

THE WORLD OF MASIANI: PORTRAIT OF A MAASAI PATRIARCH

by **Masiani Lechieni and family**

translated and edited by Paul Spencer

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1. INTRODUCTION

(by Paul Spencer)

I first met Masiani in 1976, when I was looking for somewhere to begin an anthropological study of the Kenya Maasai as well as to introduce life in the African bush to my wife Rosalind and our two sons – Aidan and Benet. The choice was a matter of chance. We wanted to respond to an invitation from a local missionary who lived in Matapato, a relatively remote Section (or sub-tribe) of the Maasai. This provided an opportunity to test our camping gear and a slightly battered second-hand landrover that I had just bought. On our way to the mission, we noticed three villages that were visible from the road, and these seemed to offer a possible starting point on our way back.

In the first village, an old man was sitting beside a hut. I greeted him in Maa and then started to explain what I wanted to do in my rusty Samburu (a northern Maa dialect). He did not think this was a good idea. So we drove on to the second village. On closer inspection, this looked neglected and barely habitable, although there were some signs of life. So we drove on to the third.

By now it was late afternoon, and we decided to experiment with our tents at a prudent distance from this village and to await events. While we were still setting up camp, a procession of three elders approached us from the village. The first was Masiani carrying a gourd of milk to offer us, and he was followed by his sons, Kinai and Kunaiju.

We stayed for three months, and the two families started to get to know one another. Our visit coincided with a particularly severe drought, made worse by East Coast Fever, which was killing off the calves. It was clear that the gift of milk to us as total strangers had been embarrassingly generous. Within a few days, Masiani suggested that I might employ Kinai and this provided a much needed opportunity to work on my Maa and my understanding of Maasai society.

Then a cloud-burst of rain could be seen in the distance and Masiani drove away his cattle to this spot including the sector of this herd that belonged to Kunaiju. He took with him one of his junior wives and her herdboys, and personally supervised the daily task of herding. Kinai was Masiani's senior son, his herd had been separated from his father's, and he decided that these cattle were too weak to move any distance. So we continued to work together. Meanwhile, news filtered through that too many Matapato pastoralists had moved their cattle to this distant spot precipitating a local disaster. The cloud-burst had been too brief and isolated to affect the grazing, and the cattle were becoming too emaciated to drive them back to their former homes. Each day brought further news of deaths among Masiani's herd. Only when the drought broke dramatically could he drive the remainder back to his village. This herd was now reduced from ninety to twenty-five cattle, while Kinai with twenty surviving cattle was nearly as rich as his father. Kunaiju's share of his father's herd had been reduced to just one cow.

In recalling this episode in their separate accounts to me, Kinai and Kunaiju were very loyal to their father, emphasising that they owed their own skills in herd management to

Masiani's greater skill during their upbringing as his herdboys. 'There is no such thing as wisdom during a drought', Kinai argued. 'Many other Matapato made the same mistake.' It was all a matter of luck, it seemed.

However, this is not my recollection of the episode. As the news of the devastation of Masiani's herd trickled in, the two brothers roundly criticized Masiani for his impulsive decision to migrate at the first sign of rain. Kunaiju argued that he had not wanted his father to migrate in the first place, while Kinai pointed out that there was enough water and scrub – if not grass – for his cattle to survive where they were without risking the toll on their strength through migration. Masiani, they felt, was becoming stubborn and deaf to their arguments in his old age. He would not admit that he was taking a reckless gamble.

When Masiani returned with the rump of his herd, He complained of his bad luck with no suggestion of bad management. The next task was to rebuild his herd, as he had done at other critical times of his career. A point to note is that the recurrence of devastating droughts and cattle epidemics among the Maasai and their pastoralist neighbours are widely reported. Whereas the resilience of the cattle that survive and the steady rate at which herds recover in number as the environment becomes more benign is less dramatic and tends to be under-reported. Masiani had experienced this sawtooth profile in the size of his herd a number of times in the course of his career, and his apparent optimism, *his* resilience, was not unrealistic.

It was this resilience at this time that led me to collect together Masiani's reminiscences. With the rains and a large family to herd his cattle during the heat of the day, he would sit with other elders in the shade outside his village, sometimes playing the Maasai board game (*enkeshei*), and sometimes just gossiping. But this seemed no random gossip. Masiani could hold the attention of a group of incredulous elders with his repertoire of anecdotes that seemed to grow in stature with the telling. He had lost nearly three-quarters of his herd, and here he was entertaining an audience who were in the same position.

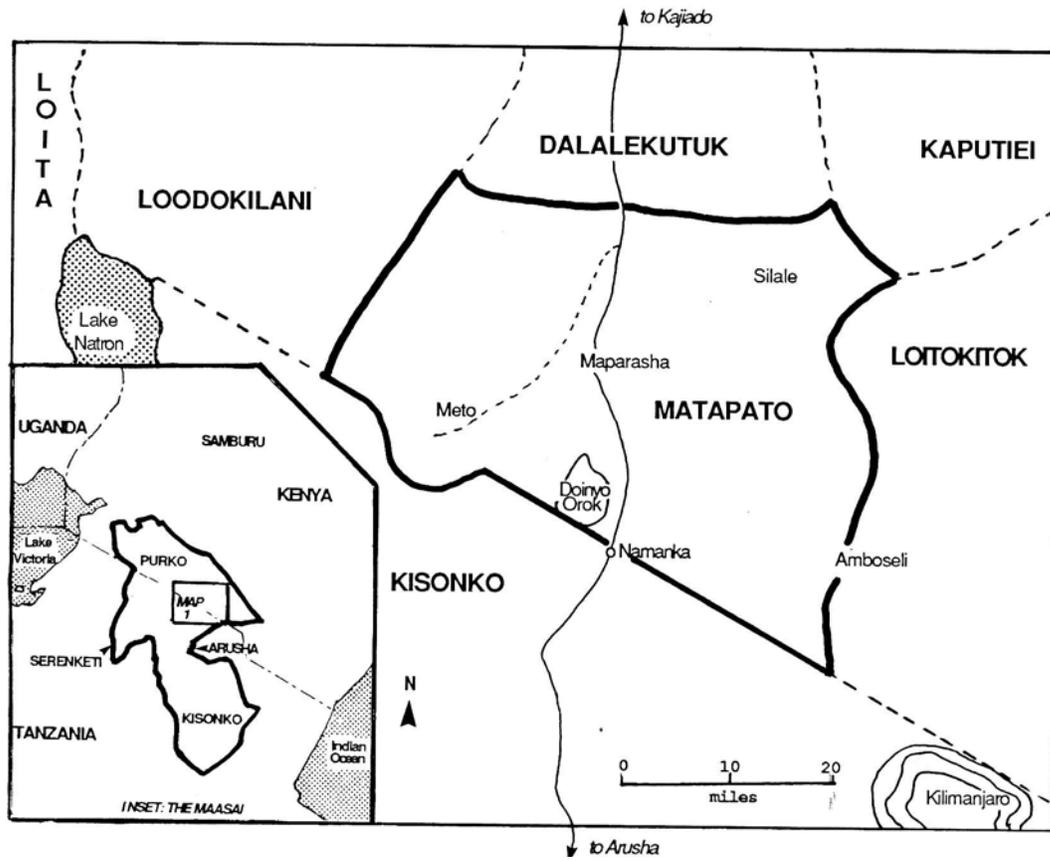
Masiani's anecdotes were of his own particular experiences, and I suggested to him that I would pay him much needed cash if he would let me record his reminiscences in the presence of other elders, who were encouraged to come by endless mugs of sweet tea. Recording the reminiscences of other members of his family seemed a logical sequel to this, especially as the cash was welcome. In this account, the story of Masiani's life is told by himself, his senior wife, Telelia, and their two older sons. By their request, Masiani's three junior wives added their contributions. Each piece provides a different slant on the events that shaped this account, and the aim here is to provide a sketch on aspects of Maasai society as perceived by a Maasai family, rather than to tease out the contradictions in a search for historical accuracy.

To appreciate the nuances of Masiani's account it is necessary to draw attention to his position among Maasai elders. The more flamboyant aspects of his personal characteristics would not be recognised as laudable by normal standards of Maasai behaviour. He was truculent as a boy, rebelling against the authority of his guardian uncle, and seemed unable to reconcile this with the rebellion of one of his own sons against his authority in middle age. He was a patriarch in a society that breeds patriarchs and the problems of patriarchy. He was not a reliable informant, which tallied with his

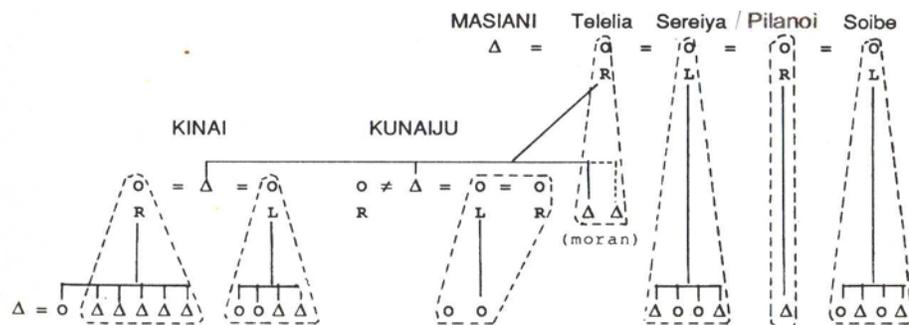
casual disregard for the nuances of ritual and political correctness. But he had a reputation for generosity, dedication to his herds, and of responding to the advice of his peers – men of his age-set – and these were redeeming features. In all these respects, he was after all Maasai, and his egocentricities were just about acceptable for a man of his age. The sheer chance of our meeting suggests that his narrative may not be wholly atypical of Maasai elders at large. He happened to be the first Maasai to offer a hand of friendship, and the following pages stem from that.

In *The Maasai of Matapato* (published 1988), I have drawn on some of the episodes presented here by Masiani and his family, fitting the context of their narratives into my understanding of the wider issues. Cross-references and a chronology of these episodes are listed in the Subject Index under ‘Masiani, biographical sequence’. For a thumbnail sketch of Masiani’s character and his penchant for colouring his reminiscences as ‘The Maasai who would not grow old’ see *Anthropology and Autobiography* (eds. Okely & Callaway, 1992: 50-3). In another book, *Becoming Maasai* (eds. Spear and Waller, 1993: 157-173), the chapter on ‘The World of Telelia’ provides a fuller background to the narrative of Masiani’s senior wife.

A. MASIANI'S NARRATIVE



Map. The Matapato and their Maasai neighbours



Masiani's family

(Δ males; o females; R/L right/left-hand wives)

AGE-SETS	Senior sub-age-set <i>(Right-hand)</i>	Junior sub-age-set <i>(Left-hand)</i>
Twaati (1897)	(all dead)	
Dareto (1912)	(few survivors)	
Terito (1927)	Madideni (Masiani's (sub) age-set)	Kitatin
Nyangusi (1943)	Kalikal	Kamaniki (Kinaï's (sub) age-set)
Meruturud (1956)	Kuloliki	Putoliki (Kunaïju's (sub) age-set)
Ngorisho (1971)	(current moran in 1976-7)	

Maasai age-sets and approximate year of initiation

2. MASIANI'S FAMILY HISTORY

When the Matapato Maasai fought the Lumbwa, they captured three full brothers. One of these was called Oikani, and another Nenu, and they were both adopted by the Laisir clan. While the third was called Pansien and he was adopted by the Magasen clan. They each married and had large families.

Oikani married a woman called Chieni and she gave birth to a son named Lempudai. Other Maasai would call to the boy 'Ara Chieni', after his mother, and that has become the family name. But he was a coward as a young man and was frightened of everyone. He dare not stand up to the other moran; and as soon as enemies appeared in the distance, he would hang behind the others and hide. He really was a coward and mean also. He would not give away food. He was altogether worthless, and they all despised him.

On one occasion, when the Matapato moran went on a raid and snatched away a whole herd of cattle, they stopped on the way to water them. However, they left behind a thin heifer that was too weak to walk. Lempudai came after them, picked up the heifer and carried it across his shoulders and followed the raiding party at a distance for he dared not go among them. In the evening, when the raiding party rested beside a hill, he would stay out of sight and leave his heifer to graze. Then in the morning, when the moran had left, he went to the spot where they had rested, and picked up and ate the morsels of meat and bone that they had left behind. Then he would carry the heifer again, following the raiding party. After three nights like this, on the fourth day this heifer could walk by itself and he drove it very slowly.

When he caught up with the others, they said: 'Here's Lempudai! Wasn't he killed then? We thought he had gone home! What have you brought with you, you cowardly thing? Where have you come from?' And he replied: 'I have been following you, but I was frightened that you might take away my heifer.' The others already had their captured herds of cattle, so they promised that they would let him keep his heifer.

So he kept the heifer, and she became the ancestress of a herd of 13,000 cattle, and he married 14 wives and had as many children as these blades of grass here. He became the richest man in all the land – richer than anyone else who lived in this area. Then he became a different sort of person and was no longer mean for God had given him this good fortune. His family and herds were spread over many villages. He would always give people food, and everyone came to like him for as long as he lived.

My father was one of Lempudai's sons. It was a fine family in the past – way back. The family was popular because it was rich – and it was a big family, and everyone wanted to marry our girls. We were really eligible for marriage and would never try to interfere with the marriages of girls we had given away. We all trusted one another within the family and gave them cattle when they needed them. However, today we are no longer a rich family, though there are still many of us. We don't have any especially rich men and we don't have many cattle. There are only a few men remaining who are any good, and recently there have been many bad men among us – as many as forty. We have never had any influential leaders. It was the Loita Maasai who ruined the Lechieni

family, taking away all our cattle [*in the 1890s*] – but they did not kill the people. The Prophet Sendeu told the Loita moran: ‘Go and bring back the Chieni family’s sandals, and their herding sticks, and their elders’ tobacco tubes. But *don’t* kill them.’

Then the Kikuyu came to fight us for my father’s cattle: and they also took sheep and goats. The herdboys ran to warn our neighbours that the Kikuyu had just raided them. The Maasai chased the Kikuyu – there were about 20 of them – and they retrieved their stock and beat the Kikuyu. My father was wounded seven times by their spears and swords. The other Maasai decided just to leave him lying there while they recaptured the stock. When they returned, they carried my father to the village and killed more stock to feed him – and he pulled through.

On another occasion, it was the Kamba who raided us. Again, the herdboys raised the alarm. Again the Maasai drove them away; and this time my father was wounded five times. They carried him back to the village and he recovered. After this, my father’s nickname was ‘the man of scars’. He went to war, and went to fight men and they ran away, while he refused to run. Altogether, they wounded him 16 times and they even speared his penis.

3. *BOYHOOD : c. 1910-1928*

Lempudai's sons were also rich and popular, and then they too died, leaving us. My own father died when I was only three months old. He was very well liked for he was a 'bull' – a worthy man.

But his brother, Lekurok, was a sorcerer, who had only two cows. He was jealous of my father who was popular and had ten, so Lekurok cast a spell and ensorcelled him and he died. The other elders of the Chieni family claimed that Lekurok had no right to take away those cattle, for I would become a bull like my father and deserved them. However, Lekurok was the senior surviving brother and took control over us – my mother and me – and started to take away our cattle.

Now Lekurok was gigantic. He was as big as that tree over there. Each of his fingers was as thick as my wrist. And his nose! It was really terrible! The other elders said to him, 'Spare that small boy'. But my uncle kept beating me and taking away our cattle. As my younger brother and I grew up, our mother told us how many cattle he had taken, and we just had to wait until I was big enough to put matters straight.

When he realized that other elders knew what he was doing, he moved us to Loodokilani [*a neighbouring tribal section*], where we had no other close kinsmen and hounded us there. Then my mother went to call on other elders, and they came to support us and we were moved back to Matapato. But still Lekurok followed us. We came to that mountain over there – Loonkiito – and then we returned. We went to Loshioibor to stay. He did not trouble us there, but then he moved us again to Kilimanjaro and kept harassing us.

When I was old enough to herd cattle, I wanted to have my ears pierced so that I would be ready for circumcision when I grew up and could take control over our herd as a morani. But Lekurok refused. Then one day, he took away one of our oxen to slaughter for his wife, who had just given birth. So I shouted at him, 'Leave that ox alone. It is not yours', and I tried to hit him. He swore at me and started to beat me and took the ox and slaughtered it.

Then I ran away to two other family elders and persuaded them to pierce my ears. When I returned and Lekurok saw what I had done, he beat me so hard that he broke my arm. Do you see this black scar here? I tell you, he broke it. Then he demanded: 'Why did you get your ears pierced? Why?' And I said: 'Because you are maltreating us and I want to be circumcised. I hate you'. And he replied 'And if you are circumcised, would you dare stand up to me, your father?' And I replied 'Yes'. I was only a boy, but I dared do so. We argued and argued, and the family elders came to move us away from Lekurok again. It was the Maasai who helped us, constantly telling Lekurok to leave us alone. But he was still our guardian.

When we boys were just big enough to look after captured cattle, the moran of Dareto age-set took us on a raid against the Ltatua. There were moran from various Maasai tribal sections: Matapato, Loonkidongi, and also Dalalekutuk and a few from Salei. Ten of the moran from Matapato had been given rifles by the Ingirisa [*'English': the British*

colonial administration], when they served as scouts in the war against the Germans, including a ‘bull’ called Lengaur. When we went past Kukuo mountain, one of the Dalalekutuk moran boasted on his father’s name. Another morani warned him: ‘Not here. Wait until we are grabbing cattle, or one of these days a fire will steal away your family calf-pen.’

When the Maasai arrived at the Tatua country, they fought them and beat them, and drove their cattle away, right up the [*Rift Valley*] escarpment that reached up into the sky. The moran then had to beat and beat the cattle to make them climb up. Meanwhile, the Tatua came along in pursuit, led by a German with a gun. The cattle stretched in a column right up the mountainside, and this German shot right into the middle of the column bringing down some cattle, while those above continued up out of sight. Those cattle below them, however, rushed down the hillside, stampeding right past the moran who were trying to drive them upwards. The German also shot at some of the Dareto moran and killed four of them: two of Magasen clan and two of Laisir – full brothers of Lembaiyo. Altogether 40 men, mostly of Laisir, were wounded on this lower slope. They were finished, and the Tatua decided that they could safely come along and return the tail-end of their cattle.

