

Example of the boys are one with the brown birds research paper

[Sociology](#), [Community](#)



Western civilization has had a very profound effect on the cultural African society, an aspect that has seen the erosion of many African cultures in the wake of sweeping adoption of western norms (Orville Boyd Jenkins, 1991, p 25). This has affected almost all known African cultures, save for the maasai community, who are the face of two east African countries, Kenya and Tanzania.

The Maasai community is an indigenous African tribe that is found in several parts of Kenya and Tanzania. They are a majorly traditional pastoral community, keeping cattle, goats and sheep and moving from one place to another to search for pastures especially during the dry season.

The Maasai have got a number of cultures that revolve around their clan system, the Morans, the age groups and age sets among many others. This paper seeks, however, to explore the maasai traditional circumcision process, with more emphasis on the traditional songs during the circumcision process.

We are however going to start our discussion with a brief summary of the Maasai traditional circumcision process. Traditionally, and even in modern society, the Maasai community practices both male and female circumcision. The female circumcision is however facing great challenges as countries are passing laws that have outlawed the female genital mutilation.

The Maasai boys are usually circumcised at ages of 7 to ten years and are immediately initiated into adulthood, after it has been determined that there is need for a new generation of warriors. Immediately after circumcision, the boys are no longer boys and assume all the rights and responsibilities that are associated with their new position in the society. Girls on the other hand

are circumcised immediately they start their periods. Naturally, women are not allowed to witness male circumcision and it's therefore done outside the compound (The Sudan tribune; 10 Oct, 2009

The ceremony begins a day before the actual operation where the boys are shaved by their parents and then dressed in traditional regalia, particularly black and also traditional sandals. The boys are then released outside the bomas to go hunt grasshoppers. This is significant of the last time they shall be taking part in such childish activities and are thereafter expected to hunt more serious animals like leopards, lions, and cape buffaloes that threaten people and animal life. After that, they shoot a homemade toy arrow back over their shoulders to show that they have left behind their childhood and are ready to advance to their adulthood.

There is always plenty to eat in many of these ceremonies. In the evening after the initiation ceremony, all the local area boys who have already been circumcised arrive in groups dressed in black and chanting traditional songs, wearing wide beaded belts, ostrich feathers and bird headdresses

On nearing the entrance where the other boys to be circumcised are holed, the boys to be circumcised must run to meet them, rip off their clothing and throw it to their bigger counterparts. The victims are then paraded outside the boma and encircled by the others. The boys are then taunted, and insulted and it's expected that this sort of treatment will embarrass and anger them enough for them to withstand the pain of circumcision. We shall look at one of the songs that are sung during these ceremonies and whose major aim is to demean the young boys so that they could see the need for circumcision. An analysis of the song with regard to the course requirements

is done at the end of the song. Traditional maasai dance

- Let us sing the song of the evening
And praise the covered ones (1) They
have passed through the thicket (2)
That has taken all the covered ones
Chorus: What on earth makes Koyiombo (3) arrogant
If he has feared the
Kikuyu (4) 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
- They both have roiled-up tails (5)
The flincher is one with boyl share osaroi
(6) with neither
You councillor 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 asses (7)
- The knife has risen up to the Pleiades
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 (8)
None will I let the flinchers
wear (9)
- 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 (10)
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

Adapted from : ()

The Maasai perform a traditional welcoming dance

While the translated version of the song may not have the traditional melody, each wording of the above song is not by default, it's done so with meaning. The first stanza congratulates the young ones who have undergone the odds and are now ready to become warriors, this is in recognition of the enormous task ahead, which involves assuming adult responsibilities and also protecting the community. The chorus does not have very kind words though. It ridicules and demeans the young boys by comparing them with dirty puppies. These boys are said neither to be humans nor cows. You see, the Maasai value cows very much, as it's their livelihood, this means that the young ones serve no purpose in the community. They even fear kikuyu. Traditionally, the Maasai would go to steal cows from their neighbors, the kikuyu, who would naturally resist the cattle rustling and heavy fighting usually ensued. The people who fear the kikuyu were therefore mocked, and this is meant to elicit pain in the young boys so that they would want to prove that they are none of the above, that they do not fear kikuyu, and are not useless fellows by accepting to be circumcised. People who fear kikuyu are therefore not expected to show any form of pride or arrogance as they are considered losers.

The painful words are strategically placed in the chorus which is expected to be repeated after all stanzas so as to sound as a reminder that the young boys are a useless lot unless they undergo the ritual.

In African traditional society, a rolled up tail was synonymous with cowardly and fearful fellows. When a dog is extremely scared, it always has its tail

between its legs. This stanza second still amplifies the cowardly nature of the uncircumcised and the need to get circumcised.

The subsequent stanzas have one message, that Koyiombo, the symbolic name for the young ones should not show any form of pain during the process, in fact he should not flinch at all and should bear the pain bluntly as a man. In fact, the older morans insist that in case one of the boys flinches during the process, then no one would ever eat anything from their mother. It should be noted that sharing of foodstuffs is a very important African cultural issue and if people do not take food from your house, then you are considered as a bad person in the community and society at large.

The performance of this song, just like most Maasai songs is done in a team. One leads the morans as they sing along. They however do not sing loudly and you may not even get what they say. All they do is jump up and down high in the air and hum a melodious hhhmmmmmm, hhhmmmmmm, as they acknowledge the allegations made by the leader. Notably however, each leader does only one stanza, and joins the others in the circle as other steps in the center to lead the next stanza. As the song is performed in a circle, the leader of the song must rotate as he faces different sides in the circle as the song is performed. Although this is a translated version of the song, the original song in the, maa language is melodious with sweet local tunes as the song is performed accompanied by traditional musical instruments. The some also rhymes at the end of each sentence to form a very interesting and captivating song, fit for the occasion.

References

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