district. This Eoko was recorded at his home in 1976.

13 Enkijuka

Ole Pere

Entasupa lomurran Ipa (Others)
Aikiyiololo toi ninye anaa aimikiyiololo
Mikiyiolo iyie (Others)

Mikiyiololo amu nanu oshi eji Ole Kores
Ololong' olgiso oibung'a ilmoekin intashat
Naiki nkalkures ilasho ilapaitin lemesesh eing'orom Ilasho
nyewaitie

Others Ee pae enenye

Oloota ntau sapuki ilaron lemebaiki empejoto Oonum ilang'at likidung'u
nkorkorri Aairritayie ilatampo lolkingi lemeidimu enkiyieu

Others Enenye

Aata olarus lemouo otomito esidano kimishir
Oriku noo kilapa enkanasa nemeidurrie ilkinyie

Aata olkiteng' omanita olorika aigil ong'uan
Lenkiteng' ai kirotet naing'uaa olerumpe oduaya enkolong'
Oinosita empuk Ilumbua

Aata olarro mugie ololong' emouo
Opiroki ntaua naakweni nkutukie olaram lekeyian
Lenkop namiri iltung ana etoni anaa nkishu
Naeni ntaua mugiein too mukuntani

Aata olkiteng' oodo omisimis irashat
Lemelita enkorkor eitalam inkejek
Oigilie entureishi nemepono endaata

Aata olkiteng oimisie erashata lemeenye ebulu
Lenkorkor lemeidimu ilmong'i leitu eing'at olaram

Edooyo ake enkereri olkoroe lemeked ilkeek
Odung'oki ilkurreta ooirinita enkorkor
Olalai oirisha oltikana le ngatet oure Ilmaasae.

Praise Song of Ole Pere

Soloist Greetings to you comrade warriors!

Others Greetings!

Soloist Do you know or do you not know me?

Others We do not know you.

Soloist I know that you know me not for I am he who is
 known as Ole Pere who wears a loose ring
 And who owns stout steers and a healthy herd
 That bears in the months of plenty

Others Yes it is him indeed!

Soloist He that owns heifers with large stomachs
 For whom the meadow is insufficient
 But who get stuffed at the valleys

Where cow bells are removed¹
As they are grazed together with those of the King's
That are outweighed by fat

Others It is him!

Soloist I have the blue one with the horn
Whose beauty resists branding
Who leads the large herd of Kilapa
Whose numbers pose difficulty when moving homes

I have an ox that is four times circled with stripes
Of my favourite cow from Olerumpe
Where the sun is seen as it descends¹
From a place where the Lumbua eat flour

I have a maroon buffalo with a loose horn
That has fattened among smiling heifers
From a country where people are sold
Whilst they are seated like cattle
And where maroon heifers are tied in shambas

I have a tall ox with dark patches
with wide strides and an obvious bell sound
As it leads young unbranded heifers
To repeated grazing

I have an ox that is camouflaged by patches
and who has not declined to grow
And whose mighty bell outweighs those oxen
That have not outgrown calves

A patch stretches over the colobus monkey
That does not climb trees
Among thin oxen whose bells are wound twice
But mine had conquered the Ng'ater anthrax

That the Maasai fear.

Explanation

Ole Pere is also the composer of the eoko above (12). Enkijuka is spoken very fast but with a rhythm like that of eoko with brief pauses that allow equally brief responses of encouragement. He opens by introducing himself to the other warriors who say they do not know him, then verse after verse he sings praises of himself, using his cattle as illustrations. He praises their body sizes, the shapes and size of their horns, their colours, the sounds of their bells, as well as their gait and behaviour. The audience (other warriors) listen intently, and after every verse they say: "It is yours", "It is him", "Yes it is", etc., to urge him on.

14 Emayian

Oo duo kitotoni, naai nchoo yiook kitoni, Naai
Tenikinya endaa, iloinosa oloing'uitie, metareto yiook, Naai
Metareto ilpayiani enaisho, Naai
Ilootooko o loing'uitie, Naai
Metareto pooki, Naai Metareto ntomonok, Naai
Naai ntoisho doi iyiook, Naai
Intoiki ilonito lemeudo, Naai
Naai nchoo yiook kiaku ilpayiani, Naai
Metajara nkishu ilpaashien
Metukurro nkera oltiren
Tiaaki enkima meyupuyupo
Meinosa inaaikuti

Oo duo ena kerai eewuo, tiaki doi miya olojong'a tena kop, Naai
Tiaaki mikiroki nkera nkung'. Naai
Taa oreteti oshe ntona, Nani
Mikiyau sii iyie Enkai, Naai
Taa oipotori, Naai
Oipotoo Maasai, Naai

Oipotoo Ashumba, Naai
Meiruko Enkai oledukuya, Naai
Meiruko emagilani, Naai
Entoikinoto, Naai
Entoiki olari, Naai
Entoiki olameynaai