Some came this way, some came that way. But two moran with guns, including that man Lengaur, stayed to guard the rear, hiding either side of a gully. As the Tatua came to the slope, these two fired on them, forcing them to run back the way they had come. The German wondered: ‘Is that gun firing at us here? Can it be that there are Ingirisa among those raiders?’ And he too ran away and hid from those ‘Ingirisa’ moran – for that’s what they seemed.

Meanwhile, the rest of the raiders reached the top of the escarpment before coming to rest. Two days later on their way back, they divided the cattle among themselves. They made a corral for the Loonkidongi cattle, one for Matapato, one for Dalalekutuk, and one for Salei: four altogether. And they selected nine moran to agree on the division. These men were of all tribal sections: three from Matapato, three from Loonkidongi, and three from Dalalekutuk – nine altogether. When the Matapato and Loonkidongi moran saw how few cattle the Dalalekutuk had taken, they despised them, and they blamed that man who had been warned not to boast about capturing cattle before reaching the Tatua country. When he realized this, the Dalalekutuk morani who had boasted came round and gave that man called Lenkashuko a left-handed blow. and he again called out his father’s name: ‘I am the son of Mamala’. He was joined by three other Dalalekutuk moran who rushed in to join him. The other moran soon chased them away, and they ran back to their enclosure where the other Dalalakutuk moran were thrown into confusion. They dropped their shields and their spears, and –pheese – they were chased away.

Later that day, a leading Dalalekutuk morani came back and pleaded with the others. He said, ‘We slept on the bare ground together. Wont you now give us an ox for slaughter, just something that we can eat on our way back home?’ So the others offered him a small thin calf, and when he tried to argue, they said, ‘We have already divided the cattle between us and that is all you are getting.’ It was we boys who had driven these captured cattle all the way back, for we were still too small to fight.

As I grew, I put wooden bungs in my ears to extend the holes until I could loop the lobes over the top of my ears. All this time Lekurok kept taking away our cattle. But now

I was ready to fight him. We had moved to these parts, and I had a brown cow with a white rump and horns as big as my outstretched arms.

I warned Lekurok, 'See that you do not take away that cow with the white rump, for it is going to calve in a few days time, and it is mine.' Then this cow bore a brownish calf with a white middle. It was evening, and the cattle had come home to graze just outside the village. I had been whittling a new herding stick, and I saw Lekurok squatting down just over there. So I picked up this calf and put it across my shoulders. He called across to me and said, 'Little son. I won't have you do that!' I remained silent. Then he shouted, 'Boy! Put down that calf at once!' I remained silent and went on through the gateway into the village to the doorway of my mother's hut, and I tied the calf there. Then I went inside the hut to fetch my spear and poised it in the doorway with the blade pointing away from the hut. I called him and said, 'Lekurok. Are you going to let me have those cattle of mine that you have taken?' And he said, 'And if I refuse you, what will you do?' So I said, 'I will speak with this spear.'

He came over to untie the calf, and he carried it over to his hut and tied it just outside. He then went back through the gateway to squat outside the village again. So I went to his hut, untied the calf and brought it back again to tie it up outside our hut. And then we started fighting over the calf and my mother rushed out to call over the village. 'Quick. Come here. They are fighting.'

As we were fighting, we were pulling this calf too and fro. As I grabbed hold of it, the other elders arrived, and I asked them, 'Why does this man want to take away this calf? Is it his? And now we are fighting because it was not he who begat me.' And Lekurok replied: 'Who bore you then?'. And I called out my father's name as I would in battle. And as I called it, I snatched up my new herding stick and threw it at Lekurok. The stick bounced off his forehead and went right up in the air. He then rushed towards me and I poised the spear. The other elders cried out: 'Hai ...Hai...Hai!', and pushed him to one side as I threw the spear. He was wearing a blanket over his shoulders and the spear missed him but went through the blanket between his arm and his body. The elders then separated us and called other elders for a meeting to finally settle the matter.

At first, Lekurok refused to divide the herd to let us have back our cattle. And he said: 'You will not be circumcised, for when you are, I will curse you to death.' However the other elders insisted that we should divide the herd and that I should be circumcised shortly.

So that was it. We divided our herds. Lekurok stayed at this village, and we moved away and stayed away until I came to be circumcised. My spear and the other Maasai elders had retrieved our cattle. Lekurok gave me seventeen female cattle and I drove them away. There were also oxen and bulls, and I drove them too to my home.

Then I realized that, it was Lekurok who would have to stand as my father when I was circumcised, and have butter placed on his head as he was blessed by the other elders, giving him the power of a terrible curse. So although I still wanted to fight, I had to placate him. Next day, I drove him a cow-with-calf, though I kept the brown calf with the white middle. I also took him beer and a blanket to appease him, and I said, 'Papa. I beseech you.' He said to me: 'Don't again fight me at any other time, for I dare not fight you any more.' By the time I was eventually circumcised, he came to trust me as a son and we became friends, for he realized that I was now a real man.

[Masiani's account of his boyhood presents a popular stereotype of his guardian uncle, but it is also one-sided and the tameness of the reconciliation between them fits oddly with the bitterness of their relationship up to that point. Missing from this account is any acknowledgment of the extent to which Masiani almost certainly acquired his herding skills and devotion to cattle from his uncle during an extended childhood as an unremitting herdboys. This would reveal another side to their relationship. PS]

4. MORANHOOD AND THE MANYATA: c. 1928 – 1933

While we were still just boys, we played and sang together rather as moran. This was fine, except that the existing moran of Dareto age-set would beat us if they caught us, and we would run away. And then we would go and sleep in the bush, for we were cowards. We dare not stand up to the moran. When they were around, we would go right out to the thick bush and to the Black mountain to sleep. Our scouts would then creep back to see, and when they returned, we would ask them: 'Where have they gone?'. And they would reply: 'They've gone. They've gone.' Then we would come down from our hide-out and dance again, until one of our look-outs came back to tell us: 'We've seen the moran again.' And then we would run away again. We were frightened of them. It's fine being a boy, but they're cowards. So we waited until we were still bigger, and when we were circumcised, we became really brave moran.

The Dareto really did beat us up, again and again. They told us not to enter their village or to sing in the central corral. Then one day, there were 59 of us staying at some other village and we all had shields. People were just driving out the cattle in the morning when we crossed the river and started whooping as we went, like moran. Up to this point, the Dareto would have beaten us for this, but this time we brought their rule to an end. We went into a large village through two gateways and right into the central corral, and we sang and danced there. Now the Dareto keeper-of-the-thong, who was deputy to their ritual leader, also lived there. He led his Dareto age mates to meet outside of the village, and then addressed them. 'We have seen that the boys have come.' he said, 'Cant you see that they are no longer just playing? Do you want a fight? Let's leave them for we no longer dare fight them. They have nothing to give us, and there is nothing that we can do to stop them. Let them stay where they are and take over the privileges of moranhood. Let me see if I have some milk to offer them to return to their villages. And when they return, don't fight them, for I would hate it and could curse you.' So the keeper-of-the-thong settled the dispute and we returned to our villages. They didn't try to turn us out of the central corral again, and everyone could see that we were now moran of a new age-set.

It was the Twaati age-set [*senior to Dareto*] who prepared us for circumcision: they were the firestick patrons of our new age-set, Terito. So we went to the village of their spokesman, Lampere, at the Black Mountain and told him that we were now moran. After consulting the other Twaati elders, Lampere went off to tell the European administrators [*Ingirisa*], asking them to forbid us Terito forming our manyata or carrying shields for they knew that we would then go off to war. We were afraid of the Twaati elders and the Twaati respected the Ingirisa, for they were in control of our country. It was the Ingirisa who forbade us. Even if we went to our meat-feasts in the forest, they would come and grab us. So we just lay low.

It was the Purko tribal section who led the way for us. The spokesman of their Twaati patrons was a great man called Legilisho, and he too wanted the Purko moran to settle down as soon as they were circumcised, telling them to 'drink milk' and become elders.

Now among our age-set in Purko was a ‘bull’ called Lemutelu. He was bigger than any other boy who had been circumcised at the same time. He was as tall as that tree, but he was also a wastrel who would go his own way. As a boy he seduced elders’ wives, and he would not leave them alone. As a morani, he drank beer and ran away with a young wife. No-one else would dare do that. It was Lemutelu who defied the elders telling them that it was the moran who governed the country, while Legilisho was merely a Laikiapiak stranger whose father had been beaten by the Purko. Lemutelu then led the Purko moran to build their own manyat.

Legilisho then brewed beer to call the other Purko elders and he addressed the meeting. ‘It is Lemutelu and not us [*the firestick patrons*] who now rule the country. He could easily lead the moran to war. But it was we who fought before they were even born. So let’s get up and see what we can do. It is not long since he beat us and cut off our earrings and our balls.’ The gourds of beer were then brought along and Legilisho put the mouth of the first gourd to his arse and farted into it, and then another elder, and then another until they had done this seven times. Then he put the top back onto each gourd, bottling up the farts in each one – aish. Now this was sorcery. And sores appeared in Lemutelu’s palms and under his feet. Then his flesh became like a hide. His bones and his knuckles became soft – and he died. [*With regard to this apparent reference to the stigmata, see Spencer 2003: 225. PS*] It was Lemutelu who stole back our moranhood for us and he paid the price. The news spread around the Maasai country and the rest of us Terito followed the Purko lead and set about building our warrior villages after all.

In Matapato, we moran decided to go to our Prophet Sendeu, but without the elders. We collected some cattle to present to him. He told us to find a striped ox and to perform the ‘shared hide’ ceremony, dividing its hide into stripes for each of us to wear. Because there were no firestick patrons to sponsor us, the Prophet suggested that eight moran should dress up as elders and play their role by wearing sheepskin capes. He then gave us some magic dust and explained how we should use it so that the Twaati and the Ingirisa would readily agree to our forming our manyat. The magic worked, but we had to pay with cattle for our insolence. When we told our firestick patrons what we had done, they cursed us for performing the ceremony without them and we had to drive along 49 heifers to placate them. They also made us promise that we would not go off to raid any of our neighbours, and they believed us. The patrons then went to the Ingirisa and advised them to let us have our manyat. The Ingirisa did not mind for they did not want to override the wishes of the elders. So they suggested to the patrons that we should be allowed to build our manyat to see if we would keep our word, but they did insist that our major village should be right by the motor track so that they could keep an eye on us.

We actually formed three manyat. Everyone wanted their own warrior village to be the biggest, but some did not want to belong to a particular village. Moran would argue over this but no-one actually fought. Ours was called Ilkituli at Maparasha, and it became bigger than any of the others with 150 huts and 8 lionskin trophies. The Olmerisho village at the Black Mountain was also big with 120 huts and 1 lionskins. However, the Olkokwa manyata at Osilale right over there only became small with rather few moran and only 37 huts and 4 lionskins.

When we first selected huts for our manyat. We ran round and chose those of our mothers. They would choose *your* mother, and they would choose *my* mother, and they

would choose *his* mother, and they would choose *their* mother – and lead all the mothers to that manyata. I had no father and could have stayed away from the manyata to look after our cattle like a premature elder. But premature elders have no sense of respect and they are mean, for they do not get to know the ways of the moran.

If a morani shows that he has no sense of respect, the others will keep beating him, until he becomes wise and worthy and afraid of the others. Premature elders only like cattle and they have no common sense. That's just what I didn't want. It was obvious that I had no father, and I looked after my cattle. I never threw my cattle away. From the time my mother bore me I have liked cattle *and* I have liked worthy men. So I decided that I could not settle down with other premature elders. I would mix with worthy men and become strong. I would not continue to be disgruntled, for I had settled the wrong that had been done to me when I was a boy. I would enter the company of worthy men and learn about true Maasai values. Why should I go any other way? I was never poor, nor mean, nor jealous with my age mates regarding my wives, for the Maasai hate such jealous men. So, although I had no father, I became a morani and I could see that being a morani was good. I became a worthy 'bull' who likes the Maasai way of things.

On one occasion, there were just five of us who wanted to pilfer cattle from the Kamba. Two had already been on such a raid, and they agreed to take me with them. We slept in the bush during the day, and then when it got dark, we stole eight cattle. When Maasai stole cattle, they did not dawdle back. They would chase the cattle at a trot, and that was how we drove these back here. No-one tried to follow us. But when we went there a second time, they did chase us away and took back their cattle, putting an arrow into that man Lekarute – the father of that idiot who was here this morning. So, with a wounded man and no cattle, we had to sleep in the bush on our way back. We pilfered a sheep and slaughtered it. We also had to steal a pot from nearby to stew out the fat to give to the wounded man while we doctored him.

When we arrived back at the manyata, we were hot for a fight, especially when the Kamba attacked us and killed one of our moran of Tarasoro clan. Then we decided to mount a raid of our own on the Kamba. We scoured the countryside, calling on all moran who were at their forest meat feasts to collect together at Maparasha manyata. Word went round, and as we gathered together we realized that the moran of Osilale manyata had not come. So we decided to send out nine scouts to Osilale to persuade them to join us. I was one of the nine and away we went.

We arrived at night when they were all asleep. Then I saw a girl who had left her hut to have a pee outside. She saw me and I grabbed her – 'Girl! Whose daughter are you? ... Where is the manyata horn?'

'It is hanging in that hut over there.'

'How many moran are in the hut, and who are they?'

'There are two – Lenejilooti and Lentuoipo.'

Then I let her go and went to fetch the horn.

I lent my spear against the hut and put my shield on top, and went inside. Now in this hut were two really brave moran. One was Lentuoipo and the other was called Lenejilooti.

I took up this horn. It was as long as this. But I didn't know how to blow it. So I handed it over to the moran outside, and they blew it: 'Tu... tu... tu... tu... tu...'

We did not know that there were European's askaris in a camp close by. They could hear the horn of course, but they just thought it was just playing and dancing among the manyata moran and took no notice.

Whereas we were using it to call the moran out of their huts, for to us the horn is like a whistle among Ingirisa, sending a serious message. And we just stayed there, waiting for them.

The Osilale moran came rushing out of their huts and asked: 'Why have you blown the horn? ... Why? ... Why? Who blew it? ... WHO BLEW IT?' And I said: 'We did'.

We held a discussion while we nine retained that horn throughout the meeting. When we asked them why they had not come to join us to fight the Kamba, they explained that their firestick patrons and the Ingirisa had come to browbeat them, and had left the escaris behind to keep watch over the manyata, telling them to shoot any moran who went away. 'Do you see that camp fire over there?' they asked, 'That is their fire. So we remained quiet here, for we knew that the Ingirisa mean what they say.'

So we replied, 'What if they are there? Are we all cowards?' Then one of their leaders asked me what little bird had led me to fetch that horn. And I replied, 'You are all just like children. I even wonder if you are even circumcised!' Then he said, 'Gently now. Don't be angry if God helps the Ingirisa with their big noses. We haven't come here to be insulted by you, and the man who was killed was not your father. It was the Ingirisa who have kept us apart from the Kamba. Previously, we were eager to fight like you, but it was the Ingirisa who calmed us down. Now go away for eight days and let the askaris return to their place and the firestick patrons to their villages. And *then* let us return to fight the Kamba. Then and not now.'

So we agreed, but we would not stop to share milk with them, for we were still angry. We arrived at Maparasha manyata before morning to explain the matter to other moran.

We dispersed for eight days and then gathered together and started off. We slept in the daytime and went along at night. It wasn't the people whose cattle we wanted to take that made us take care – it was the Ingirisa. For the Ingirisa hated lawlessness and we were afraid of them – we respected them.

Meanwhile, an elder of Dareto age-set heard about our plan and had summoned the other elders. Our firestick patrons tried to stop us, but we took no notice and climbed up through the saddle between the hills. There were four hundred of us.

However, we did not know about that new fangled thing that sends messages that you call 'the telephone'. Our firestick patrons had told the Ingirisa, and the Ingirisa telephoned for reinforcements. They came and camped right beside us, just as they had done at Osilale outside the manyata. And we cried out: 'May God punish whoever brought them here. Let's pay our patrons back with our spears, and scatter them so that in future they will mind their own business.' Those were our brave words, but did we dare defy both the patrons with their curse or the Ingirisa with their guns? We did not dare, and just said, 'Let's be off before they shoot at us.'

The Ingirisa did not punish us. They just came and said very gently, 'Let it alone. Leave us to find out why the Kamba came to fight you.' And they slaughtered 10 oxen for us to eat and sent us back to our homes. Then they sent to the Kamba, and took away cattle and their arrow quivers away from them. I tell you. The Kamba once had as many cattle as the Maasai. But now they have very few left.

On another occasion, some of us wanted to fight the Kaputiei Maasai. So we went to collect the moran that were at the Lolmerisho manyata. It was late and we killed 4 oxen there. By the time we had dragged ourselves to Maparasha manyata, it was quite dark.

We called a meeting of moran, but those at Maparasha said, 'We dont want to go and fight the Kaputiei, for the Ingirisa have arrived and they would shoot us.' We replied, 'Let them shoot at us, for we are still going. Don't wait for our firestick patrons to come or for the Ingirisa, for thy will punish us too.' At this point, some of the more eager moran from our manyata got up and stomped off, while others from Maparasha wanted to call them back until we had all agreed. Then we started fighting. My friend, Kalitu, hit one of Maparasha moran who then attack him with his spear. Kalitu had no shield and I ran up to protect him with my own shield, knocking the spear to one side, which wounded me here on this leg. When Kalitu emerged from behind my shield, his finger was slashed by the other's sword – have you noticed his missing finger on his left hand? It was I who had shielded him, and he remembered this when recently he gave me that girl for my son Kunaiju to marry.

There was a morani called Loibudisho who was brave and fierce, and we had wanted to fight one another for some time. He belonged to the Makasen clan and believed that the whLechieni family would not stand up to him, and he boasted on his father's name and cattle. So I got up early one day and followed him to the den where Makasen moran were sharing meat. Then I said to him, 'What are you going to do, you son of a Kikuyu woman. Would you like to have a little chat?' There were just three of us, all of Lechieni, though the other two were cowards, while there were seven of them, all moran of Makasen clan. They all liked me and replied, 'Leave all that be. Give the Chieni moran some meat.' But when they saw that I really wanted to fight this man and would not listen to them, they drove us, the Lechieni three, from their feasting place. I called back to them, 'There's no point in restraining us, for I will still beat him.' At this point, Loibudisho ran towards me, and I ran toward him, and we met. I hit his forehead with my club and he fell with his stomach facing up to the sky. The others ran to separate us and later at the discussion, we argued about it and then we became friends.