Blessing

Now that we are seated, O God, let us be Seated-Let it be'
When we eat food, those who ate and those who smelled, may it nurture us
May beer nurture the elders
Those who drank and those who smelled it
May it nurture them all
May it nurture the ladies
Make us bear on hides without holes
God, make us elders
May the calves fill the pens
May the cattle fill the homesteads
May the children play at the hearth
Tell the fire to stay burning
Let it eat the ritual meats

How about this child who has come, make her not take flies from this lands
May the children greet her knees
May she grow to be lucky
Be oreteti tree with the spread out roots
May God bring you back
May you be one that people talk about One that the Maasai talk of
One that other peoples talk of
May God hear the prayer of him who was the first man
Make us bear for each other
Make us produce in time of plenty
Make us produce in time of famine

Explanation

This is a typical blessing in its context. It was recorded live at Ole Polos, see footnote 4, at the close of a session where oral literature forms were relayed and discussed. Although blessings vary in different situations, the diction and presentation is always the same. One person utters the blessing, while others join in with 'let it be' or 'may God hear our prayers.'

Riddles: Iloyietia and Ilang'eni

RIDDLES ON PEOPLE

The propounder says Oyiote, are you ready?

The audience replies, E-euo, it has come, (we are ready).

1. Anaa ijo eewue?

Enkiroroto ai o enino

Why do you say it has come (you are ready)?

Because it is a discussion between you and me

This riddle alerts the audience and makes them appreciate their role in replying and propounding riddles.

2. Eturori olchani nepuo ilng'osil Kinopop, (neing' or sing asil nabo alo)

Olmoruo obore ayiok.

The tree has fallen and its branches went up to Kinopop (or the branches faced one direction).

A man with many sons.

3. Kidung' ang' ata kira aare nimiking' amaro.

Iyie oloip lino.

The two of us cross the wilderness without talking to each other.

You and your shadow

4. Mmm-hm! (or siisi).

ilomon latala endaa naisho

Mmm-hm!

It is the visitors for whom I have no food to give.

This is a common exclamation when one is in a “fix”. Hospitality in the form of supplying food to visitors is usually assumed making it difficult for one to refuse it.

5. Arro onyil

Olaibartani.

Who looks like a greasy buffalo?

The initiate

The initiates wear black togas and put grease on their bodies

6. Ejo tirkash nejo hio!

Ilainyiamok

They approach hesitantly yet bravely.

The raiders

Depending on the confrontation, raiders may either steal or take by force.

7. Eidikirrokino nampoio o nang' iyo.

Olorroboni o emootian,

They are ready to fight

The bluish one and the brown one are ready to fight

The Dorobo and the sheath.

8. Esika kejek

Olorroboni oked esoit

His legs are bruised

A Dorobo who has climbed a rock (cliff).

9. Edoku te supalera.

Nyirta oolkokoyo

They rise from over the acacias.

The gums of the Kikuyus

The Maasai know the Kikuyu to have slightly swollen brown gums, yellowish brown teeth and heavy lips, leading to a general indistinctness as to which is which, making the beholder wonder which of the three they see. The lera trees have a brownish yellow colour.

10. Edung'ng'utunyi olosinko erumisho enebanji

Enkeju enkerai.

Your mother walks across the village with something insing out of her (body).

The leg of a baby.

When the baby is fastened on the back and trapped with a garment, a little leg is soon seen from its mother's side while the rest of the body is hidden

11. Edung'ng'utuyi olosinka emorisho.

Entasat nanyaal enaing'urre.

Your mother walks across the village using abusive language.

A woman chewing gum.

There are various clicks and sounds made by sucking in air, which children are prohibited from making because of their likeness to the noises made during sexual intercourse. But children are merely told to stop being abusive. The same kind of sound is made by chewing gum, obtained from various plants chewed often by women.

RIDDLES ON HOME AND HOUSE STRUCTURE

12. Anaa kajo aimu kishomi naing'or pooki?

Nkutukie oonkajijik

As I walk through the gate, they all gaze at me.

The doors of houses.

All doors of houses face inwards towards the village centre.

13 Murran lainei kumok naa aare ake oipang'aki nkishu

Mbokishi e kutuk-aji.

I have many warriors but it is only two who appear to be looking after cattle.

The poles of a house.

The construction of a Maasai house allows two poles to stand upright at the entrance. These are the only poles that are seen from the outside.

14. Egor minyi ng'utunyi.

Eng'ape o erishina.

Your father strangles your mother.

The pole and the raft

The poles of a house stand upright with a little fork at the top where the rafter is placed. The two are bound with a string appearing as though the pole is strangling the rafter, the former, being bigger, is the more masculine of the two, and is considered the father, and the other is feminine.

15. Anaa ira sapuk nimikijing' entore ole partololong?

Olkirine le nkaji

You are so big, yet the belt of ole Partololong' is still loose on you

The strips that are used to tie the rafters of the house together are usually very long.

16. Ampurlulu?

Elusie e shumata

What is unfathomable?

The hollow in the sky for roof).

17. Toosho shartula metamanai.

Osinkolio; olkirine le nkaji.

Strike it and let us see it spin.

The dance (or song), the rafter of a house.