On another occasion, we had hunted a lion and I was the first to spear it, but two of the other moran managed to grab its tail before I did. I rushed crying 'Oi Lechieni, it's mine', and snatched the tail from them. But I was last, and they claimed the mane for a head-dress. I then wanted to fight these two other moran, and happened to meet them near a deserted village. I saw that they were going to fight me together, and they were joined by a third morani who ran up to be with them. So I went through a gateway of the village and found a safe spot with the thorn fence behind me. I crept behind the fence and waited for them. Then I sprang and wounded two of them, drawing blood. I was not wounded, for I know how to use a shield very well. When they tried to hit me, I deflected their weapons and inflicted three wounds. Then the other moran came and separated us.

There was another occasion when I first speared a lion, but another morani called Lesamoili was the first to grab its tail and claimed the mane. This time I did not mind. Now these lions at that time had manes as long as that [15 inches] and this one was light coloured! The lions came from that mountain and from Naseeki. And they really did have long hair.

At that time, there were many lions and other large animals around. No elder would live alone in his village because later in the day, the lions would come along and take away his cattle. So the people would live together in large villages. It's not like that now. The lions have been killed off by moran and Ingirisa [*the English*].

My younger brother died when he was still quite young, but he really was a 'bull' and killed a lion. This lion terrorized a neighbourhood and four villages moved elsewhere. The lion would even come along at midday and take its pick from the cattle herds that were out grazing, even near the village. Then my younger brother and another morani said to those Maasai who remained, 'Don't move away today, for we will stay here and protect you.' In the evening, when the cattle were coming home, the lion also came and it grabbed a cow that had a female calf just outside the village. My brother speared it and killed it on the spot. Then the elders gave him a girl to marry. He really was a 'bull', but he's not alive now. He died very soon after that.

The most important lion-hunt involved my friend Loloishi, who later offered me his daughter for my son Kunaiju. It was Loloishi who really fought a lion and was the first to spear it. Then that man Lenkopiro was hurt when he tried to grab its tail. So Loloishi claimed the mane, and they argued over it, and the quarrel mounted until the elders of Dareto and Twaati age-sets came to the manyata to restrain Loloishi, but he wanted to continue the argument. Then I came along, and led Loloishi away from the discussion and suggested to him, 'Forget about that lionskin. Don't do this, for you will be a corpse if you carry on like this.' And he replied, 'All those elders and moran could not prevent me from having my way. Why should I now listen to you?' And I replied, 'Because I am a worthy man, not a shameful one.' So he forgot his grievance for my sake. He went back to the meeting and said to the elders and moran, 'I am now ready to give away this lion's mane. But it is this man Lechieni who has made me change my mind and not you. If I have not killed another lion by tomorrow, you will know that I am not the son of my father.'

Loloishi set off that very day and spent the night at another village. That very night, a lion sprang into this village and grabbed a cow; and it was Loloishi who speared it and brought it down. Now the hair of that lion was light coloured and as long as this! Did he or didn't he kill it? He did!

So it was that while the first lion-mane was being sewn by the girls into a head-dress for that other morani Lenkopiro, another mane head-dress was being sewn for Loloishi. We then came to be very good friends, and he moved away to Loitokitok some time ago.

When we came together for promotion at our *eunoto* ceremony, our manyat at Maparasha had eight lionskin trophies, the Olmerisho had nine, and Osilali had four. So we had 21 altogether. I had killed two of these lions, but no lion head-dress. I had to settle for one made out of ostrich feathers.

We stayed as moran. We did good things. We did bad things. The moran of my age-set still stole stock, and they still seduced the young wives of elders, and they killed lions. They were just like you were, when you were a morani. We would fool about just as you did. We were no worse than that. When we seduced the elders' wives, we did it very discretely for we were frightened of the elders and did not want them to know. There were a few moran – ten or twenty – who did not want to seduce wives. But generally young men are all seducers and that's the truth.

At that time, there were many girls in the manyata and they were very big, even though they were still just uninitiated girls. They liked the moran a lot and we went to look for them in the elders' villages also. Nowadays, elders no longer want manyata girls to be too big. The moran are no longer as trustworthy as they were. They are now good-for-nothing. They don't know how to just sing with the girls and leave it at that. So now we initiate them early so that they can go to an elder's village as wives.

By the time we had been moran for about seven years, this was a long time and we all wanted to relax and become elders. After our *eunoto* ceremony, when we shaved our hair off, we built another manyata and again grew our hair to half-way down our necks, but we really wanted to become elders. At the manyata, we had forgotten about the importance of herding. Whereas two or three or four of us who had lost our fathers wanted to return to stay with our cattle and look after our families.

So we shaved off our hair a second time and each of us performed a small ceremony 'drinking milk' from gourds handed over to us by our firestick patrons of Twaati age-set. After this we no longer had to share milk with one another. We were no longer moran. Then the junior [*left-hand*] side of our age-set were circumcised. At first, we wanted to fight them and they did not dare to stand up to us. We fought them on five occasions and beat them each time. We didn't kill any of them, but we did hurt them.

During all this time we had not been on any successful raid. Then when three of us from Matapato were on a visit to the Loita Maasai, we decided one last time to join in a small raid they were planning with their neighbours, the Laitayok Maasai, against the Sukuma.

There were 21 from Laitayok, 17 from Loita, and us three from Matapato. That made 41 altogether. We slept in three places on the way and eventually came to a Sukuma village. Two moran went off to scout and the rest of us waited. They were gone a long time and did not come back, so I followed the way I had seen them go towards a gateway. I circled round the village several times to see if there was any other way in. Everyone in the village seemed asleep, and I found the other two scouts. I opened the gateway and let out two cattle and the other two intercepted them. We then drove off 45 cattle altogether. They then told me to fetch some more, so I took another 14, making a total of 59. And then we went out.

The other moran whom we had left behind were looking out for us. We drove the cattle to them and then left to go back to our own country. This was the time of the autumn rains, covering our tracks. We drove the cattle as far as we could before it got light, and then rested and slaughtered a cow to feed ourselves. I don't know if it had had any calves, but its hump was as big as that and it was fat!

I left the others to look at the surrounding area. The place we had come to was very steep. I saw a dust cloud and said to myself: 'Are the people we have just robbed following us and causing that dust?' When I got back, the others were chatting to one another: 'Where's the roast flank? ... Pass it over to that man of our age-set.' I found the other two Matapato moran and told them to get up. '*Erpap!* Let's go just over there.' And I grabbed some meat. When we had got as far as that tree, they said: 'Let's sit down here.' And I replied, 'No. Not here. Let's eat our meat right over there and sleep there, and let's leave the others where they are – for all the places are the same – there are no

beds for any of us.’ And I carried the meat away and led them to a more secluded spot, where we settled down.

The three of us chewed some of the meat, but could not finish it – that cow was so fat and its meat was so sweet. All the others we had left over there could not eat it all either, and they lay down to sleep beside the fire and all that meat, and the cattle were lying down nearby.

Then along came this man with a gun – I don’t know if he was the owner of the cattle we had stolen. When he was as close as that tree, he shot right into the fire. Off went the gun: ‘paaash...’ I woke up with a start. The fire had leapt up to the sky. And the cattle ran: dii ... dii ... dii ... The moran all ran: dii ... diii ... dii... And again the gun went ‘paaash...’ The full brother of that Loita man Lenaisuake rushed past the fire. The bullet entered behind his sword belt and came out in his groin. There was panic. Hai, we ran. We started up like a flock of birds resting in two trees – panic! Man, we flew. Those people that we had fought pursued us. They grabbed some of the Laitayok moran and put them in jail, and then later let them go, for we had not fought anyone. At least some of the other moran knew which way to go and taking charge, they led the way.

The three of us from Matapato decided to make our own way home. We went as far as Kisapuk is from here, and then as far as Kilalash, and then (say) Ilmarba, Enkwetata, Loirimirimi, and then changed direction back towards here. ‘Oye. Look over there at that star: our country is over in that direction!’ So we climbed down from (say) Tiamuloine and reached Lemoos.

By this time, dawn was spreading in the east, and we had slowed down to a trot, for we had run so much that we had cramp. We thought we had reached another district. But in the light of the dawn, I could see that we had come right round in a circle. The other two were afraid to go right up to the spot where our camp fire had been and stayed behind while I went to the spot where that man had shot at us and beaten us. The place was now deserted. The cattle had all gone.

And *there* was the morani who had been shot. I looked down at him and realized that he was dead. So I laid his corpse out. I took off his ear-rings, I undid his neck beads and his sword. I took off all his personal ornaments. I turned him over to lie on his right side. But I did not have to undo his pigtail, for we were all elders by now and had shaved our hair. I took his sword out of its scabbard and lay it down, and I lay down his spear also.

And there was the cooked meat, lying on the ground. I went over and picked up the ribs and the centre breast, and I then said to myself: ‘Now get up!’, and I fled. I ran to where the other two were.

They saw me coming and ran off as if I were one of those who had chased us away earlier. They were frightened of me. When I saw *them* run, I thought that they must have seen something, and I ran off. We ran like the wind until we arrived at a place as far as Lesikoyois from here.

On the way, I came across a stray cow, and I claimed it for myself. It was only a thin young male, and when it saw me, it stopped grazing and ran away. We caught hold of it, and it calmed down, so that we could drive it along. It became mine. So I had started off driving away 14 cattle, and finished with just one male calf. It was God’s gift.

At last, we said ‘Look over there! There’s Losiruwa mountain. Can it really be Losiruwa?’ Should we eat the meat that I had rescued here? No. We dared not wait. We would not eat it here. Do you think that we really wanted to stay? My back ached. My

legs were as hard with cramp as that stick. We went on and said: 'There's Lolkiani mountain. The sun has gone down. Let's stop and have some meat.' So we ate and ate. And then we saw a Loita village, but we dared not speak to the people. We were thirsty and the cold wind of this part struck us. So we lay down outside the village and slept.

This was the time when things were really tough. It was the hardest time of all. After all that running, we came home to our own country to look after our own cattle as elders and no longer moran. Being moran means going right out into the bush, and spearing wild beasts, and going out to steal. An elder does not do that. For you have your own wives, you build your own home, you eat your own food, and you have your children. These are all yours. You don't go away fighting any more – you just stay where you are. To become old is fine – you drink beer given you by your children.

5. MARRIAGE AND ELDERHOOD (c. 1933-1966)

While we were still living in the manyata a great friend of my father invited me to take his daughter, Kunaiju's mother, as my first wife. There were two other suitors, an elder of Dareto age-set and a morani of my age-set, Terito, but her father had chosen me. She had a lover at our manyata – another morani – who wanted to take her and run away with her, but her father was firm and she was frightened of him and dare not run away. That morani came back looking for her, and I landed three heavy blows on his head. The other manyata moran separated us, and I asked them to tell him to leave her alone for she was no longer his. But he did come again, and this time I struck him four times. After that, he went away and did not come again. We remained enemies for three years and then became friends. I never hit him again.

My second wife was a daughter of Talala age-set, and a gift from her brother who was an age mate in Loita and a great friend of mine. Oh, that wife hated me. We quarreled and quarreled, and then she ran away. Her brother wanted to remain friends with me and promised me another wife if I let them keep the marriage cattle. Years later, they offered me another wife, Seenoi's mother, and I took her for my first son, Seenoi's father [*Kinai*]. So I have been given two wives by friends from Loita and I have promised them that I will give a Loita elder that young reddish daughter of mine in return when she is a bit bigger.

My third wife was also a daughter of Talala age-set and had been my lover at the manyata. She ran back to me after she had been taken away for circumcision and marriage at her father's village. I told her not to stay, for I knew that the elders would hound me. She replied that she would stay, even if I was as good as dead. Then I was punished by the elders. My age mates gave me five cattle and I added another five to offer to her father. Then the elders left me in peace, and she stayed with me until she died very soon afterwards. She was an ideal woman – and then she died.

I took all three wives to the manyata, but I could not sleep in their huts until the manyata was disbanded. It was only other moran who were allowed to sleep in my wives' huts. Kunaiju's mother [*Telelia*] bore her first daughter at the manyata, and she bore Seenoi's father [*Kinai*] shortly after the manyata had been disbanded.

Later I was given another wife for my son, Kunaiju, by that man Loloishi, who had gone to Loitokitok after killing two lions. We were very good friends, but she was mindless and had no sense of respect. She swore at me and I told her to go away, for I did not want a wife who abused me. And away she went.

Then there was a drought in Matapato, and about five of my age mates had moved their herds to the low-country of Loodokilani, where the situation was better. Another elder and I decided to join them until the conditions in Matapato improved. While I was moving in that direction, others from our age-set could see that our close unity was threatened as we dispersed in various directions. Our age-set was preparing the next stage

of our promotion to elderhood, *eating meat*, while the Ilkitatin age-set were growing stronger and more audacious. My age mates were very fond of me and regarded me as a 'bull' and a very generous person. I had always given them plenty of food whenever they came to my home. So they tried to stop me and sent a messenger telling me to stay where I was so that we could discuss my wish to move to Loodokilani. I took no notice of this order and just stole away for the sake of my stock. So my age mates followed me and mounted a raid and hounded me and hounded me and drove away five cattle, punishing me for disobedience. I let them take the cattle without a fight, and just moved on. I hated this after all that I had done for them, and I still feel bitter. I had been punished unreasonably and felt peevish. They did not punish any of the others – I don't know why. Just me.

When conditions improved, I returned to Matapato and joined in the preparations for *eating meat*. This was to be held after most of us had had a chance to marry, our age company would again come together in a large village like a manyata. But this time, we were attached to the huts of our young wives rather than of our mothers. We all had to eat meat given to us by these wives, relaxing another avoidance of moranhood. Kunaiju's mother [*Telelia*] came and gave four of us meat, and we all liked her for that.

However, our firestick patrons had placed a general curse on any young wives who had been seduced by Ilkitatin moran: these tended to be the most attractive wives and they had 'gone to the boys'. They were afraid of the curse and did not want to give us meat. When they stayed away and we realized which wives they were, we did not want to eat any meat from them either. We all disliked them. Their husbands would shake with rage and wanted to beat them, while other husbands tried to protect these women, and would say: 'Leave them, leave them, and I will give you a cow'. Other unfaithful wives would run away and collect cattle from their fathers' homes to drive to their husbands. Our patrons also came and said to the cuckolds. 'Leave your wives alone and do not curse them. For they are our children, and they will die if you do. Don't finish them off as the Dareto age-set did when they found out that their young wives had been seduced by *you!*' That was an end to it, for we did not want to disobey our patrons. And they blessed us and the cuckolds got cattle.

When Kinai was a herdboys, we went out with the cattle and we took them down a rather steep and dangerous spot. I wanted to prepare a herding stick to give to my father-in-law [*Telelia's father*],. So I made a fire to harden this stick in the flame. The fire spread into the dry grass and got out of hand. As it spread, it scattered the cattle and drove some of them right up the mountainside, trapping them on a ridge. You should have seen it. By the time I could reach them, they had been badly mauled by the fire. There was my black-and-white cow just standing still, but it was no longer just black and white. Its head was all charred, its horns had dropped off, and it was still standing! As I came to recognize this cow of mine, my stomach turned to jelly and I cried 'Oosho.' For this cow could fill two gourds at one milking. Could it ever do that again? Altogether, ten of my cattle were burnt to death. There were also other cattle trapped up there belonging to other elders. God! Oh, God! Meanwhile the fire had spread out of control. All that day, it ravaged the area. Next day, we fled to another area for the fire had eaten up the country and there was nothing left for the cattle to eat.

That was a very difficult time. I had lost my cattle and had just two goats, one mature and the other was still a kid. So I decided to migrate to Loodokilani again and to stay there, for there were a considerable number of Matapato families among the Loodokilani, who have always been our close friends and allies. I had seen how good this area would be for building up my flock of small stock. I especially wanted sheep, because they are docile and provide plenty of fat for the family. Goats are easier to manage, but they do not have any fat. It is not easy to build up a flock of sheep, but I felt it was worth while to recover our fortunes.

When I got to Loodokilani, some local age mates visited me and stayed overnight. I did not have much to feed them with, so I slaughtered the mature goat and left the kid. The Loodokilani elders said to me. 'Hai worthies! He gave us one goat, and now God will give him many.'

I have friends from all over Maasai. There are some in Loita; some in Purko; some in Loitokitok; some in Kisonko. But I only have one in Kaputiei. When they were visiting Matapato, I would give them stock. Then when I went to visit them, and I would drive back stock that they had given me. After this, my friends in Loita would call me over: 'We have heard that the Matapato cattle are finished, but you have given us cattle in the past. Come here after it has rained, and we can give you some.' This is very good, for stock don't die out everywhere at the same time. If cattle die out in this country, then Loodokilani will give us some; Purko will give us some. Cattle are given away like that.

While we were still poor and Kinai was still quite young, he was initiated into Nyangusi age-set and became a morani. He then one day led five other Nyangusi moran to my village as he was hoping to join them with his mother at their manyata. However, these moran could see that I only had one wife at that time and accepted my wish to keep her with me.

Later, when he led some of his age mates to our village, I needed to feed them, but still had very few stock. So I asked Lempelilai, a cousin who lived nearby: 'Give me a sheep or a goat for slaughter so that I can feed these moran, for it is now the dry season and there is no milk around.'

He replied: 'What have you been doing recently that you have no stock of your own?'

I said: 'Give me one to slaughter and I will find you something to repay you.'

He still refused. So I said to him: 'Alright. I'll gather up a flock elsewhere.'

I then offered these moran a young ox from my herd, but they refused it. One of them wanted to take blood from the animal that night to mix with what little milk there was.

This irritated me, for I could not understand why they would not take what they had been offered. So I vowed in front of them: 'Do you see that small flock of my cousin over there? I am going to get far more than those before I move from this village, and my son will stay here to help me.'

Next day, a man whose wife had just given birth came along and asked for an ox to slaughter. Now Kinai had an ox that was fatter than any ox in the country and I started playfully haggling with that man.

'That ox would normally fetch three ordinary striped oxen,' I said.

He immediately replied: 'I'll accept that and let you have three.'

Then I said: 'I won't accept it. I also want a striped heifer and a milch-cow with the same marking.'

And he replied: 'You can have them as well.'

I went on: 'No, I still won't sell. The only things I will take are 12 sheep and no goats.' 'You can have them,' he said.

Then I said to him: 'That's an end to our bargaining. There will be no more haggling.' He then persuaded me that I should also take at least one goat – for that is good.

On that day, I drove away 13 animals, including a ewe with white legs and a greyish-brown lamb with white legs, and I looked after them all. After that, I also bargained a white ox with a black patch on its back in exchange for money and a young ram. On another occasion, I bargained an off-white heifer for 12 more sheep. And I bargained a brown bull with white hips and got 16 sheep from the Somali. One of them was pregnant and had five lambs. I then sold that black cow with the splayed horn and I acquired just one non-Maasai ram with a huge tail, and I castrated all my other male sheep. So in a short time, my stock had increased to the size of the flock of that cousin of mine.

One day, I was out with my flock, quietly leaning against a rock, and this cousin of mine, Lempelilai, came along and only saw my younger son Kunaiju and he called over to him: 'Boy! What family are you from? ... Which Lechieni? ... Whose are these animals? Yours!? ... Where is your father?'

'Over by that rock!' Kunaiju replied.

So I called over to the boy. 'Tell him that these animals are all mine, and I have many more sheep elsewhere. And remind him that he refused me a goat to slaughter for those moran when we had lost our stock.'

There came a time when that flock was so big that there was no other flock like it anywhere. Then along came Lempelilai, wanting to beg a sheep, but he was too mortified to do so. He was with another elder who also wanted a sheep. I offered him one and asked him what Lempelilai wanted.

'He also wants a sheep.'

So I said, 'Tell him to take that one over there, but it's not as small as the one that he refused to give me. Take it away! But look – tell him that I still have not got as many as I will have. In future, he should take note of how my flocks are doing without having to ask my son.'

By the capes of my age-set's avoided daughters, when Lempelilai had driven his sheep away, I moved to another area. I found a grassy and well watered spot to settle, and herded my cattle on the slopes of a hill and grazed my sheep and lambs in the plain. The ewes became pregnant again, immediately after bearing each lot of lambs, and within a period of only five months I twice had to enlarge my stock enclosure!

At first I slept on top of the hut because of the heat and the mosquitoes. Then I built myself a bunk on stilts in the middle of the pen for small stock to guard these animals. I had my bow and quiver with me in my bunk so that I could kill any predator that came along. And there we stayed.

One night a leopard did come along. First it devoured a sheep that was about to lamb. Then on another night it got hold of one of my calves. Kinai tried to kill it – and missed. 'Oooye', he moaned. 'I so wanted to get it!'

So I said: ‘Oooo – you wanted to get it. Don’t you miss ever again, or that cat will take more of my cattle every time you try.’

I was furious. So I swore: ‘I vow that I will not have anything to eat or milk to drink during the next four days while that animal stays around. I will not stomach it. Then turning to an elder called Lento, who was passing our way, I said: ‘Come this way on your return, for if this cat has not eaten me first, you will be able to sit on its skin.’

I then prepared a trap. First I dug a hidey-hole for myself, just inside the main fence by a tree that was bent over, and I tied a sheep to the tree – one that I was looking after for another elder. Then I built an outer fence beyond with a gap for the leopard to walk through.

Then I got some cud, and I planted it in a trail leading through this gap to tempt the leopard my way. And I put dry leaves down on the ground so that the crackle would be easy to hear. And I made a small hole in the fence to point my arrows through. Then I crouched down behind this in my hidey-hole.

That night, I told a morani who was with me to keep quiet, and I told the other moran to make plenty of noise in the sheep pen in another part of the village so that the animal would come my way rather than theirs. I crouched down behind my trap and waited.

Eventually, I could hear the leopard coming as it pawed the crackly leaves and sounding rather like a francolin bird: ‘takatak ... takatak ... takatak’. It was right by me so that my arrow was prodding its armpit as I let it fly. It was a poisoned arrow, and went right into the animal: ‘woof’. The animal leapt away into the darkness.’ What?, I asked myself, ‘Did those peasant farmers who make this poison cheat me? How can a leopard get away to hunt elsewhere when the tip of the arrow has completely embedded itself? Get away if you can!’ I heard Kunaiju’s mother [*Telelia*] calling out: ‘That must be a hyena!’ Little did that woman know. I said to the morani who was with me: ‘Let’s get up and leave this hidey-hole and join the others.’

I was very excited and called out to everyone in the village: ‘You can go and rest now, everyone.’ I went to my hut and said to my wife: ‘Brew some tea, for you know that I vowed to have nothing until I killed that animal. Now you can make me some tea.’ Other elders came along to drink with me and we chatted and joked.

One of the elders, said: ‘Do you really think you have killed it? I just heard it being sick outside after having had so much meat. It went ‘ewoko ... ewoko ...’

I replied: ‘By my cow’s backside, that arrow won’t come out. It won’t. A dead cat cannot be sick.’

Next morning, I went out and brought its skin back to the village. When the elder, Lento, came back that way, I was playing the Maasai board game, Nkeshi. He saw the leopard-skin laid out under the board. ‘Is that it?’, he asked. ‘By the unclipped ears of my cattle, your boast has paid off.’ And I replied: ‘It came to an end just here and it can’t die a second time.’

One day, I and was with my son, Kunaiju, herding my growing flock of sheep and goats with thorn-pods and we came to a place where there was a pothole. The bottom was so deep – it was right down there: twice as deep as that tree is high. Six of the animals fell down it. I drove the rest of the flock right away and then went back to the hole to listen. There – right down there – I heard: ‘báá... báá... báá...’. And I said to

myself, 'Aish ... it's deep'. So I took off my cloth, undid my knife, and took off my sandals. Then I climbed down to look for them.

As I went down, I kept stumbling and falling and falling until I got to the bottom. The chalk was white as white as that paper of yours. So now I was with the lost animals. I looked up towards the entrance to the pothole but could no longer see it. There I was, waiting at the bottom of the pothole. 'Worthies!' I said, 'I'm dead, yes I'm as good as dead.' So I stayed quietly with the animals. I did not know at this point that one of the sheep was dead.

Meanwhile, Kunaiju had seen me fall down and he went to fetch the local elders. The elders came and stripped the fibre bark off some local trees, and knotted them end to end into a very long rope and made a noose at the end and lowered it down into the hole. They lowered the rope, and the noose touched me, just here on my back. I thought for a moment it was a snake and brushed it off. Then I realized that it was a rope and that I wasn't as good as dead after all. They called down to me: 'Take hold of this. You'll pull through. I took hold of a sheep, put the noose over its legs and shook the rope, and they lifted it up. In this way, they lifted up the five living animals, and then the dead one. Then it was my turn. I put my legs through the noose and placed it just under my buttocks. Then I grabbed the rope with my hands and called up: 'Take hold', and they called down. 'We've got it.' And one of the elders said: 'Ai worthies, it's an old man down there.' They hauled me up and I clambered up the sides as they hauled, climbing up and up, and up until I got out. I had earlier brought a small container of water, which I had left on the ground. Now I poured the water over my head and washed. When I had finished, we ate the sheep that had been killed, and then drove the flock home.

When I had just led away my youngest wife as a bride, we lived in an area where Ingirisa hunters had shot a lot of animals recently, leaving the carcasses lying around. A lion found these and became used to feeding on this meat. Then the Ingirisa left, but the lion remained and it started to grab cattle being watered at a nearby gully, frightening the herds.

At this time, Kinai was looking after the cattle, while I tended the sheep and goats. Then the Kamaniki age-set [*Nyangusi*] gathered to perform their promotion ceremony of *eating meat*, and Kinai went off to join them. Now without him, I had to look after the cattle and the whole family by myself. I only had a bow to guard the cattle at night, so I told Kinai to leave me his spear – the blade was as long as this.

One morning while out herding, I had one of my daughters and my new bride with me. They were driving the herd, while I went on ahead. When I arrived at the crossing place, an elder called Lembukoki came rushing along shouting. 'Ero ... Lechieni ... oiye ... there's the lion that has been worrying the cattle in this place. Don't let your herd come here.' But I pointed out that there was no other place around where my cattle could get water.

So I told the children – this bride of mine and the girl – to collect the herd and keep them together while I watered the cattle. I tied my cloth around my waist and took off my sandals to get down to the job. It was a vast place with long grass growing between the various wells. I looked around the spot and I liked it. Now I had an ox with a bell around its neck, and it was leading 27 cattle. So I went to drive them towards the grass where they could eat.

In this herd, there was a bull belonging to Kinai: it was dappled with a short tail and was called Konika and its dam had been Seur. It was grazing in this long grass. Then I saw the lion, crouching *there* and ready to spring. It had already taken four cattle from local herds and this would have been the fifth.

Was this really *the* lion, I wondered? I crept round silently so that it would not see me and ran to a hidden copse, and then came round slowly with my spear poised, carrying my sandals and with one cloth tied over my shoulder and the other round my waist. The lion was very close but it was not looking my way and didn't see me. I crept round behind it, and then threw the spear as hard as I could.

It got him just below his shoulder and pierced right through to the other side. Kinai's spear went right through him, and defenceless I ran away. The lion sprang right up into the sky and when it fell to the ground, the spear dropped out. It then chased me as far as that copse, and I sped through it still with the lion after me. As I went, I could hear its roar: 'prrr...prrr...prrr...' It was all but dead. Then along came a morani leading an elder, and then another elder. They were both cowards. 'Has the lion eaten you?' they asked. I was silent. I was so frightened that I did not know how to open my mouth.

Then along came a young man who was very brave but almost blind, and he greeted me. 'Has the lion taken any cattle then?' I replied 'No'. And he said: 'Let's go. Lead me to it. Where's your spear?'

I told him, 'I have left it over there.' I went to retrieve my shoulder cloth from where it had fallen, but I could not find the spear. Then the blind man asked: 'Which way shall we go to finish off the lion?', and I said, 'Let's not do that. The cattle have been frightened and are scattering.' And indeed, they had been scampering through the water and it was all muddy, as the other elders could see.

The cattle had stampeded like a swarm of locusts, except for the young dappled bull that had been caught up in the mud. The children were trying to keep the cattle together as I had told them. They had heard the lion and my daughter wailed: 'Oi – my poor papa.' But my bride did not like me – she hated me and said to her: 'Come on. Leave that old man to the lion'. She really did dislike me.

And then that nearly blind man implored me to join him in finishing off the lion – for he was still really a morani. 'Come on', he said, 'Let's trap that *May-it-go-without* lion!' And I replied, '*May-you-go-without* yourself, my boy! Just leave it.' For I no longer had anything to defend myself with, and I did not dare to face the lion empty-handed. I refused to lead him to where the lion might be waiting, especially as some of the cattle were lost. There was that ox with the bell, for instance, and the cattle it had been leading. Soon we could hear the bell and knew that they were coming. We counted them and all 27 were there. I told the children to fetch the gourds so that I could fill them with water from a spot further up the watercourse.

That very day, Kinai returned from the *eating meat* ceremony, and he counted the cattle as they made straight for our village after their fright. He was still counting them after it got dark, and then we found that the youngest dappled bull was still missing.

He asked me if the lion had got it. I told him that it had not, but I had no idea where it was.

Next morning, I found Kinai's spear near the gully and the young bull was safe but still stuck in the mud. When I came to drive it away, the others asked me if the place was really clear. I told them to tell Limbukoki to let his children drive the cattle to water and

not to argue any more about keeping them away from the gully. Later Limbukaki asked me: ‘Shee... Have you really speared this lion that has taken so many cattle?’ I said, ‘I don’t know if I killed him, but I certainly fought him.’

I stayed in Loodokilani and looked after my flock until I had 1,500 sheep and 430 goats. By this time, I had become a very rich man. During my stay, I wanted more wives, but I first wanted to build up my herds of cattle to feed them and a growing family, and this was my first concern. Even when I was rich, Loodokilani elders did not offer me a single bride, although I had given them one of my daughters.

Eventually, some Matapato elders were visiting the area and they said: ‘Worthies! That man Lechieni has become *very* rich. He’s as generous a person as ever there has been. He always feeds us and gives us cattle to take home when we come down to visit him in this Loodokilani country. But he does not have everything. He only has one wife, the mother of those two young men.’ So they offered us four more wives – three for me and one for Kinai, for I had become a rich man.

It’s hard when you have too many wives, because they misbehave. At first they went around loosely having affairs with other men, and they disliked me. I did nothing and I didn’t beat them. I left them until they had sons and then they came to like me. So they became fine young wives.

Altogether, I have had seven wives – one died and two ran away, leaving me with four. But now we of Terito age-set are old men and we will just stay as we are. I don’t want to take on any more wives.

The Maasai say that those with only one wife are senseless, for if she dies or runs away, and then we are dead, like men biting the dust. Or perhaps there are days when she becomes ill or has a baby. At those times, an elder needs two wives – or four or five. This has always been the reason given by the Maasai. They have always wanted it, for she may die.

Women have come twice to dance at my village when they were worried about their fertility. On one occasion, they asked for a sheep. When I gave it to them, they blessed me and danced like anything.

On the other occasion, when we were living at that village where all our cattle died out, they toured all the villages in that area. In all those villages, the elders would only give five rupees. But when they came to my village, I gave them 15 rupees. I said to them. ‘Rich men should give the women more money. Get them all to pay you 15 rupees each, and 15 and 15. Go round the villages of my age-set – the Terito – and tell them that Lechieni has given 15 rupees, and they should not risk bringing ruin on themselves or their families by offering so little.’

Aha. The women liked me for that. They liked me and blessed me and blessed me, and blessed me and danced in my village. I collected all the milk that there was in the village and gave it to them to drink together with the 15 rupees.

When it was Kunaiju’s turn to be initiated into the Putolek age-set, the Loodokilani men said: ‘We will have him as one of our moran.’ But the Matapato men said: ‘Loodokilani have no good reason to take that Lechieni boy. They cannot have him.’ So the Matapato moran of Putolek mounted a raid to snatch away Kunaiju’s mother, Telelia.

If they could confine her in their manyata in Matapato, then Kunaiju would have to follow her. The Loodokilani moran heard of this and also decided to mount a raid; and the two groups of moran stood facing one another: one lot were just here and the other lot were just over there.

They wanted to fight. So I thought: 'If they fight, it is me and not my son that caused this fighting. What should I do? Should I disown those Loodokilani? They are only outsiders.'

Then the Loodokilani moran called out to me: 'Oye. You of Loodokilani.'

I replied, 'I am not of Loodokilani. I am of Matapato, and I'm telling you all, so that you do not fight one another. Let the Matapato moran take away my son, Kunaiju. Let him go.'

Then Kunaiju said, 'I wont go.' He had lived in Loodokilani all his life and they were all his friends.

We argued over this, and when the Loodokilani snatched away the boy, I handed over his mother to the Matapato moran to lead away.

The Matapato moran then selected cattle from our herd for Telelia and drove away one donkey loaded with the belongings of her hut. They simply left the boy behind.

I went to the Loodokilani elders, who were discussing this incident and said to them: 'Oye. If you keep hold of my son, who will he become? Won't he still be my son?'

They replied, 'Your morani son has as good as gone – so you may as well move away. We have now realized that you no longer like us. Now ... *go back to your own country.*'

I replied, 'I will do as you wish.' So they drove me away and I moved back to Matapato It was they who made me leave. And I now have come here to stay.

[The expression 'Go back to your own country (shomo nkop inyi)' is a time-honoured order by elders to expel an unwelcome immigrant. The fact that the Loodokilani and Matapato Maasai were such close and friendly neighbours with a considerable degree of intermigration adds to the drama of Masiani's claim to have averted a major confrontation between the two sets of moran. PS.]

6. SENIOR ELDERHOOD

When we arrived back in Matapato, Kunaiju became a Matapato morani and went to the manyata there. He still had friends in Loodokilani, and visiting Loodokilani elders would ask me: ‘Are you always going to stay in Matapato, or should we give Kunaiju girls from Loodokilani to marry?’ I then replied, ‘There are plenty of girls in Matapato. I will look for wives in this country, for no-one, not even Loodokilani, would give me girls for nothing.’ And that’s how it is, for as you have seen, I have led away three wives to give to him in this country.

Many years ago, a delegation from Matapato had gone to Loita to get some magical medicine [*emasho*] from the Prophet, Sendeu. However, he did not have enough to give to everyone. So he had said: ‘Go away now, but remember that I still owe you some medicine, and I will give you what I owe to Matapato when you come back.’

Then years later, East Coast Fever spread among our cattle at Meto, and the calves were badly affected. Meanwhile, Sendeu had died and I joined a delegation [*lamal*] to visit his son, Simel, who had inherited the role as Prophet. There were nine of us: three from Chololiki [*Meruturud*] age-set, three from Kalikal [*Nyangusi*] and three from my age-set [*Terito*]. When we got there, we found another much larger delegation with 49 elders from another Maasai country. They had arrived before us and they were rowing with Simel. He was a member of Terito age-set and had picked a quarrel with their Kalikal members. So their Terito delegates took sides with the Kalikal and they were in the middle of this argument when we came along.

Because there were so few of us from Matapato, the larger delegation despised us, so we decided to join in the fray. There was not really much to argue about: we all had very similar views. But we wanted to match this verbal brawl, and so we did just that, worthies [*lewa*]. We chased them and defeated them, many though they were.

‘Oye.’ We said, ‘You are refusing to listen to us because you think that we are just weaklings [*ilturuwa*], so we are taking you on so that you wont do that again.’ We ‘hit’ them hard.

When it came to our turn, Simel did not want to be told about his father’s debt. ‘What’s this you’re up to?’, he said. So I replied: ‘First, we came before and we were told to come again, and here we are. And now we need some charm (*entalengoi*) so that our cattle can lead our calves. Simel then asked: ‘Why did you leave it so long before coming back – until your calves are finished? Did you hear?’

‘Yes’, we replied, ‘We have heard, but here we are now.’