RIDDLES ON WASTE PRODUCTS

18. Shipishipi kayoi.

Enkorotik enkiteng' sas.

Name some loose substance.

The bowels of an emaciated cow.

The elders normally tell whether or not the cattle have been well grazed by the texture of their dung.

19. Epuru nemeishu.

Emodiei enkiteng!

It steams but it is not lit.

Fresh cowdung

20. Sikira tioitoi?

Nkamulak

What resembles cowrie shells on the path?

Spittle.

21. Anaa keidurraki neshukunye olkine ng'iro ang'?

Enterit

Why have they moved home and the brown he - goat has returned?

Because it is the dust

22. Eidurraki neing'uari ntare inyi ebore boo

Ilkileleng'

They have moved home and left all your sheep behind?

The sheep's droppings.

23. Anaa ketooshoki inkuti neing'uari inkumok eirrag?

Why have they taken a few for grazing and left so many resting?

Because they are the sheep's droppings.

RIDDLES ON MATERIAL CULTURE OBJECTS

24. Elopi tiauluo idia ang?

Olbene

Who is being made to vomit outside that village?

A bag

It is common for a few people to do shopping for the whole village. When they arrive, people gather around them and everyone takes whatever he/she had ordered, until the bag is left empty.

25. Eng'udi ai nadoku tentorror aata

Enkidong

My staff which I have had ever since I came up from Entorror.

The tobacco container.

Sometime in the mid 18th century (c. 1760) the maasai, Samburu, Itiamus, etc., separated at Entorror, which is now somewhere in Samburu country.

26. Moruo sas loong'onyo.

Ildireta

What resembles an old thin man with numerous vein?

Pack-saddles.

These saddles are oval shaped and are made by crossing thin strips of leather and encasing them in a wooden frame. They are used to load stuff on donkeys. The thin leather str resemble veins.

27. Murran lainei kumok nemeetae olobayie.

Ncheito.

I have many warriors but there is none at the end

Pegs.

Hides are normally spread out and pegged to dry.

28. Kilikuai oshe kop.

Enkoitoi, enauner.

There is a message that stretches across the world (land) surveying it.

The path; the pole that is used to make holes when a house is being built

29. Eiperipera toltiren.

Eminyor naya nkonyek.

It is fidgeting beside the fire.

A stomach with sickly eyes.

30. Barnoti ai nasulu ntare te ndoinyio.

Olmurunya.

What is the young man like when he is driving the sheep down from the hill?

Like a razor blade.

31. Nelido nele

Oloijililiai le kule.

That over there, this right here...

A drop of milk

A drop of milk is seen at the bottom of the gourd, over there, and when the gourd is tipped up to the mouth, the drop is seen at the mouth of the gourd, right here.

(Note the punning of the alliterative sounds)

32. Pus Olupi?

Enkii.

What is blue in colour and barren?

The stone used to sharpen swords, spears and knives.

This stone is usually blue in colour, and since it is a stone it does not procreate.

33. Eru mukumper toldoinyio?

Entolu naiper ilkeek.

What do we hear braying up on the hill?

An axe hewing wood.

34. Anaa ipi nabaa o nabaa nimintieu atakedo enkashe e kirkoris enkoriong?

Eremet

Why are you so brave yet you cannot sit on the back of the heifer from Kilgoris?

Because it is the spear.

There may have been some blacksmiths who lived at Kilgoris in the olden days, so the spear may have been made and brought from there.

35. Mugie ai naten ilasho.

Enkawuo o mbaa.

My brown one with speedy calves

The bow and arrows

36. Ting'iria maaishaki

Olalem opiki enchashur.

Will you persevere while I put it all inside you?

The sword that is being put inside a sheath. (This riddle has a sexual connotation).

37. Tilida maampeu

Embae nang'or esoit.

What bounces violently?

An arrow when it hits a rock

38. Or namutareki

Endapash.

What is the bare spot where people die in millions?

The bed.

Maasai beds are made from piling branches and leaves and covering them with cowhides.

39. Ejo rrokirrok eito idia alo nejo mukumuk eitu ena.

Ilkurkurto le nkare.

What makes a loud noise when going in one direction, but none as it returns?

The gourds without water and, later, with water

40. Epong'a toltiren.

Olmosori

It is constipated by the fireside.

The gourd for brewing beer.

These are very large in size and are left by the fireside for the beer to brew.

41. Eigirigiro te rishat ildoinyio.

Emala oolkidotu natanya epukuri

Something is heard quivering in between mountains.

It is the big gourd of the Ilkidotu age-set, that has refused to be closed.

42. Anaa ipi nabaa o nabaa nimitonie enetonie entito nayok?

Emoti.

Why are you so brave yet you cannot sit at the place where the little black girl sits.

Because it is the fire

The little girl is the pot which has turned black with soot.

43. Bitiro tiaji.

Soito le nkima

What resembles warthogs in the house?

The firestones.

The Maasai use three stones for the fireplace, like many other African groups

44. Edung'ng'utunyi olosinko emukita enapiak

Eng'amurai olkumpau

Your mother walks across the village mouthing distate.