‘Well. I wont give it to you now.’

‘Why not? We are here.’

So now it was our turn to fight – and we fought and fought – and eventually we were given the one thing that Simel had refused the other deputation – some medicine.

And he said, ‘Shee. By the flank of my cattle herd (*emurte*) and by my striped toothless ox – these men are strong.’

And I replied, ‘Let’s leave all this cattle boasting (*nkimanya*), and get down to business, for this is what we have come for.’

So he gave us the magic dust (*emasho*). ‘But’, he said, ‘if I give it to you now, don’t come again asking me to settle this debt. It is settled now. In future, I’ll only give it to the elders I want to – the Kalikal age-set, the Twaati, the (– what are they called? –) the Terito, the Chololike, or the moran. When a really big and effective *delegation* comes, I’ll tell them to take away the magic dust. Now go away, for here it is and you know that I have it. Go and find a *kilinyei* tree – somewhere in your own country – you must know where they are, but leave alone those alone that are in this country (Loita). Also, take this other charm for you said that the drought had finished off your cattle. Search for two really worthy and generous men [*inkaminini*]. Don’t choose mean men [*opiak*], for God refuses to send down rain for mean men. Go and look for an *entukei* tree on the Black Mountain. You will find it in a hole by a river, for it is there. And separate into two groups for these two ceremonies’.

So we came away and walked all the way back here – to *this* village where we are now. Haish – I had previously brewed enough beer to fill the whole village. And now, worthies, we drank – and drank – for three whole days. I’ve never managed that before, I tell you.

Then we got up early to hold a discussion to find these two really worthy and generous men. And they said: ‘That man, Lechieni – he’s been generous to all of us, let’s choose him. For there is no Kikuyu and no Maasai that he will not give food to. He would feed every person in our country. That’s the one. And let’s have that elder Loletushar, for it’s the same with him. That’s two. Give them both sheepskins to wear, for they can do the planting in the *entukei* ceremony.’ We both hated being chosen for the job. We thought that in our hands instead of bringing rain, the sky would just dry right up. But the others just silenced us.

Having found the *entukei* tree on the Black Mountain, we took a switch from it and came back to the village where the beer had been brewed and we went to plant the *entukei* switch. First, we dug a narrow hole with a sharpened ground peg some distance from any village. Then, I was given a bit of honey comb to place in the bottom of the hole, and we filled the hole up and buried the honey. Then, I was given the *entukei* switch and gently prodded it into the ground so as to pierce the buried bit of honey-comb. It was important that I should not miss the honey when they planting this stick.

We were no longer drunk by this time, and we were really frightened for we dare not do it. There were as many men around us as these trees – it was a *huge* gathering. Worthies! So we finished the job, still not knowing if the switch had pierced the honeycomb or missed it, and we splattered beer upwards to the sky. We gave our blessing. We beseeched God; and then they led us into a hut to drink more beer.

Now, at the time when we drank this beer at night, the rain broke – just at that time. It poured and they shouted, ‘Steady now ...’ It leaked into the huts, and the women had to climb onto the roofs with dung to plaster up the leaks. It rained and it rained and it filled up all the rivers that flow into the Lesikoyo. The whole country had become water. We got up to go back to our homes where there was more beer waiting for us – but we could not cross these rivers to get back. So we returned to the village where we had been staying, and drank more beer there instead, and stayed one more day. And that’s what happened when we went to Loita.

Elders did not used to drink as much as they do now. The Twaati and Dareto only had small amounts of beer at their celebrations. It was our age-set, who first acquired beer in a really big way. Today, all elders want to have beer and get merry. It is fine when everyone sits together. Here we are – six of us – and we would all six want to drink, jabber and chat. For someone who is just happily drunk and wants to play – this is alright, even if a sober person who comes along despises him.

However, now that we are elders, we would all despise a man who loses all sense of decency when he drinks, swearing when there are ‘children’ around, taking hold of other men by their legs or arms as if wanting to fight them. Take so-and-so, for instance. He staggers backwards and misbehaves, swearing at our (age-set’s) daughters and putting his arms round them. He no longer has any sense of respect. He misbehaves towards all of us. So we have come to despise him for he has no sense of respect. He swears at the daughters of his own age-set and puts his arms round them. When he recovers, he’s fine, and we say to him: ‘What’s all this you are doing? We also drink beer, but we dont do this. You are just a psychopath (*olainyaalani*).

When the Putuliki [*Meruturud*] were still moran, three of us went to drink beer. One was a Dareto elder of the Lechieni family, and the other was a Terito friend of mine, and myself. Then a younger brother of this Terito came along, also of Terito. These two brothers hated one another. So I said to my friend: ‘Go away so that I can buy that brother of yours some beer. It would be bad if you are both here.’

When I gave him the beer, I could see that he was drunk.

‘I’ve hated that brother of mine recently,’ he told me, ‘enough to hit him.’

I replied: ‘Gently now. Leave those words.’

He then said: ‘I wont leave them, *alak ai poso*.’ And he sprang at me, struck my jaw, threw me down and grabbed hold of my throat.

He had forgotten that he was wearing a sword or I am sure that he would have cut my throat. He was strangling me and I pleaded and pleaded with him. But it was no good. I was being completely throttled almost to death. When he thought that I was dead, he let go, and following him with my eyes, I saw him go outside.

When he had gone out, the woman of the beer-house came running and calling out, ‘Oye. Come here for an elder has hit another ...’

All the other elders came in running, including the two brothers, and the one who had attacked me now hit his brother on the head and drew blood. They were pulled apart and then I got up.

Now, I often visited this place and groping in the dark, I knew where to find an elder’s panga, and it was really sharp! I got hold of it with my left hand, for I am equally able with both hands. He was being held in the doorway, and I sprang towards him – borogosh! – and grabbed the handle of his sword, I was bending down, he again struck my jaw and leaped back trying to grab at his sword. But it was already out of its sheath and he cut his hand on the blade and let go.

I now had hold of both these weapons – one in each hand, and as he ran away, I slashed at him. I slashed, worthies, I slashed him hard. I slashed him between the shoulder blades with the panga. They wanted to restrain him, but he only wanted to run away, for I had punished him severely, I tell you.

Now this man had many close kinsmen in this village, and I wanted to fight them all, for I dared to, though that brother of his and I did like one another. So now my age mates gathered together to resolve the issue. They told me to give the man I had fought a sheep so that he could drink the fat and we could become friends. But I refused to give it and moved out of the area.

‘I won’t give it to that man who throttled me until I pissed myself, and who beat me until he thought I was dead.’ I said. I had many sheep, but none that I would give that man.

My age mates now wanted to punish me, and they went around calling the other elders. I could hear them yelping at night – just over there. I had a quiver with poisoned arrows, so I went out of my village determined to shoot those men. Another young man of our family came with me and told me not to shoot.

The elders of my age-set now came and settled down to hold a discussion. We both lurked in the dark to overhear what they said. One said: ‘Oye ... let’s not rush in to grab his cattle. Let us be careful in punishing this elder.’ And another said, ‘No. Let’s rush in and beat him. And a third said, ‘He should not be hassled or beaten. We must get at him carefully.’ My young friend then turned to me and whispered: ‘You said just now that you would shoot them all. But do you want to shoot men like that who are trying to help you. Wouldn’t that be bad?’

I agreed with him. So we got up and slowly walked towards the discussion and I addressed these elders: ‘Oye ... don’t again suggest that you should rush in and grab my cattle.’ And they replied, ‘Forget it, for we are not going to rush in.’

I went on, ‘When I overheard one of you say that you wanted to rush in and grab my cattle, I would have beaten you harder than I beat that man recently, you so-and-so.’ So they grabbed nine of my cattle.

Then they returned them one by one as others pleaded on my behalf. Until there were just two left: a heifer and an ox. They refused to give back either of these but never came again to take any others.

I got that ox back again though. It was being looked after with someone else’s cattle and strayed away from the herd while they were grazing. So I stole it back and hid it among my cattle and then quickly sold it, swapping it for a white female calf and then drove that back. The man who was looking after the ox came to look for it, but he never knew that it was Lehieni who had got his own ox back. I recently told my age mates what I had done, pointing out that they had taken four of my cattle altogether. No, that wont do! They did not mind any longer, especially after elders of other age-sets have suggested that the matter should rest.

When moran raid their father’s villages to take their mothers away to their manyata, some fathers do not mind, but others hate it. When I was a morani, for instance, our firestick patrons asked the Ingirisa [*administration*] to forbid the moran from erecting their manyat, because they knew that they would then want to go raiding. Even now some elders try to resist and to jab at the shields of the moran with their spears. These elders wanted to fight mere ‘boys’. When this happens, the moran grab the elder by his arms and take him over by his hut and hold him while they snatch the cattle and load the donkey, and run away with these, leaving the elder – all alone.

When I saw the Ngorisho moran coming to our village, I did not try to fight them, but simply let them drive the cattle and lead my wife with her donkey away. For when I had been a morani, I had myself helped to take these away to the manyata as I had wanted, and now these were my sons who were doing the same. We heard them running towards us, and I called to them, 'Slowly, now, slowly. Dont rush at us like that. I will give you what you want. Select your things slowly and carefully.' And I offered them their cattle, and my senior wife [*Telelia*] as a 'mother of moran', and I told them to take hold of a donkey. They loaded it with her belongings and drove it away.

I have arranged two marriages for my older son Kinai. I was invited to take away the girls and it was I who decided that they should be Kinai's. I went to lead his first bride back and he did not even know that I had made any arrangements or gone to fetch her. Now with his junior wife, I again arranged it without telling him. But this time, I told him to go and fetch her, so he led her back.

I also arranged Kunaiju's three marriages, although one of these wives has run away. The first was offered to me by Loloishi, who was still grateful for my friendship when he wanted to fight for the mane of that lion he had killed. Since then, he had migrated to Loitokitok. So I led the girl here. But she became unmanageable. She had had three husbands in succession and just went her own way. She had no real home of her own, but would just leave each village and run back to Loitokitok. When Loloishi gave me that girl, I didn't beg for her – she came from the 'bush'. He had no cattle of his own and asked for some cattle so that he could repay her previous husband. I gave him nine cattle altogether, and then led her here and gave her to Kunaiju.

After this woman had run away, Kalitu was another friend who gave me a daughter for Kunaiju, because I had protected him with my shield during a fight. We will repay him when Loloishi gives me back the cattle that I gave for his daughter. But just now, we have all lost most of our cattle.

I arranged each of these five marriages for my sons, but their wives are under their control, not mine. If one of them hits his wife when I am around, then I hate it. I don't mind once I have gone away. And when I come back, if she has done wrong, then I tell my son to drop the matter and not to beat her.

I no longer have enough cattle to arrange marriages for my two moran sons of Ngorisho age-set. I have begged for two girls from different families for them, and have been invited to take one of them, while the other is still very small. Now they must wait.

When Kinai married, there was no longer any respect in the country, and I kept him close to me before I gave him full 'control' over his cattle so that I could see whether he knew how to treat his wife well or not. Then we had a quarrel. He was at fault and I confiscated nine of his cattle, and later returned seven and I kept two. So we sorted things out between us. I gave him a bull, and he gave me a heifer. Then he moved away to brew beer for me to make things up between us, and I followed him to bless him, and that was that. Now, I no longer control his cattle: he controls them and I don't mind. However, I can still assert this control in the final resort if I have to and he cannot refuse me any request, even though he is now an elder. When he slaughters a cow, he saves the *enkelemian*, and the *olngarposha*, the *breast fat*, and the *naiborpolos* for me, and when he sells a cow, he gives me 10 rupees (20 shillings). Even if he lives here while I am living

right by Lemeipoti mountain, he brings me the money or the fatty lumps (ronkena). If he knows that I am coming, he leaves the fatty bits and the tongue and brews beer for me to drink when I arrive.

Kunaiju still does not have 'control' of his cattle, I do. However, if he wants to take over control at some point, then I wont prevent him. But I wont let those two moran sons of mine follow suit. They do not know enough yet, and it is I who have control over their cattle. They are still at their manyata, but it is my cattle that they are looking after.

B. MASIANI'S FAMILY

7. TELELIA'S NARRATIVE: MASIANI'S SENIOR RIGHT-HAND WIFE

When I was a child, I had an older brother who was a morani of Tareto age-set, but I was too young to join him at their manyata. However, my mother did take me to see their *eunoto* festival, when the moran become 'great'. I don't really remember much for I was only as big as Sibilai [*ie. five or six years old*]. I remember one scene though. Matapato moran shared the same festival with the Kaputiei Maasai at that time. I was with a group of children just outside the village where we had found some berries and were sharing them together. While the moran were dancing, a fight broke out between them. A Matapato morani threw a stone and hit a Kaputiei on his head. We saw him as he staggered crying: 'ooOWooo . . . ! My mother!' He ran right towards us and then fell to the ground, struck to death. He was as close to us as that tree. We stayed there, quite quiet. How could we know he had been killed? We were only small children.

Another child at that time was Lechieni [*Masiani*], whom I later married. He and I were about the same age. We had been children together when our lower teeth were taken out. We had grown up together. And then we were together when his ear-lobes were pierced so that he could be circumcised and become a morani. That is an old story. He was a poor boy with no father, and had to live with an uncle, a brother of his father, until he was old enough to be circumcised. Meanwhile, he could not stop his uncle taking away his cattle all the time.

One day, Lechieni had had enough and said to his uncle: 'Papa, I want to be circumcised.' The uncle replied: 'Did you say circumcised? The son of a widow! No! No! No!'

So Lechieni decided to get his ears pierced somewhere else as a first step towards circumcision. We were out herding the calves and we pierced his lobes with thorns and put twigs in the holes so that they would not close up. When he returned to the village, his uncle exclaimed: 'What have you done to your ears?'

Lechieni replied: 'I had them pierced because I want to be circumcised. I hate being nobody. How can I stay like this?'

The uncle then beat up the boy, hitting him, tearing out the twigs, and breaking his arm. It was two months before it healed.

One day after this, we were out herding and one of Lechieni's cows bore a calf in the bush. He carried his calf back to the village to his mother's hut. His uncle came and took it away to his own hut. Lechieni was furious. He took hold of a spear and threw it at the old man. It went through his blanket, through his shoulder-cloth and stuck right in the ground. This time it was Lechieni who had 'beaten' his uncle. My father belonged to the same age-set as Lechieni's dead father, and he joined the other elders when they were considering what to do after this incident. He knew how the boy had been treated and could understand why he had thrown the spear at his uncle. He therefore went along to the meeting and said to the uncle: 'Leave it at that and stop fighting. Circumcise the lad and I will give him my daughter to marry.' That was how my marriage came to be arranged. I was promised to Lechieni.

So, when the Terito age-set was formed, Lechieni was among the first to be initiated into it. Then he moved to the Maparasha area, while we were living with my father near Oldoinyo Orok (the Dark Mountain). I was still a small girl but I was growing up. It was the moran of this area who led me to their meat feasts in the forest. At first, I was uncertain about following them in case my father did not want me to go. Even today, a Maasai girl has enormous respect for her father. Everyone else respects him, and she should not be separated from anything he wants her to do, for he would hate it. This respect that the girls have for their father really is great. But, until I was actually initiated and married, I also belonged to the moran in this area and could not refuse them. They insisted that they had come to lead me away, so I felt I had to go. We once stayed in the forest long enough to slaughter seven oxen before coming home. Another time, we stayed to slaughter two. Every girl had to have a lover who also protected her from other moran, and one of the moran who slaughtered an ox for us to eat was my lover.

Then, five months after Lechieni, I was initiated to be married. I stayed in my father's home for four days and, on the fifth, I was led away before dawn to Lechieni's village while I was still only an initiate. My father said to me: 'Here you are, my child, I have looked for a husband for you and this is the man I give you to.' And to Lechieni: 'Take her away to your village. Go and give her fat. Give her food so that she does not run away to some other man.'

So Lechieni came, long ago, to lead me to my new home when I was still only an initiate. We stayed there for a long time, and he slaughtered cattle to feed me and help me grow. His mother was also there, for my own mother was still at my old home with a son of her own to look after. I stayed there for two years, and then, in the third, I returned to my father's village to have my hair shaved and end my period as an initiate. I was shaved in the evening, then we got up early to go back to our own village – the village of Lechieni. And there I remained, now as his wife.

[It was at this time that the Terito age-set formed their manyat (c. 1928). Lechieni's was at Olkitatin (Maparasha), while Telelia's former lover went to the manyata near her father's home at Oldoinyo Orok. Beside their mothers, a number of unmarried sisters of the moran would stay at the manyata where they had moran lovers. The image of moranhood was of bachelorhood with no domestic ties, and those that had married for personal reasons were expected to leave their wives behind at their father's village. Because several married moran like Masiani had no father, they were allowed to bring their wives to the manyata on sufferance. There, these wives were in an anomalous position with no role. They were avoided by their own husbands and despised by the other moran as polluted, and also by the unmarried girls who identified closely with the moran. This anomaly only ended when the moran went to celebrate their eunoto. At this point; these wives were obliged to return to their parental homes while the moran took a major step towards elderhood and anticipated marriage on a larger scale. PS.]

Now the Maparasha manyata at Olkitatin was huge with several hundred moran and just seven of us young wives. We were not allowed to go with the moran when they took

the uninitiated girls into the bush to slaughter cattle. At their feasts, they would save some meat and take these to their mothers to give us to eat on our own. The moran did not want their wives at the manyata and we were frightened of the moran, for the Terito age-set were vicious. They did not even want to see any of their wives passing by them inside the village; if a morani saw one, he would throw a club at her. We were not allowed to go into the communal area of the village at any time. We dared not even go round the outside of the manyata to visit other huts, for the moran would beat us, they were that bad. Then in the evening when we just had to go out to milk our cattle and put the calves back in their pens, the moran would stay right away over there so that no married morani would accidentally stumble across his own wife in the twilight. They avoided us and hated to see a young wife in the village. You would go to the hut of your mother-in-law to sleep. When it got light, there was just the gap between the hut and the outside fence where you could go. Once the cattle had gone out grazing, your mother-in-law would lead you outside to rest right over there in the shade of a tree beside the other young wives of moran and cover you with a cloth.