Tobacco leaves.

Normally these are chewed by older men and women

45. Anaa keidurraki neing'ueri menye nkishu?

Oltim

They have moved home and left the father of cattle behind.

what is it?

It is the tree branch that is used to close the cattle gate

46. Anaa keidurraki neing'uari esumpat eminyi te ming'ani?

Olchala.

They have moved home and left behind your father's gown.

what is it?

The dunghill.

47. Anaa keidurraki neing uari menye ntare.

Olchala.

Why have they moved home and left the father of sheep behind?

Because he is the dunghill.

48. Sampurumpuri santetua.

Olkila loo saen

What resembles a butterfly?

A garment that has been decorated with beads.

Women's sheep-skin garments usually have elaborate patterns of beadwork.

49. Kiteng'ai naibor-kutuk nang'ar oreren.

Enkike.

My white-mouthed cow that is shared by all.

The toothbrush

This is a stick toothbrush that has been peeled on one end so that the white inside is seen. All toothbrushes therefore look the same, and it is not rare to see them being shared.

50. Asuria tiaji

Nkeenda

What resembles snakes in the house?

The straps

Leather straps are put to many uses in a household, and are bound to be numerous.

51. Eikirnyianya minyi ebarni.

Olchoni oshei

Your father struggles as he is being shaved.

What is he like?

A hide that is being pegged.

RIDDLES ON NATURE AND NATURAL PHENOMENA

52. Ndapan ainei naarisio.

Enkewarie o endama

Shumata o enkop
I have two hides that are of equal size.
Night and day

The sky and the earth.

53. Parkinyeyie oinyeyie iloreren
Enkakenya
What acts as an alarm to awaken all people?
The morning.

54. Emanaa entoki pus aman enkang'ang'
Enkoileelio.
There is some blueish substance that is surrounding out village.
Dew

55. Einosa enkop enkima neing'uari Naikoro.
Olpura.
The whole world has been burnt to ashes leaving Naikoro standing on her own.
The bare spot.
It is not infrequent to find bare spots that are inhabited only by ants. Since no grass grows on such spots, fire does not burn there.

56. Eimariri nankoid ilkeek
Empuruo
She looks up at the trees above.
Smoke rising.

57. Tito e tale naado mporro
Enkima.
The beautiful girl with long strands of beads.
The fire.
(When it is in flames.)

58. Eman enkeeya pus enkang'
Injo; Eman ake. Empuruo

What is the deadly disease that surrounds the village?
Sleep; smoke
When all people are fast asleep it seems as if all are dead.

59. Anaa keidurraki neini nanyokie?
Enkima
They moved homes and the red one was born.
The fire.
The Maasai often burn up the old village when they move

60. Mayopa ele reyiet maing'oru ilaras le minyi.
ilabur le nkare.
Let us walk along this river and look for your father's ribs.
The foam from the water.
When the water runs furiously, it forms patterns (lines) of foam. These are being likened to the ribs

61. Eitalang akino ilperesian imbaa.
Ilkekuno le nkare.
They point arrows at each other.
The reeds growing on the banks of the river.
Reeds and other river vegetation normally grow facing the stream

62. Bornoti ai nashal kutuk
Enkoitoi nalo enkare.
What is a strip of leather like when the end is wet?
It is like a path leading to the water source.
There is a play on meaning the end of the mouth (enkutuk), which in this case applies to the end of the leather strip and the beginning of the path.

63. Anaijo eedo ena anashe ng'utunyi nemebaiki enyewa enker?
Enkoitoi.
Why is your mother's sister so tall (long) but cannot reach up to a sheep's udder?
The path.
The adjective for long and tall is the same in Maasai and is only distinguished by its context.

64. Tamanai teidia alo oldoinyio matamanu tena nimikitume aikata.

Nkiyiaa.

Go round one side of the mountain while I go round the other side, but we will never meet.

The ears.

Ears do not move.

65. Or nememanyi, ore pee emanyi neishiri.

Enkong'u

There is a bare place where no one ever settles, and if one did so, there would be crying. What is it? The eye.

RIDDLES ON PLANTS

66. Anaa ipi nabaa o nabaa nimintieu enkanasa oonkishu sampin.

Ildupa.

Why are you so brave yet you dare not approach the army of dapple-grey cattle?

Because they are sisal

67. Kalo shani oshi oota olkikuei obo?

Oldupai

What tree has only one thorn?

The sisal plant.

68. Anaa ipi nabaa nimintieu atijing'a enkanasa olmakele?

Ildupa.

Why are you so brave yet you cannot join the army?

Because it is the sisal plant.

69. Sarng'ab enkinanash

Entonata olpopong'i.

What is muddy-like?

The foot of the candelabra tree

70. Edoku tionyoi

Kule olpopong'.

What rises from the green ones?
The sap of the candelabra tree.

71. Murran lainei kumok naa enkeju nabo
eitasheyie.

Olpopong'i

I have many warriors all of whom stand on one leg.

The candelabra tree.