I hated it at the manyata and came to loathe my husband. So I ran away to my lover near the mountain at Oldoinyo Orok. Then after a time I returned again to my father's home for I did not dare go back to Lechieni and the manyata. My father made me promise not to run away again and I tried to forget my lover, for I never wanted to be separated from my father's wishes again.

It was after this, while I was still staying at my parents' home, that my morani lover came to me at night. There were five moran. Four stayed outside the village while my lover crept through the gateway to the hut where I was sleeping near a small vent in the wall.

He came and poked me through the vent with a stick and whispered: 'Come. Let me lead you away, back to the mountain.'

This time, I refused to go with him, for I did not want him any more. I told him that I only wanted to obey my father, and he had given me to Lechieni.

Altogether he came four times that night, poking me and calling me, calling me again and again to follow them to the mountain. And I refused each time. In the morning, I told my mother, and she told my father. When he heard, he came to me and said: 'Leave that man alone, my child. I have told you that I don't want it, for you have your husband. If he comes for you again and you follow him, I will have you tied up and beaten by your brothers.'

I did not want to leave Lechieni again for I respected my father as a daughter. I had great respect for him. My father also called my lover and told him to leave me alone. That's how it happened. After this, my lover never came again for we had all rejected him. I never ran away again to the mountain, and I have never run away from my husband since that time.

When Lechieni heard of all this, he was furious. He did not want any other man to have me and certainly not one from another manyata. In those days when he was a morani, he really was strong and would fight and beat any other morani. He always has been strong, like a bull. He is weaker now that he has become old and no longer has the strength and he does not beat women or children. But even now he will still stand up to

any man who has offended him, even an age-mate who was at his manyata, and he will hit him straight away.

Lechieni came to fight that man who had poked me in the night with a stick. They fought, and how many times do you think Lechieni clubbed the head of that lover of mine, my protector? Three! But Lechieni had no right to do this while I was still with my father, and this was no way to settle the issue. So my father called him. 'What's all this?' he demanded. 'You hit that man and now you want to take back my daughter?'

Lechieni replied: 'Papa. Take this heifer. Take this beer. Take this blanket. Forgive me. Take them, and let me have my wife and I will look after her.'

So he led me back to the manyata. I was his first wife and we were there for three years before I became pregnant. This was the time when the Terito age-set were going to their *eunoto* festival and the young wives had to return to their own parents' home. Lechieni's mother went with the moran to the *eunoto*. So, when I became pregnant, my own mother came to take me home to look after me during the birth, while Lechieni's mother stayed over there at the festival. Another elder of our family led along an old woman who knew how to deliver a child. I gave birth to my daughter Sinyet later on the same day as the sacrifice which made her father's age-set 'great'. Her 'fathers' of Terito age-set were at the *eunoto*, and I was at the home of my own father. We stayed for some time so that the baby could grow strong. When it was time to move, my mother moved with us to Lechieni's village which was now at Nkiito. There Lechieni brought some fat for the children and drove along some milk cows. Once the child had grown – it was as big as this and could play – Lechieni killed a sheep for my mother and she returned to her own home.

Then we too moved to the village where Lechieni had first led me. We stayed there for a long time. I had another child, the only one who has died, and then Kinai, the Kamaniki. Now we had our own home right out in the bush. I had three growing children and Lechieni's mother was with us all the time. I no longer yearned for my lover. I only wanted my own home and to be with Lechieni. Then I became well established. If Lechieni and I did not always speak with one mind, it was just the tongue that was different, for these were always trifling matters. We had grown up together – since we were as big as Benet – and we have always been together. We stayed to look after our cattle. My father approved, and so did I for his sake, and so did my husband. And my lover went completely out of my life and never came back.

I only once nearly ran away. I had forgotten that a calf was outside the village when I was penning the others before the cattle came home. Then I noticed and asked the children: 'Where is the calf?'

'It's in the hut,' they replied.

When we were milking the cattle, I heard the calf crying out in the bush, 'aaAAa'. 'aaAAa. . .' I cried. 'A hyena has eaten it,' and I started to run away.

Then I thought: 'Ai. There are my children at home. I won't leave them, even if Lechieni beats me. Let him beat me. I won't leave my children.' So I came back and went to the far end of my alcove in the hut and remained quiet. Then Lechieni came home.

‘Children!’ he said, ‘Where’s your mother?’ ‘We don’t know. She’s gone,’ they replied. ‘Where?’

‘We don’t know. She said she was going to run away, for you would beat her.’

‘She’s gone? Oi. We’re done for. Who will give my children food now?’

I coughed quietly and said: ‘I haven’t gone.’

‘You haven’t gone you good-for-nothing [*anaka ipusu*]? I’ll beat you now,’ he exclaimed. ‘Come on out, for I will not argue with you inside the hut.’ So I came out, wearing my cloth over my arm like this so that I could ward off his blows. Then I went over to continue milking the cattle, and still he didn’t beat me – then or later.

He did beat me at other times though, when I did wrong. He would run up to me and lash out with his stick and I might want to run away, but it was always over with just one blow. I would plead with him: ‘enough ... enough ... enough . . .’ Or I would run to my hut and stay there, and he would leave it at that. I never actually ran away on any of these occasions. Never. Never. Never. I don’t know about running away.

At first we only had three heifers. We looked after them, and herded them. And out of this herd poured three thousand and one hundred cattle. The children grew and we had all those cattle. Then, when I had my fourth child, an epidemic killed off all our cattle except eleven, and we had to sell the hides to buy enough to eat.

Then another terrible thing happened. Lechieni’s mother went to sell some hides and to fetch water at the same time. While she was lifting water from the deep well at Partimero, she slipped, fell in and was drowned, weighed down by all her clothes and ornaments. Now things really did become hard for us, for we had all those children to look after.

[At this point in the narrative (c. 1946), Masiani migrated with his family to live among the Loodokilani Maasai. The Loodokilani lived in the hot low country of the Rift Valley and were neighbours and long-standing allies of the Matapato. This provided ideal conditions to rear sheep and goats, a demanding but quick way of recovering Masiani’s lost stock to feed his family. PS]

So we went down to the low country at Loodokilani. There I had another girl. We all of us helped to build up our flock of sheep and goats. We brought up our young sons and as they grew they could be left to look after the herd by themselves. One boy might drive the flock to that distant hill over there, and then back home by himself. It was me and Lechieni and our young sons who made these herds what they are.

It is the men, of course, who control things, but the wives do not mind, for they do not want to interfere in matters that belong to the men. I can only tell you my story. It is the same as Lechieni’s, for we are the same age. The other things that he has to tell you are none of my business – news about men fighting – I really don’t know anything about that. However, I do know the woman’s business about looking after her family and I know how to bear children. I can do all the women’s work. All the Maasai have their work to do. This includes the wives and the children they bear and the celebrations after children are born.

Sometimes a woman has a miscarriage. Then the other wives will come and beat this woman who has killed her child, and they will cut some flesh from her brow. Have you

seen s mother's brow? Ha. Ha. They slaughter cattle and the elders eat one side of the animal and the wives eat the other side.

At other times, the Maasai women have their fertility dance [*oloiroshi*], they all process singing from village to village. At each village, they greet the other wives and go into their huts for some food and are given whatever they ask for: a sheep, money. Animals are killed for them and their clothes are smeared with fat. When it is morning, they sing in the corral and sprinkle grass round about. Then they bless the home and process to another village where they are given whatever they want. There is respect in the country at such a time. The elders show respect for the women and the women show respect for the men. There is nothing bad or spiteful. The women use the money to buy sugar to brew beer. Among the gifts is a goat which is given to the elder who acts as host in the final part of the ceremony. At his village, he slaughters a pregnant cow and the wives have chalk smeared on their foreheads and backs and the animal's foetal fluid is smeared on their stomachs. After eating the meat, they dance around in a large circle, while the elders drink the beer. The wives then dance and sing until the sun sinks low and the celebration finishes on that day.

Young men also have their dances. When each of the boys had grown, he would join other boys in their initiation dance [*inkipaata*]. Then after being circumcised, they would make bows and arrows to shoot birds for their feathered head-dresses. After this, they were shaved and became moran – and hooligans [*imalimala*] for they were Maasai. They fought everywhere, but they got over it. They even fought other moran inside the villages, but they got over that as well. When your son is a morani and wants to go somewhere, he simply leaves and you do not know where he has gone. Then later he may come back to see you some other month.

[Telelia's oldest son, Kinai, had an uneventful moranhood, became an elder, and Lechieni arranged his marriage. However, when her next son, Kunaiju 'the Putolek', was initiated into Meruturud age-set the family faced trouble (c. 1966). Kunaiju had spent most of his childhood in Loodokilani and regarded it as his true home. In order to join his Loodokilani friends as moran at their manyata, he had to accompany Telelia and some cattle: by custom a morani cannot be separated from his mother and her 'herd', if she is at a manyata. However, the family still had strong roots in Matapato and, while in Loodokilani, Masiani and his son Kinai had only obtained wives from Matapato. This confirmed the general expectation that the family would return to Matapato sooner or later. PS]

It was when the Meruturud age-set had become moran and we were still in Loodokilani that we had a hard time. A party of young moran from Matapato came down to force us to return there so that the Putolek [Kunaiju] and I could go to their manyata and not to the one in Loodokilani.

Kunaiju was elsewhere at the time with other Loodokilani moran. There were just me and Lechieni and Kinai at home. I had recently come out of hospital and was still quite ill. The Matapato moran told us that they wanted to take Kunaiju back with them but asked me if I was well enough to go as well. For, if they took me and some cattle, then Kunaiju had to follow.

‘Can you move?’ they asked.

‘Yes,’ I replied. ‘Here, take this hide. Make me a new pair of sandals and then let’s go back to our country before it gets too light.’

So Kinai rounded up the donkeys for the moran and said: ‘These are ours. Take hold of these.’ He and his father, Lechieni, also selected some cattle and said to them: ‘Take these as well.’ I then slipped away with the moran to Matapato, here, without Kunaiju, for he was still with his friends in Loodokilani, while here I was among the Matapato moran without my son.

When we had arrived inside Matapato, we stayed ten days at the manyata at Intumuleni without Kunaiju. When the Loodokilani moran found out, they took up arms to fight, for they wanted to snatch me and the cattle back. The Matapato moran knew this would happen and discussed what to do next. They left the manyata singing, and returned driving all their cattle into the central corral at midday, so that they could defend their herds when the Loodokilani moran arrived to fight them. Then, with their cattle penned up and safe, they slaughtered four oxen to eat while they were waiting for the Loodokilani moran. They said to me: ‘We will not let you go. Only the Intumuleni manyata will have you.’

Meanwhile in Loodokilani, the moran there were preparing to come and snatch us back. However, it did not come to that. There was no fighting because the Loodokilani elders intercepted the Loodokilani moran and detained them. Kunaiju, my son, wanted to remain there with his friends, but it was the elders who persuaded him to change his mind. Elders are fine for they do not allow their children to fight. If the elders had not intervened, then the Loodokilani and Matapato moran would have fought over us. So Kunaiju realized that he would have to leave his Loodokilani friends and come to Matapato. A messenger was sent from Loodokilani to tell the Matapato moran that I should be allowed to go to an elders’ village, for Kunaiju did not want either me or the cattle in the manyata while he was not there. He would slaughter some cattle to feast the Loodokilani moran and get their blessing. Then he would come to Matapato to follow his mother and cattle.

So the Loodokilani moran came together to bless Kunaiju, and then led him to a place near the boundary with Matapato. There, some Matapato moran were waiting for him, and they led him to the manyata here at Intumuleni. That was how we came back to our own country where we are now.

Now Lechieni had to face the Loodokilani elders. They told him: ‘You were responsible for all this, encouraging those moran to take back your wife. Now, you must leave us. Go back to your own country.’

Lechieni replied defiantly: ‘Yes. I let them go. For, when I came to Loodokilani, we were all poor and my sons came barefooted. All the time I have been here, I have been generous with you and have given you one of my daughters, and you never gave a single child to help me: no girls to marry and no boys to help me herd. When I return to Matapato, I will remain there.’ Then Lechieni and Kinai returned here as well.

It’s fine when the moran lead you to the manyata as one of their mothers for there you are a very senior woman among your children. The manyata was a village of moran, and it was they who were in charge of it, but not when they came to rest inside my hut, for that belonged to me. While I was a mother there, the Meruturud stayed as moran – as

moran. They would go off to the forest to eat cattle – as moran. Then they went to their *eunoto* festival and became ‘great’. There was this huge and wonderful ceremony, and again they danced their *enkipata*, just like the boys. When it was all over they retired to become elders, I returned to Lechieni’s village, for no decent woman throws away her husband’s home. It is fine there also. The manyata or your husband’s village, it is fine to be at either. Your children are there and there is nothing you can dislike, for they are all yours. So the Meruturud age-set in their turn rested and they were ‘given milk’ to drink and they became elders and married wives. Kunaiju has had three wives altogether; although one of these ran away and he now has only two left.

Altogether, Lechieni has had seven wives. One died, two ran away. Now we have grown to be four households, but I was first, and I am the senior one of them all. I have had three daughters [*and a fourth was adopted out*]. One of these is now at Oldoinyo Orok, another remained in Loodokilani, another is near here, and the oldest is now a manyata mother at the Maparasha manyata right over there.

When a woman has a child, she has other wives to help her look after the baby. When your daughter becomes pregnant, your son-in-law visits your husband and asks his permission to have your help. He then leads you back to his village. While you are there, you must prevent your daughter eating too much. She cannot eat meat or milk from a diseased animal like other Maasai. She should remain hungry, and simply eat a little plain porridge [*kurma*] so that she will be strong and have a fine child: There you stay until she has had her child and for two months more. Then, on the third, you return home for the baby will have grown and you will have taught her how to hold her child. While you are there your son-in-law will buy you cloths to wear and give you money. He will slaughter an ox for you as his mother-in-law and give you some fat. Then returning to your own home, you carry this fat on your back, for your work there is over. That’s how the Maasai do it.

Each wife is given cattle to look after, and I really would hate it if Lechieni took away one of my cows to give to another wife. If I had a son and this other wife had a son, then they would quarrel and fight over that cow of mine when they grew up. So the Maasai don’t let elders take away cattle from their wives like that. If my husband did so, then I would wait until my boy, the Kamaniki [Kinai], could get it back for me, for I am his mother. When your son grows – as high as this – you give him a cow. The Kamaniki now has some of my cattle. I was his mother and gave them to him and to my other sons. It is the youngest – the morani – who is expected to look after me when I grow old, and he will inherit all the cattle that I have left, while Kinai as our most senior son will look after Lechieni in the same way, and it is he who will inherit Lechieni’s things. Kunaiju is the middle son and he is not expected to look after either Lechieni or me.. However, any of these children of ours will feed us and none of them would refuse us a cow. This has always been the way of the Maasai from the time they first emerged.

I do things for Kinai and for Kunaiju, and they buy me a cloth and say: ‘Here, take this from me, mother.’ Or tobacco ‘Here, take this from me, mother.’ Or tea: ‘Here take this from me mother.’ There’s no-one who will not give me something. ‘Here take this from me, mother.’ When Kunaiju’s wives become pregnant, I’ll come along and help get them get ready so that they can have their children and become strong. And then I will return to where Lechieni is. I belong to all the family homes and, whenever

they are in need, I will be there to help them, so that they can pull through without selling off their cattle. I am the mother of them all.

A woman knows how to look after the home, taking care of this child or that cow. You feed your husband and get to know his stomach. His stomach is like a child. You give him food at all times, and there's no time when he has to go hungry between meals. Just now, the cattle are finished by this drought and the hunger that this brings is bad for an old man. However, Lechieni has never had this while he has been with me. We stayed looking after our stock for years and years. We stayed together as a family and never divided the cattle between wives into separate herds.

Then with the next circumcisions, it was the turn of the Magaa age-set who are still moran. When they too came to lead me away to their manyata, this time with my youngest son, that was fine. Lechieni did not mind, for we were in our own country again. He slaughtered cattle and goats for the moran to eat when they came to lead me away, for they had come to their father's home.

So my hut is at the manyata of the moran again. There it is the young moran who dance in the centre of village and bring meat to their mothers and tell us what to do. Lechieni is not there for the manyata is a place for young people, and I am no longer young. My head has grown white, my back aches, and it is a long way to fetch water. My grand-daughter Sibilai is here and she helps me. But she is only a small child. How much can she carry?

And now our cattle are finished once again, so here I am back at Lechieni's village, where Kinai is the senior elder as Lechieni has moved elsewhere with the cattle. While I have been living over there at the manyata, Lechieni has been living with his younger wives. I have noticed that he has become very thin recently, as if he is going to die. When we are together, I give him plenty of food and his body stays fat. Now his younger wives that are looking after him are just children and he has become thin. Milk from their cow gets drunk first by others. Their porridge gets eaten, and they don't even know how to prepare it properly. They spoil it and then he does not want it, for he's an elder. However, I am the same age as him and I know how to do everything properly.

Just now, I should be at the manyata of the moran, of course, but there is no food there any more. So the manyata moran gave me permission to come back to Lechieni's village to help Kinai's wife have her baby, for just now she is very weak. I will stay here for two or three months and then, when she becomes strong again and can look after her own baby, I will return to the manyata, for the moran want to go to their *eunoto* when it rains. They need to go very badly – have you heard? Do come and see how fine it is and see how everything I say is true. You did say you would come.

Just now, however, I am frightened. For it is not Lechieni or Kinai who are in charge of me, but the manyata moran. They may come at any time to lead me back, and say: 'Come on! let's go.' What can I say? For I have deserted them. I'll say: 'Alright, alright, alright. I'll come, but just let me stay a little while so that Kinai's wife can have her baby and get well. When it rains, then I'll come back to your manyata and we can all set off for the *eunoto*.' However, the moran may come and say: 'The manyata is moving *now*; and we are setting off for the *eunoto* site over there *now*.' If they say that, then I will have to go.

They are not moving yet, they will decide very soon now. They will come dressed for battle as warrior posses [*impikasin*]. They will spread out to round up their mothers, driving them from villages in the low country, from here, and from Nkiito, taking all their mothers again to the manyata. They have begun rounding up the mothers who have left the manyata during this drought so that they can be ready to set off. When they have all the other mothers, then they will come here and say: 'Now you *too*. Come along you. Let's go, for the manyata *is* about to set off for *eunoto*.' Then I will have to leave Kinai's wife and go back to the moran village. Then we can all move to the *eunoto* and see the moran have their celebration and become 'great'.