Maasai warriors are often seen standing on one leg. The candelabra tree has a long stem with branches growing only at the upper part.

72. Mirrimir nimitum.

Iling'anayio limibaiki

There you are but you will not get it.

The fruit that you cannot reach.

73. Tamano teidia alo oldoinyio matamano tena nikitumo
etodore yiook inkaik.

Ilama.

Go round one side of the mountain, while I go round the other, and we will meet
when our hands are red.

Going round a bush eating red berries.

74. Kaja shani oshi otolo oiba ilkutikae?

Olpiron.

Which tree is cruel and hates all the others?

The tree which they use for firesticks.

It burns the others.

75. Kaja oshi ilkeek ootii ena kop?

Aaare, olotoyio oloshal.

How many types of trees are there in this country?

Two types, the dry one and the green one.

76. Anaa keidurraki duo neiboru pooki ilukuny?

Ndung'ot oo nkeek

They have moved home and all their beads have turned white?

The bushes when their tops have been cut

77. Murrani ai naipiru oltaika te nkop.

Oloiropiji

What is my young man like when he generates his pigtails from the earth?

Like a turnip.

This is not quite a turnip but it is very much like it, and is eaten by children. Its leaves are here likened with hair while the root is compared with pigtails.

RIDDLES ON DOMESTIC ANIMALS

78. Or nememanyi.

Entibili osikiria

There is a clearing in which no one settles; what is it?

The donkey's spot

79. Tiinka narikito tiinka.

Emuny narikito enkuo.

Something that is leading something

Rhinoceros leading a calf

OR

Tiinka nadung'o tiinka narikito tiinka nadung'o tiinka.

Esikiria nadung'o enkidong'e (enkiok)

Narikito enkurrarru nadung'o enkidong'oe (enkiok)

Something with a cut something leading.

Something with a cut something.

A donkey with a cut tail leading an ass with a cut tail.

80. Adung' ang'ata pus naturu iloiropij aare

Ilki le sikiria.

I walk across a bare wilderness and I uproot two turnips (turnip-like roots)

The teats of a female donkey.

81. Ejo rrokirrok edoyio te parsilale

Isirkon oioto.

They are heard clamouring downhill.

The donkeys who are carrying loads

Various items in a donkey pack knock against each other and make such a noise that the donkeys cannot pass quietly and unnoticed.

82. Tilida tigomi.

Emurt oloing'oni

What is knotted all over?

The neck of a bullock.

83. Eipirri eng'obu.

Olashe ong'ar nkishu.

He sips (gulps) as he runs.

The calf who shares two cows.

When a calf is suckled by two cows, he tends to feed from both cows whenever he gets chance.

84 Tirrida ndapan maape kinopop

Nkidong'o oondia in

Let us fold and tuck in the hides on our way to Kinopop.

The tails of bitches

Bitches are often seen with their tails tucked in as though they are prepared for a long journey.

85. Medoli ti oreren

Enker sampu.

What is it that could never be found in the whole world

A dapple-grey sheep

86. Ene manturlugum.

Eilata olmeregesh

What smells like the droppings of sheep?

The fat of an uncastrated male sheep.

87. Olkiteng' lai otii erishata oolmang'ati.

Olng'ejep

I have an ox who lives in the midst of enemies.
The tongue

88. Ebobolae te lang'ata
Osikiria eboe
Ebobolae ake
Embitir epiki olkataar
Why is there such a struggle in the valley?
It is a donkey's incisors that are being removed

OR

A warthog is being forced to wear a bracelet.
Two rather formidable tasks

RIDDLES ON INSECTS AND OTHER ANIMALS

89. Eidurraki nepaashiki nkasho sopiain enkan'g'
Ilipidila
They have moved home but the brown calves have settled in.
The fleas

90. Ekur enchani eibelekeny
Olpidilai oudi enkiok
It beats the bush as it turns it over.
A flea whose cars are being pierced.

91. Eimugumugu tosinyai.
Lemunchu (Lekonkor) oidulie olalem.
What is seen clambering over the sand?
A beetle that is weighed down by the sword

92. Kiti ena anashe ng'utunyi neyiolo atushumu kule.
Olotoroki.
Your mother's sister is very small but knows how to more milk.
The bee.

93. Mugie ai naaru entim.
Olotoroki.

I have my little brown one that forces itself through the wilderness.
The bee

94. Edung' pose melioo orregie?
Osampurumpuri.
What moves across the world but leaves no trace?
The butterfly.

95 Timini nkuuni.
Enkume enkalaoni
What is very tiny?
The nose of an ant
(Not possible so arrive at a literal translation)

96. Murrum lainei kumok naa emua nabo eeta.
Emuyoo
I have many warriors all of whom are one oslour.
The red ants
(Also other social insects)

97 Anaa iten nabaa o nabaa niminepu kapiroto etagore
Olojong'ani.
Why are you such a fast runner but you cannot catch up with the Kavirondo when
he is annoyed? Because he is the fly.

98 Anaa iten nabaa o nabaa niming'asie Nekarancha kutuk – aji?
Olojong'ani.
Why are you such a fast runner yet you are unable to get to the door before
Karanja?
Because he is the fly.