When this is all finished, the manyata *will* have to disband and I will go back to Lechieni's village, wherever he is. I'll stay together with Lechieni, not with Kinai or with Kunaiju. For it is Lechieni who is the father of these young men. By then I will be very senior and the younger women can fetch the water and my back will get better. I don't want to go to another manyata. Why should I? Where are my children? I have no more sons to become moran.

8. KINAI'S NARRATIVE, MASIANI'S SENIOR SON

[Because of Masiani's early marriage to Telelia, their first son, Kinai, belonged to the next age-set following Masiani's, whereas the senior sons of most other Maasai elders were at least two age-sets below that of their fathers. As a result, when Masiani became a young elder, he already had a son who could help in herding the family's cattle, and to this extent, he was freer to indulge in his social life than other elders of his age. A theme that bedevils Kinai's narrative is the extent to which he is bound by his father's freedom to exploit this situation, curbing Kinai's own social life, denying him a full moranhood, and relegating him to the lonely margins of his age-set. Masiani's age peers were aware of this and suggested that the father-son relationship was tainted by Masiani's scorn for Kinai, which stemmed from the fact that Kinai had been begotten by an age mate and was not Masiani's natural son. They suggested that this streak of resentment was on a par with jealousy among age mates over sharing rights in each other's wives. It betrayed Masiani's ultimate loyalty to his age-set, despite his unstintingly generosity towards them in all other respects. PS]

It was papa who taught me how to look after cattle when I was still small. We would herd them together – both of us – and if I was lazy he would beat me with a switch. I both feared and liked my father. He was strong and I dare not disobey him, for he could have cursed me to death. A father does not normally want to curse his child; and when he argues a lot, the child should go off – ‘run away’ – where he cannot be seen. Then his father will tie a knot in his tobacco tube strap and spit as he ties it so that his anger does not have the effect of a curse, for he does not want to curse his own son to death. He only wants to argue so that the child will hear him and become wise.

Even now when papa is very angry I fear him and I will ‘run away’. If he strikes me I would run away. If he argues and argues, I do not just stand still, for when a son looks his father in the eye, he shows that he too is angry and wants to strike his father. Other elders hate it when this happens. They want to see the son back down and ‘run away’. So I leave papa when he argues and go off to my part of the village and leave him in his, for I just fear him – I fear him.

When the Kamaniki (Nyangusi age-set) were being circumcised, including Matapato boys living in Loodokilani, papa said that I was too small and he wanted me to wait until the Chololek (Meruturud age-set) were initiated. When it came to the circumcision of boys of our village, I said to papa, ‘I want to be circumcised. There are many boys of my age who are being circumcised, and I no longer want to stay as a boy, for I can stand up to anyone who tries to bully me. If they try to beat me, I can hit them back for I dare do so. But if I stay as a mere boy, then I will be hounded by these boys when they become

moran. I want to become a morani and go to the manyata. Eventually papa agreed with me, and I was initiated at the tail-end of Kamaniki together with other Matapato boys whose families were living in Loodokilani. We did not stay as initiates very long. We just waited two or three months and then we were shaved and became moran.

On the day that I was shaved, I was accompanied by other Matapato moran. Then papa said to me, 'I still need you to look after our cattle, so you can become an elder straightaway [*ngusaniki, a premature elder*]. This was a bitter surprise, as I wanted to go to the manyata as a morani. I tried to argue with papa, and other Matapato moran joined in to persuade him. Eventually, he agreed, and so I became a morani.

Meanwhile, the Kamaniki moran in Matapato were recruiting for their manyata at Meto, and they said they would send an armed recruiting posse [*empikas*] to our village in a place called Kapanko in Loodokilani and collect us. When the posse came, expecting to take away our hut, papa said to me 'I don't want you to stay at the manyata, for I am very busy here and have no other herdboys to help me with the cattle.' Then the armed posse saw that papa had only one wife and many small children and a large herd of cattle with just me to herd them. I was the only fully grown son to help with the herding, for Kunaiju was much younger and still small. They saw that we were hard-pressed and they took away other huts from the village but decided to leave ours. There was no argument: just the posse and a few elders. So I had become a morani after all, but a not a morani of the manyata. I was a non-manyata morani [*olshumorot*].

So I and mama remained at papa's village in Loodokilani, like many other non-manyata moran who stayed at home to look after their fathers' herds. Then from time to time I would go to stay with the moran at the manyata at Meto, while papa stayed at home. During that time, the moran would lead me to their bush camps and we would slaughter animals, or we might make visits elsewhere, for moran go all over the place. I would stay with the moran at the manyata for one month or two, and then return to papa's village and stay there for quite a time, looking after the cattle. The Meto manyata was a long way from our home in Loodokilani. If I wanted to get home in one day, I would get up very early in the manyata and arrive home late that night. I would return to papa's home with another non-manyata morani and stay a month or two herding our cattle. Then papa would say to me, 'Don't leave the herd, for I am going to visit friends at such-and-such a place.' And it might be two months before he returned.. When he came back, I might return to the manyata for two or three months. Papa did not mind when I went back to the manyata, but he would say: 'Don't leave me with the cattle too long, and take a look at the pasturage on the way. I am now an old man and I cannot look after the cattle so well. Or he would try to keep me at home saying, 'Leave the manyata alone and stay here to help me with the cattle.' And I would stay for I was the only grown person at that time. When he told me to wait at home for a bit and stay looking after the cattle, I was afraid of him, for it was he who begat me and was in charge [*eitore*].

During this period, Matapato moran would slaughter oxen at their forest feasts, and on one occasion I led a group of moran to our home in Loodokilani. At that time, papa was living in the same village as a cousin called Entirata, who had a large flock of sheep and goats. This was during the dry season and there was little milk to offer the moran. So papa told me to ask Entirata for a goat to slaughter for the moran to eat. Entirata refused

us a gift in friendship and would not even sell us one in exchange for a calf. When I told father, he offered the moran a calf to slaughter, but they preferred to take blood from our cattle to mix with the milk. Next morning, we were joined by other Matapato moran, including Entirata's son, and at this point Entirata gave us one of his goats for slaughter.

That evening, papa told me he would sell a fat ox from my herd in exchange for a small flock of sheep and goats, for he was angry that Entirata had refused us a goat in friendship or in exchange for a calf. I did not mind losing this ox, for other moran had been providing oxen for slaughter at our forest feasts and now it was my turn.

When the manyata for our age-set disbanded, I stayed at home, looking after the cattle. When papa went away, I was left in charge. When he did come back he would be in charge of everything again and I would just tend the cattle. He really liked it when I tended the cattle properly, but he would hate it if I abused this trust. He would harangue me, for it was his herd and he was in charge.

Even when I was still a boy, I could look after the herd by myself when father went away for perhaps two months. He would say to a friendly neighbour: 'Keep an eye on these cattle and help my child until I come back.' He would go to Loita to find his stock friends, and then drive back cattle that they had given him. Even when I became an elder and waited and waited, he was still in charge. He would still go away to visit his stock friends, while it was I who looked after the cattle for I knew exactly what to do while he was away.. A part of the herd was mine, but he did not quickly let me take control over my cattle. I understood what he wanted and also I feared him.

There was no-one my father did not know when he visited his friends in other Maasai sections, and it was he who went to look for girls for us to marry there – for we were too young.. He searched for my first wife, Nanta, and took control of the marriage. She had been married before and had left her husband because he had lost all his cattle and they had no children. When papa heard about this, he went to negotiate Nanta's re-marriage to me. I knew nothing about this. Papa took her on a bus to Kajiado and then a train to Loodokilani and led her to our village. They had arrived before I returned that evening after herding the cattle. Papa told me he now had brought me a wife. I was delighted. There was no formal wedding, for Nanta had already been married. It was just an agreement between her father and papa.

When Nanta started to have children and I was more mature, papa gave me some control over my cattle, so that when her father or some other kinsman came begging, I could give him a cow. But he did not hand complete control over to me quickly.

When papa was still a morani, he made friends with age mates among the Loita Maasai, and then as a young elder he married one of their sisters. He bought this girl back to Matapato, but she came to dislike him and ran away, saying she never wanted him any more. Her brother wanted to remain friends with papa but he was now poor and could not pay back the marriage cattle. Instead, he suggested: 'When I have a wife and she has a daughter, I will give her to you for one of your sons.'

Papa waited and waited until his friend came to marry a young wife and she gave birth to a daughter. He then went to Loita to betroth a girl once again and only told me when

he had returned. Then I had to wait until this girl had grown big enough for me to go to that country to lead her back here. And she is the other wife I have now, Sereti.

On one occasion, when Meruturud age-set had just retired from moranhood, I saw a group of them arguing with four Maasai from Arusha who were selling beer. Three of the Arusha ran away and then the Meruturud attacked the fourth. I was with another elder and we ran to separate them and called on the moran to let the Arusha alone. They had hit his shoulder with a club and blood was oozing from his mouth. This Arusha was a passing stranger and I did not know him, but he was of my age-set, so I led him home to look after him. Next morning, I killed a sheep and gave him the fat to drink and he stayed for two days. Then he went back to his country and said to me: 'Know that we have become friends, for you have saved me.'

At this time, I used to take the small stock to the low country in Loodokilani for periods, leaving papa with the cattle. On one of these occasions, the Arusha came back to visit us, bringing me a stool and tobacco and possibly some grain. When he learnt that I had gone away with the small stock, he left these gifts and returned to his own country, while papa kept the gifts for himself.

On another occasion when I had taken the small stock away, my Arusha age mate sent his brother to invite me to his son's circumcision, and he invited papa as well. When the time came, papa said to me: 'Don't go, for I'll go by myself.' I said: 'I will go, for that friend of mine gave me something, and it was I who killed the sheep for him.' And father replied: 'You wont go! You wont! You wont! You wont!' So we argued and argued.

Next morning, I rose early without telling papa and went with that Arusha brother who led me back to his country. When we got there, the circumcision was later that day, and I stayed seven days in the village of my friend. He slaughtered a goat for me during those days that I stayed and gave me beer. And I drank beer, and when I came to return to our country, he gave me a stool and said: before you come again, I will bring you some grain.

Meanwhile, papa was forced to stay at home to look after the stock, and when I came back home he was still furious – he really hated it – and he started to niggle and it became a quarrel again.

So I ran away and set off to fetch other elders. There was Lekilento at the discussion and I had fetched him, and there was Lembutini and I fetched him, and Lenkonyimbu. We discussed the matter at length, and one of them said: 'Let Kinai have his share of the herd, Let him be separated so that you do not curse him. Bless him and give him a bull and he will give you a heifer.' And the others agreed and they blessed me.

Papa insisted on taking the standard maximum fine: 'I will take nine cattle'. Those elders replied: 'Take them – but bless him.' They continued discussing it at length, and then they said: 'Don't take as many as nine.' But he still insisted, 'I'll have them – I don't want to listen to you – I'll take them.'

But in the end he did not take them all. It was those Terito elders (papa's age mates) who told him to take some of them and leave the rest; pointing out that I needed cattle for my own children; and papa listened to them. So in the end, he took just one large heifer and a milch cow, and the remainder stayed with me. What he took was his choice. We never quarrelled after that. Papa realized that I was an elder who had acquired dependents, and that I knew how to look after them. He no longer minded.

At that time I had 80 cattle of my own and a small flock, mostly of sheep, while papa had lots of cattle – 400 of his own.

In this way, I came to be separated from papa. He gave me a bull and I gave him a heifer in return and we parted. He drove away his cattle and the heifer and I drove away my cattle and the bull. And we separated on that day. I moved away to go to Lelepepa's village, and the elders blessed me and blessed me and blessed me and blessed me and blessed me. That is how an elder and his son divide. And once they have parted there is no more bad feeling – for they have formally separated.

I stayed away at Lelepepa's village while papa stayed at our old village for one wet season. And then the cattle caught East Coast Fever and started to die off. So we discussed the matter and papa said to me. 'The cattle have suffered. Move back here so that we can together collect up cattle from our stock friends among the Maasai, and together we can look after our herds better. For we no longer have enough cattle to feed our family in one place. If we come together in one village now, then my cattle and yours can still be herded separately, but we can be together.' So I moved back and we came together in this village.

If I want to move away, he can no longer mind. And if I have real hardship by myself and want us to come together, then he still will not mind.

During the recent drought, when papa suddenly decided to move his cattle to a spot where it had rained, I stayed behind with my herd and all my family. I felt that the grass would not grow after just one shower of rain. The drought would be even worse and the herd would be exhausted by the long trek in one go. Also my children are small and weak and it would be difficult for them in a spot with no water. I just did not want to move. It was better to stay in this place where at least there is water and a shop for selling the skins of dead animals and buying cereal food. Even without grass, there are other plants that the cattle will eat and just survive on.

When papa moved, he thought it would rain some more and then the grass would grow and the cattle would grow strong. But he left a part of his herd here and intended to come back here when his cattle herd had got stronger. After the move, papa's herd dwindled from about 80 cattle to 25. Many other skilled stock-owners moved to that place for no-one knows what to do in a drought and no-one can know in his heart that his cattle will die off.

Nor did I know, but I had separated from papa and just stayed here and refused to move. So my cattle were less affected than they would have been if I had moved with papa. I had 25 cattle before and now I still have just 20.

It was my younger brother Kunaiju's herd that suffered most. He is married with a family and wanted to stay behind, but he has not yet separated from papa for they have not quarreled, and papa will not let him manage alone for some time yet.. So papa drove away Kunaiju's cattle as well as his own. Kunaiju felt papa was wrong, but he could not stop him. We both thought that that papa had made a serious mistake and that the cattle would suffer. But papa was determined to go, while Kunaiju remained behind to look after the sheep and goats and also found some road work to pay him some money to feed his family. As the news filtered back home that more and more of our cattle were dying, it became clear that it was Kunaiju's cattle that really suffered badly. Now he has only

one female cow and two male calves left. His herd is finished. For this reason he cannot separate from papa just yet. He needs help to feed his family.

When this happens, a man calls in his debts. If he is owed a cow or a sheep, he will go to fetch it and drive it back to his home. He may have given cattle for a future bride, and if he really needs the cattle back now, he may refuse to marry her and take back his cattle instead. Or if the woman is already one of his wives and has run away, then he may divorce her to get the marriage cattle repaid. He will tell his son to lead him to drive the cattle back to their village. That is how the Maasai manage their affairs and rebuild their herds. And that is what papa will do to get back the cattle that he is owed for Kunaiju's first wife before she ran away.

9. KUNAIJU'S NARRATIVE, MASIANI'S FAVOURITE SON

[Masiani's second son, Kunaiju, was torn away from his close boyhood friends when the family were expelled from Loodokilani. Yet he clearly enjoyed a fully extraverted youth back in Matapato, making new friends and maintaining warm links with Loodokilani. He too was clearly dominated by his father, Masiani, but his sunny rapport with his peers appeared to stem from his manyata experience away from his father, which had been largely denied his older brother, Kinai. PS]

Matapato and Loodokilani are both fine places. Loodokilani is really hot for it is low country, but it is good for cattle herds and especially for flocks of small stock. God has now settled us here in Matapato and I am content here. But if I wish to build up my flock of small stock and meet someone else who wants to go to Loodokilani, I will return there. For we stayed there for a long time. I was very small when we left Matapato for Loodokilani. As I grew up there, I no longer remembered a single child or a single elder in Matapato. I had become a Loodokilani completely. Kinai and papa remembered Matapato, but I didn't. I grew up among Loodokilani boys when out herding, and stayed there and had my ears pierced in that place. We stayed and became big boys. Before being circumcised to become a morani, I joined in the initiation dance with other Loodokilani boys. There was nothing that we were not given. We would be given big patterned cloths from the shops and wear thigh bells so that anyone who saw us might say: 'Are they really moran?'

Then we were circumcised and wanted to build our manyata. I asked the Loodokilani moran to select mama's hut for the manyata and I would follow her. However, back in Matapato, the moran there also discussed the matter and said to themselves: 'We won't let Loodokilani have that Lechieni boy, for his father is a rich man with plenty of food to give us.' So the Matapato moran set out on a raid to reclaim us for their own manyata while I was elsewhere, recruiting for the Loodokilani manyata..

They came when I was away from home, and they led my mother away. They also seized her household belongings, and her cattle and drove them away to rebuild her hut in the Matapato manyata. They slept in the bush at Ltepesi, for they were coming to steal from us, and they knew that we would fight them if we knew. They first sent some scouts, then when they could see that no moran were there, they said: 'Borogosh! Let's go!'

They waited until dawn was spreading round; and then they rushed papa's village, forcing open the gateway with their shields and rushing to the centre to sort out the cattle they wanted, marshalling them together and some donkeys to carry away mama's possessions.

When they came, papa said to them: 'Lads – take it easy now, for I won't refuse you this hut. Take things carefully for they are yours. Just come along.' He knew that

Matapato and Loodokilani moran would fight together if he did refuse and someone might get killed at his home. He said: 'I don't mind if you take this morani away. But if the Loodokilani moran had come yesterday to take him away, then I also would not have minded, for I have become used to this country. However, now that you have come first, I will not try to detain you in case bloodshed enters my home, for I do not want that. I don't want this to cause trouble. Go and take away the hut, and get out of the way of the others, for they may come today or tomorrow. I do not know when. Get out of their way so that when they come, you will have removed yourselves altogether. So papa let the moran drive mama and her possessions right out of sight.

Meanwhile, we Loodokilani moran had missed our opportunity. We were just messing about and left it too late. At this time, we were driving an ox that we first wanted to cut up and share, then there were other huts we wanted to gather up for our own manyata before coming to fetch my mother's hut. We heard about it next day when other moran came to tell us. 'The Matapato moran have taken away your mother and her hut for their manyata'. Au^{uu} man! We really hated that. We shook with anger and had to be restrained. We all hated what had happened and roused the moran of this country to gather and fight the intruders with spears in order to return my mother and home to Loodokilani. We hurried along to fight – hurry to fight, hurry, hurry until we came to papa's village. We rushed to papa's village, but found that the Matapato moran had already got away with the hut. Hai! MAN! We shook! We so wanted to fight those that had taken away my home, and we decided to bring it back straight away.