99. Anaa keishiri tedukuya nekua kishu nemeishiri oshi ake?
Olojong'ani loontorosi otigile.
Why in there wailing at the front of that herd of cattle when it usually doesn't
happen?
It is the tsetse fly that has attacked.

OR

Anaa keishiri ake x 2

Olmoruo otalaikine atabolo olkidong’;

Another reason? x 2

It is the old man who has been unable to open the tobacco container;

It is the whistling (from the herdsman).

100. Anaa kepuru idia soit nemepuru oshi ake?

Ilmokuain eudi nkiyiaa

Why is that rock over there smoking when it usually does not do so?

It is the lizard's ears that are being pierced

Red-hot metal rods are normally used to pierce ears. Since it is lizards that dwell in rocks, it is appropriate to assume that lizards are undergoing an ear-piercing ceremony if smoke rises from rocks

101. Anaa aidorrop enkanashe ino nemeeta

olng’anayioi oing’ataa?

Entaritiki

Why is your sister so very short yet there is no fruit that is beyond her reach?

A bird.

102. Eman enkiu te siare.

Emotonyi naitaapa ilayiok

It goes round a hush with a club.

A bird that has been impregnated by boys.

103. Elutoo ntarama oonkishu.

Entaritiki

What walks on the stomachs of cattle?

The bird.

104. Barnoti ai e karteyia nayiolo olosek.

Olwuapishoi

What is the young man like when he uses his tricks?

Like the snatcher (i.e, Vulture)

Vultures are notorious for snatching meat from people's hands. They are tricky in the sense that they always manage to take people by surprise by swooping down unexpectedly.

105. Eparana tiauluo

Ndero naatupurro oloiboni.

Why have they all gathered outside the homestead?

Because they are rats that have stolen from the diviner. (Considered quite daring, but it creates a stir.)

106. Ejo rraa nemesha

Nkejek oontarakueti, mbenek olng'aboli.

It is droning as though the rain is falling, yet it is not raining.

It is the noise made by the feet of the impala as they run; the leaves of the sycamore tree.

107. Eluaa te kitet

Oloitiko omishira

One cannot arrive at a literal translation, but the riddle refers to the stripes at the bottom of a zebra that are lined differently from the rest of the body.

108. Elang' elang'u.

Olng'ojine oliko ntare ikuoo

What goes across here and there in a hectic manner?

A hyena (the limper) showing goats' kids their mothers.

There is here a play on the meaning of hyena's name, the one who limps. The work of directing goats' kids to their mothers is done by shepherds and it is such a hectic exercise that one is seen bustling about.

109. Ene mankumukum ene matirrintir.

Olowuaru kedianye

It moves with a funny gait

A left handed beast/lion.

110. Eik enkeju te ng'osua

Emuny narip olkila lo lang'ata.

Who is seen hanging the leg up on the tree?
A rhinoceros that is sewing her boyfriend's garment.

111. Soit e sikile naudo isiet
Endukuya olenkaina.
The rocky one with eight holes.
The head of an elephant.
The skeleton of an elephant has little pores and the depressions for the eyes, ears, etc could number eight.

112. Barbal te nkusero.
Emudong' olenkaina
Barbal ake?
Enkong'u enkitejo
What is so obviously seen on a plain?
The afterbirth of an elephant and the eye of a rabbit

113. Edoiki ilmotonyi enkaldaupe.
Empopong' olenkaina
The vultures descend on it in their thousands.
The carcass of an elephant
(Because of its massive size)

COMPLEX TYPE RIDDLES (Ilang'eni)

1. Amaa naaya, o naayieu o naaipieu, kainyioo?

Answer enkaya, enkiyieu o ilkipieu.

This riddle consists of puns, when translated, it loses meaning. See if you can get it. Riddle. What is it that takes me (aya), that which wants me (ayieu), and that which smears me (apio)?

Answer: It is enkaya, enkiyieu and Ilkipieu, all parts of a cow. Note the punning on similar sounds. The trick is in the sounds, not in the meaning.

2. Amaa naaji teniyieu niyieng' enkiteng' nimiaata enkeene nireyie, nimiata enkalem niyieng'ie, nimiaata enkare niyierie naa entim itii, kaji nko?

Answer. Ekajoki enkeene-e-nkai metaa enkeene, najoki ologilalem metaa enkalem, najoki oloitiko ntiko shomo enkare.

Supposing you want to slaughter a cow and you need a strap (string) to lead her with, you need a knife to slaughter it with, and you need water to cook it with, and you are in the middle of the forest, what would you do?

Answer 1 would ask the worm (enkeene-e-nkai) to act as the string (enkeene); I would ask the ologil-alem (type of worm), to act as the knife (enkalem), and I would ask the zebra (oloitiko) to run (ntiko) and fetch some water.

MAA NARRATIVES

Entito e Tiyiogo

Netii apa ena tito sidai oleng' niaku keyieu pooki ng'ae neya. Neisho ena tito neirriwa olkilikuai ajo ore pooki ng'ae oyieu neya nelo metishila entito. Negeluni enkolong' napuoi enkesha. Nepuo taa ng'uesi pooki naaing'oru oshi ena titi. Naa naikitejo naituruk. Nekuso ake nelo, paa kerany ajo:

Ore pee ening' entito nepuku ake ainining' nerany sii ninye ajo:

“Maayieu nanu iyie

Entito e Tiyiogo

Naikodo emkang' emye

Nepiki imporro nkaik

Nepiki intuyutia

Maayieu x 2”

Neitoki enkopera alotu, nejo sii ninye:

“Natito e Tiyiogo

Tupuku ng'uraki

Enkoilii napera

Terishat ang'itie.”

Neitoki ake entito ajoki enkilii, “Maayie, Maayieu”, tosinkolio. Nelotu oloitiko nerany ajo:

“Natito e Tiyiogo

Tupuku ng'uraki

Oloitiko on kuyiana

iin kuyanat le long'o

Oitiki oyioyiyiog

Nkiyigot olmurran”

Neranyaki entito ajoki maayieu, mayieu. Nelotu olng'atuny.

“Natito e Tiyiogo

Tupuku ng'uraki

Oloipurro telerai

Nedotu ntana enkop

Pooki o nkutiti.”

Niany entito olng'atuny. Nelotu ilng'ojine etukuse sii ninye nerany ajo:

“Natito e Tiyiogo

Tupuku ng'uraki

Leuu ng'ojine

Nimijo eing'ojine

ilpisia meidimu

Le likae apa otua

Otara torinka

Karurum iloik

Terishat ang'itie

Nimijo esulare

Amu keon eitagol

Olmurrani tenkolong!”

Netoki ake entito aany sii ninye leng'ojin. Neitu emuny eyieu sii ninye netil entito.

Nerany ajo:

“Natito e Tiyiogo

Tupuku ng'uraki

Enkaiserri olmunoyi

Namiru ilchekuti

Kilome meitadiak

Oritet olmoruo

Nelo enkumpau enkop

Neipirrar emakat.”

Niaraa entito emuny ajoki maayieu. Nerukunye taa ake ing'uesi. Neitu enkiteng, nerany ajo:

Natito e Tiyiogo

Tupuku ng'uraki

Pararang' eibala

Nalepi tosiang'au

Nelo olaburra enkop

Nesaru ilchekuti

Pooki o ng'aturan.”

Neing'or ake entito enkiteng' nerany ajo:

“Maayieu nanu iyie

Entito e Tiyiogo

Naikodo enkang' enye

Nepiki intuyutia

Nepiki imporro nkaik

Maayieu x 2”

Nerukunye taa akeing' uesi eponu ake aakesha niany entito pooki. Ore te siadi tukul nelotu karbobo. Nerany sii ninye ajo:

Natito e Tiyiogo

Tupuku ng'uraki

Lentore e Topisia

Nemeidimu sirkon

Olopheny ake onap.”

Nening' ake entito karbobo nerany si ninye ajoki:

Kaayieu nanuiyie

Entito e Tiyiogo

Naikodo enkang' enye

Nepiki intuyutia

Nepiki imporro nkaik

Kaayieu, kayieu.

Neya karbobo entito.

Daughter of Tiyiogo

There once lived a girl who was so beautiful that everyone admired her. So when she learnt of everyone's admiration, she sent a message that all those who wished to have her should present themselves to her, each giving an account of his or her talents. A date was set for a special parade where all admirers would appear.

Here was the first to arrive, dressed in the finest attire for the big day. He sang to the girl, and his song went like this:

Daughter of Tiyiogo

come out and look at me

*The one with a swift club
So swift that boys cannot catch*

On hearing Hare's song, the girl also replied in saying:

*I do not want you
I daughter of Tiyiogo
whose family has adorned her
Adorned her with brass coils
Adorned her with beads
I do not want you
I do not want you*

Next came Antelope, singing his own praises, saying:

*Daughter of Tiyiogo
Emerge and look at me
I am Antelope the fast runner
And I leap between homesteads.*

On listening to Antelope's account of himself, the girl replied in song, telling him that she had no desire for him. Next came zebra with his beautifully decorated body. He sang to the girl and this is how his song went:

*Daughter of Tiyiogo
Come out and look at me
Zebra with fine patterns
Patterns of the shields
Zebra with hiccoughs
The hiccoughs of the warriors.*

The girl once more sang to zebra, dismissing him as she had done the others. The next to arrive was lion, who followed suit, singing his own praises:

*Daughter of Tiyiogo
Come out and look at me
The one who roared at Elerai
Uprooting roots from the earth
The big and the small.*

The girl refused lion, who was immediately followed by hyena in his best, ready to present his feats in a praise song:

*Daughter of Tiyiogo
come out and look at me
Hyena the limper
Though none can notice it
He's only overweighed by chains
Chains of the dead one
The one he killed with a club
But think not of it as shameful
For, by munching
The warrior builds up strength.*

Turning down the limping one, the girl was next approached by Rhinoceros; he too hoped to win her. He sang:

*Daughter of Tiyiogo
come out and look at me
The horned one of the Laiser clan
The one who chases shepherds home
And with his horn he never ever misses
The thigh of the old man
When his tobacco falls to the ground
And up flies his soda ash.*

Rejecting Rhinoceros, the girl sang to him, saying: "I do not want you."
The animals continued tripping along one after the other. Cow also came along singing her praises:

*Daughter of Tiyiogo
Come out and observe me
The obviously loud one
The one milked with esiang'au
And the milk lather flows down
Rescuing shepherds*

As well as infants

The girl, looking at cow, sang the same song, dismissing her as she had done the others. So the animals continued parading and relating their feats and talents. But the girl did not feel impressed by any of them.

At the end, there came Mongoose, and he too sang his praise the way the others had done. His song went like this:

Daughter of Tiyogo

Come out and look at me

The one with a chain belt

One that outweighs donkeys

It is the owner alone that can carry it

On hearing what Mongoose said the girl responded by singing:

I do want you

I the daughter of Tiyogo

Whose family has adorned her

Adorned her with brass coils

Adorned her with beads

I want you

I want you

So Mongoose took the girl.

Olng'ojine o enkiteng'

Netii apaa neimin enkitend' Nepuo nkolong'I uni enkop etii ake ang'ata. Ore tenkolong'e uni nelo olkeju aing'oru enkare naok. Neinepu olng'ojine nerany ajoki:

“Aasai le uu enkiteng' nalepo

Enkolong' e uni ena eitu aokisho (airraga ang'ata)

Naar enkure olapa le ntung'us”

Neranyaki olng'ojine ajoki:

“Meekure ebaiki maimanya le munchu

Aang'as amurut aitaar entirbo

Naaitoki aidosu ilgisoyia le nyewa

Naaitoki aijurum olendia napong'a

Meeta elimoto nemeish eewuo
Eisha kinosa ole Wuargas onyokie
Obatat oltuala ole polos kimirta
Kimirta, Kimirta!

Kainyioo naning'o tenda tim ejo kau!
Murunya nkiyiaa oitalala endaata
Olonapu ndaiki meturua enapita
Nemeng'arie entolut naitaa ng'otonye
Nelotu nerrorro tembata emoyoo
Netukuny tenkutuk entanun natong'ua

Neyieyio nashomo nkang'itie e eiking'a
Nkarra olpaashie intebebek kidamu
Idamu ole minyi otiooyo tiauluo
Intaa enkikarret embibi natoyio
Naiwuang'ie tolng'ejep naimu oloing'oni

Meraposh leng'ojin enkiten
Enjipati olalae intare tikitam
Pukoret nashirraki olkiteng' loltuala

Hoe hoo maimanya le munchu!

Ore ake peyie eidip olng'ojine ataranyaki enkiteng, neimanya, nekweniki, nanya.
Neiting'.

Hyena and cow
once upon a time, a certain cow strayed and could not find her way home. Three
days passed before she was found. On the third day she went to the river for a
drink of water. At the river she came upon Hyena to whom she sang:
I beg you please le uu
I am the cow with a suckling calf
This is my third day without a drink
And the December sun has made me thirsty.

Hyena answered
It is rather too late (swearing)
First I will suffocate you with my smell
Then I will rip off the roofs of your udder
Next I will make you squat like a constipated bitch

There is nothing that does not come to an end
Our feasting on the brown olw Wuargas has ended
The one who felled by the bell as we chase
As we chase, as we chase!

What is heard in that bush saying kau!
It is the large eater with blade – shaped ears
He that carries food until he is overcome
Yet he does not share it with his poor mother
He came and tripped near the stomach
And with his mouth he pressed against a rotten spleen

Oh sister who has gone visiting other villages
As you fence the homestead, do so but remember me

Remember your brother who is yet to come
For fencing use dry straw
The ones that I would simply push aside with the tongue
As I the bull, walk in

A suckling cow satisfies not the limper
Twenty sheep are but speck between the teeth
An ox with a bell is pure starvation.

Hoe hoo I swear!

When Hyena had sung to the cow, he swore, laughed, and ate her all up. And that is the end.

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Sub Title: Songs and poetry

Summary

Songs and poetry are an essential part of life in many communities. In societies where traditional customs are strongly adhered to, there are certain rituals that are observed to the accompaniment of songs, dirges and other poetic forms. Apart from these ritual tunes, there are also songs that are composed spontaneously as the occasion demands. These include lullabies, love songs, war songs and political songs. But whatever function they serve, songs and poetry embody a people's philosophy, beliefs, values and, sometimes, their historical development.

Short paragraph about me and a photo

Katitia P.K. studied at Olchekut Supat Apostolic school [OSAS- Lemek] and at the university of Nairobi where he acquired a B.Ed [Arts] majoring in English and literature. He taught at Olkejuado High School, Iloodariak and Nkoile boys secondary schools. He is currently a children's officer in the department of children services based at the headquarters [Nairobi], in the Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Services.