Up to this point, I still belonged to Loodokilani and I did not realize that I had now become a foreigner. I said, 'I do not want to go back to Matapato at all. I do not want to be forced to return there, man!'. Then I said: 'I will not return to Matapato. Let the hut go, for I will not follow.' Then the other moran said to papa: 'Look out, for your son refuses to go.'

Papa replied: 'Why cant he go? I let the Matapato moran take away that hut, for I am a Matapatoi and I will not allow my son to become a Loodokilani. We Maasai of different homelands must not clash over this, and I do not want to be the one that has caused bitterness between us. If you do not like this then that is too bad, for my child will return to Matapato. That is his homeland.'

Then papa turned to me: 'You. The Matapato moran have already taken your mother away and she has gone. Now you must go and follow her. And I replied: 'I don't want to go and I absolutely refuse. Go back yourself and become a Matapato morani if you like, for I will not go. I'm a Loodokilani and it is these moran I really love and they love me.' So we moran continued our discussion. All we could do was to fight those Matapato who had taken my mother away. This was bad among age mates, but there was a lot of fighting, even with spears.

Meanwhile the Loodokilani elders started to gather to discuss the matter nearby and they tried to stop us. But we had mustered ourselves and gone to Emukutan and then we arrived at a place called Sinon. By this time, the Matapato moran with my mother and her possessions had reached Oltepesi and we were about to confront them among those thorn trees of Leruenshe. However, the Loodokilani elders had caught up with us and spread out across our path, penning us in. Then they suggested that we should discuss the matter. At first they said: 'We wont prevent you from going to bring the hut back, but stay and talk with us first.' After we had discussed this, they said to us: 'This must not go any

further. You must not intercept that manyata hut. Just let it go away.’ In this way they delayed us as we stayed to talk in the bush – and talk.

Meanwhile, the Matapato moran managed to get back to their country before we could catch up with them in the bush. So we went back to our locality and had a discussion with our patrons of Terito age-set. The other moran said to me: ‘Stay here, for we can support you and feed you at our manyata.’ They really liked me, for they especially liked a morani who is brave. Yet I realized that my home had gone and that I had no other alternative than to follow my mother, for she had already gone. If I stayed at the Loodokilani manyata, then I would just be a pauper. I would not have a thing to offer other moran, for my cattle would not be there – they had already been taken away. I did have my own mother, and I did not want to have to go round continually to the homes of others for food like a pauper.

I had now quarreled with father and he threatened to disown me, saying: ‘If you stay here, then look for some other elder to be your father, but not me. For I am going back to Matapato. And look for some other woman to be your mother in Loodokilani. You can stay if you wish and go to some hut you know, but I won’t be there and nor will your mother. We did not give your home to the Matapato moran willingly. We argued over it and then they stole it.’ If *you* want to bring anger to this country then stay here, but *I* am not prepared to do this.. I don’t want the blood of Matapato and of Loodokilani to flow in *my* village. You can prevent that, but there’s nothing more that I can do’

So I decided to think about it, and I thought: ‘That’s right. Would it not be awful if the moran clashed together? I have heard the Loodokilani elders say over their beer that we are really from Matapato. That country is ours, and we have only been here for the grass.

The Loodokilani elders were angry; and the moran were angry. From my point of view, there was nothing better than them, for I was liked by everyone in Loodokilani – by each child and each elder, let alone the moran.. Now this friendship was as good as finished.

When the moran met again, I had decided and said to them: ‘I have to leave you now to follow that manyata hut – my home. Do not think that this is because I don’t like you.’ And they replied: ‘Yes. We’ll let you go, and it is goodbye. We are not angry with you; for if you ever had any friends, you have them here. If you ever want to have any brothers-in-law, you will get them here. We will always like you as much as before.’ Those moran of Loodokilani did not want me to go. They cried just like children. And I also cried, for I hated the idea of going.

So we stayed a little and I led my friends to our village and killed a sheep. They said to me: ‘We will bless you now, and then you must go.’ So they blessed me and washed my feet with milk. Then I got up early so that they could lead me to Lusie to hand me over to meet the Matapato moran who had taken away my mother. I felt like a man going to his death when they came to take me away. I was led to mama’s hut, which had been set up at Olkiu.

When the Matapato moran had snatched her away, mama hated it. At first she would cry: ‘I have come to this country without my child.’ She really hated it without me, and she was unhappy and bitter. Then I came and she felt quite better. For she had thought that if I did not follow her, then I would be killed. But when she saw that I had come after all, she became happy once more and never again felt sadness in her heart. Then we moved to the manyata at Indiamoloine and stayed there to live with the other moran.

Even after I had left for Matapato, my Loodokilani friends were unable to forget me and wept for me for perhaps three months. Then they would come to visit me at the Matapato manyata and lead me back to their country to join their forest meat feasts. Now, when I go to Loodokilani, there is no-one who says: 'Who is this?' Who has come?' When they first see me, they just say: 'Here is so-and-so, the son of Lechieni who has come here'. We could not break our friendship, for the ways of men of the same age and local group among the Maasai are cherished. There is nothing like this companionship. So that is how it has stayed between us and we have remained close friends. Even now, if one of us wants something from the other, we go to fetch it. Anything I want now, I go to ask one of my Loodokilani chums, and he will give it to me. And if he wants to come here to this village, he just comes.

Recently with this drought, we are all impoverished and there has been nothing left to share. We are all hard pressed. But that's not the way things were and for a long time we used to have many visitors from Loodokilani. If I have a chance, I may go back to Loodokilani to look after my small stock, for goats like it there, and I know the country as well as this place. I grew up there and boys of my age and the women all knew me. My ears were pierced there. We became big boys together and joined in our circumcision dance. There is not a single man in Loodokilani that I do not know.

Back in Matapato, I came to know these moran and their ways, for they were just like those I had left in Loodokilani, and I got to like them. We would go to meat feasts in the forest. We went as posses to recruit more moran for the manyata. We did not want to hang around the villages or just stop at home, for we were warriors. When we were not at our meat feasts, we would go away to fight other people or to hunt for lions. There was nothing we would not do.

So I looked at this old country of ours where I had been as a small child and I got used to it. Papa now had his own home here, and there were all our other relatives. There were as many men of the Lechieni family as blades of grass and many other families to whom we were related through marriage. In Loodokilani there had only been very few members of our clan, whereas in Matapato there were many. There was everything here that we needed and we all came to stay.

As moran, life was hard for us, but at least the land was not scorched with drought as it is now. We had cattle, and there were no poor men whatever. When we drank milk, it was only in company with other moran, for no morani should ever drink milk by himself. And then we also had our meat feasts in the forest and these kept everyone happy.

When we finished eating at a forest feast, the meat would disagree with us and we just wanted to quarrel with one another or perhaps fight our enemies, the Kankere Maasai. They had already raided us, and we were always looking in their direction for an opportunity to retaliate. Lions were also our enemies and their manes made fine headdresses for moran. We would go off to hunt for them when there was nothing else to fight.

We built two manyat altogether for the first was burned down by the General Service Unit, after we had attacked the Kankere with spears and many people died. We had completely wiped out an entire village just as it was getting light. We finished off all the men, and only saved the cattle. So we built another manyata at the same spot. In this way,

we fought off the marauders who threatened this country, and they have never come here again. So we stayed at that new manyata village until our promotion ceremony, *eunoto*.

Then we moved to Embukani, and moran from the other two Matapato *manyat* also moved there to join us for our *eunoto* promotion. Each *manyata* had its own sector of the *eunoto* village, which stretched as far as from here to those trees over there. Ai man! We had moranish things – there were ostrich feather head-dresses, lion-skin headdresses. We had all these things, and we each paraded our trophies. If any manyata sector had no trophy to be seen, others would laugh at them and shout ‘cowards’, ‘slovens’. They would be despised, so at Meto we had eagerly fought for these trophies, and killed so many lions that there were no more left in this country. We collected nine long-haired lion-skin trophies altogether, all our own.

That wet season was like this one, but at that time they had calves, and you could not see the ground outside the village for calves. Then our patrons of Terito (two age-sets above our own) came along. There was no room in the huts, so they slept outside. They lit a fire in the middle of the village and lived there right in the centre. We built the wind-breaks and we scattered cow-hides for them to sit and lie on everywhere. They didn’t look for huts to sleep in – they did not want huts – they lay and looked at the stars. And they would drink 100 pots of tea. There was not a hut that did not prepare tea for them. Pots and pots and pots of it. We collected them in the centre of the village – they were as many as these blades of grass. And we also brought as many small gourds of beer as pots of tea. The place was full of beer. And meat was also brought to them. The centre of the village was absolutely full of meat. There was no room in the huts. The elders never had to say: ‘What is there to eat?’ They just picked up anything they wanted. We brought all foods to them, including meat that had been hung up outside. They were short of nothing.

It was there that our patrons of Terito instilled us with a huge sense of respect. They were all there, including papa and Lekilento. They really were important, and when they came we revered them as our ‘fathers’. We were emerging like small gourds. You might expect some to grow up stupid, and others to grow up wise, but none of us were altogether bad, for we all revered our Terito patrons. Totally.

The Terito managed to organize us just as they wanted. They prepared us for elderhood and really knew their business. It was they who established us and who oversaw all the ceremonial details. We really were afraid of them. When the Terito said, ‘Do this’, we did it. Man. They really knew how to do it – they knew all about organizing ceremonies. How to slaughter and divide out the cuts of beef; and they showed us how this was done. This is, how we divide the deputy ritual leader’s ox, and this is how we divide the ritual leader’s ox, so that we would know and be able to do it for ourselves. Once they saw we had learned what to do, they would sit on their stools and just point out the things to do.

The Terito elders gathered us moran together to squat down in a huge crowd, while they **blessed us as they circled round and passed among us, splashing us with beer and sprinkling the Prophet’s magic dust on our heads from a small gourd.** They blessed and blessed and blessed all the things, and then told us to disband and to go to our fathers’ homes and stop drinking milk in each others’ company, but to perform a local ceremony to *drink milk* by ourselves, for they no longer wanted us to fight like moran. It was the Terito who calmed us down.

When the Terito sent us away to become elders, we replied: ‘Ai! We won’t listen. We do not want to become elders. We really like being moran,, for if this country is again threatened, then it is always we who must chase the raiders back to their country and prevent them taking away our cattle.

The patrons replied: ‘If you refuse to *drink milk* alone, we will drive you away and you will die as moran, never again to be offered this chance to become elders. Do you still respect us? [‘Yes’.] Do you hear us? [‘Yes.’] ‘By all means don’t ever, ever, ever, ever *drink milk* alone. Just become dead moran.’ So we replied: ‘We will go and think about it over there by those trees.’

We discussed the issue on four separate occasions. We were afraid that our ‘fathers’ might become angry. We argued: ‘Let us listen to them now, for when we became moran there was nothing we could not do. We went on policing forays, we went on raids and to fight lions. It all smelt sweet. But now we have finished all that. There is nothing to stop us from continuing as moran, but we now have a new job to do. Let us not again refuse our ‘fathers’. So we eventually agreed with them and told them that we would disperse to *drink milk* alone.

It was at our *eunoto* that we shaved our heads and became elders. After we abandoned our manyata we settled down and had other things to do. The ways of moranhood are hard, but we were no longer moran. We had grown up.

When you *drink milk*, you call an elder who is a ‘mother’s brother’ to give you the milk. He holds the gourd while you drink. You would not let a poor man do this for you. You look around for a rich one. Papa told me: ‘Go and fetch Lekilento here to do this for you.’ While papa arranged to brew the beer, I led Lekilento home and he completed this ritual for me, holding the gourd, blessing it with spit and invoking cattle..

On the day that I *drank milk* alone in my father’s village, I became an elder. My whole body hated it. I was alone, yet did not know how to stay that way. I would set off to find some age mates. I would fetch Lekwemeri and together we would search for other age mates. At Embukani where we lived, we were looking for one another all the time. Yet we had *drunk milk* alone, and I came around to drinking milk by myself. My body did not want it at first – it detested it and I was apprehensive. That was how we stayed for some time. You would go out with your cattle and bring them home in the evening – by yourself. You would say: ‘Wuh! I just can’t go on. I’ll lie down now.’ You would only drink a little milk, for your body did not really want it. You would put just a little in a cup, enough to taste, and then you would step up to the sleeping hide to rest, for you would hate to be seen drinking by yourself. Next morning when it was light you might go and meet a fellow member of your age-group. You would drink milk together, but neither of you would open up the gourd for the other, as proper moran should do, and it was no longer quite the same. We were no longer really moran. So we all disbanded to look after our cattle, and we broke up our earlier fellowship and became used to drinking milk by ourselves. If you immediately turned your attention to herding cattle, you would be very busy. Those of us who had cattle got on with it and went our own ways. It was the men who had no cattle who would keep together and continue to share milk together, though without opening up the gourd for one another. In the end, it was those who turned to herding their cattle who soon got used to drinking milk alone. And that was how we became elders.

Then we went on to marry wives for ourselves. When papa had been driven away from Loodokilani, an elder called Languaala said to him: 'If you had not let those Matapato moran go away with your hut, I might have given your son a girl as a wife.' Papa replied: 'Even if you do not give us any girl now, how do you know that I would have given one to you? It does not matter, for Matapato also have girls. My son does not have to wait until you decide to give him a girl. He will get a wife over there in Matapato.'

It was father who went to lead my first wife. I only heard about it shortly before they reached home. He sent a message to us: 'Tell the boys to brew some beer, for I am leading a bride home.' That was all we knew about her, we did not even know that papa had gone to the Loitokitok Maasai to fetch her.

It's fine having a father for he brings you many things unexpectedly. Otherwise, when you no longer have a father, you will not just be given things and you have to work things out for yourself. So we brewed beer and waited for him. When he got to the dark mountain, he sent another messenger to forewarn us: 'Tell so-and-so to wait for us, for I am still coming, but it is Kunaiju who will get this wife.' I was not her first husband. She had already been married to another elder and then she had left this man. So her father gave her to us.

Papa had led her for us so far and now we did not know what to do. For if you are not there when they negotiate the marriage. And if you are not there when they drink beer and clinch the betrothal. And if you are just told later that the marriage has been arranged, and they say: 'It is now settled', only then do you realize fully for the first time what those men, your fathers, have arranged and what is being fetched. I borrowed some ceremonial capes and I called an age mate to be my best-man. We then waited for them to come, so that I could lead my bride into the village.

She was still with us when I led her to the ceremony where our age-set *ate meat* for the first time in front of our wives. She seemed to like it well enough when she came to our home, for she certainly looked after the stock we had given her. But she also had a bad habit of wandering. She started coming and going from my home and would go to other villages like waves on a lake. Then she kept running back to her own country, Loitokitok.

I could now see that she was no good and my head was no longer fond of her. She had come to dislike our family and I despised her. She was no good and I started to beat her. The other women of our family also disliked her, for they felt she might ensorcel them if she had a baby and they tried to look after her. But papa still liked her and said to me 'Don't beat her any more, for she is the daughter of my friend – leave her alone'. So I kept silent. Then she got up and left us of her own accord and ran back again to her own homeland. I thought: 'This foreign woman is no good and I'll no longer put up with her. I'll let her go and they can look for some Matapato girl to give me instead.' I did not bother to follow her, and I lied to papa telling him that I had tried to bring her back.

It was her father's brother who made us angry, for whenever that girl ran away to Loitokitok, she would always go to his village. She never went to her father – always to her father's brother. It was only to him that she went – and went – and went. And it was only he who would pamper her and did not make her return. We decided to leave it at that

for that family is no longer a proper home. It has become rather like a warriors' den. Away she went, and we just left it like that and looked after our own affairs..

So we now have a quarrel with that family at Loitokitok. The only thing I want from them is to make them pay back the marriage payments, for we had given that family 21 of our cattle altogether. And there is just one man to whom we have made these payments – her father's brother. Before then we had never quarreled with that family at any time; and now I suppose they must think that we hate the cattle that we gave them, for we have not yet gone to claim them back. But with this drought detaining us here, we will not go yet, for the [women and] children would suffer if we did. That is how men feel when they want to go to distant places – the drought would take away your children. First we must help the children, and then we will go to fetch the cattle. I would not go alone, without also leading papa or my brother, Kinai. But it is papa who arranges family affairs for all of us. He is in the lead, as in any 'raid' when we look for cattle. When the Loitokitok marriage broke up – it was just like that.

A child – even a young elder – who does not accompany his father is harassed – harassed. If there is some older kinsman or in-law in this area and he wanted to pester you, he would leave it until he saw that your father had gone somewhere distant. Then he would descend on you to pester you, demanding gifts, and you would have to respect him. Whereas at other times when your father is here, he would not dare to pick a quarrel with you. So long as I have papa, I do not want other Maasai to come to pester me, or quarrel to no good purpose.

When papa recently moved the cattle away, it was because of the drought that crushed us. We had no time to discuss the matter. The cattle were finished and he drove away those that remained. It was he who was in charge. There was nothing for our women or children to eat – not even a single cow for milk. So I decided to stay here to look for paid work for the sake of the children. Previously, when I move away by myself, I had no dependants. But now, for the time being, I have to remain here, but when God gives us the opportunity, I want to move to where papa is and follow him. For we had not agreed to go our own ways. I want to be where papa is. If sometime in future I want to be separated from him, he will arrange it. Meanwhile, if he wants to tell me: to move anywhere, off I go. For I listen to whatever he tells me from his heart. I do not want to separate from papa and take over control of my own cattle whatsoever. Just now I would not know how to live away from him. It has only been in times of hardship that we have ever been separated.

10. NARRATIVES OF MASIANI'S THREE JUNIOR WIVES

Sereiya's narrative (Masiani's senior left-hand wife)

When I was a girl, I did not go to the manyata, but I lived in my father's village at Meto for all his sons were now elders and I had to herd the cattle. I had a morani lover, like all girls, but I didn't want to marry him for I was frightened of my father. I really would have liked to marry a morani. But I also had a sense of respect, and I respected my father's wishes. It was Twaati age-set who bore me, and the Dareto age-set who bore my mother, and a Terito who led me away in marriage. Then I was married and stopped herding these cattle.

The Kulalik were moran when I became a member of Lechieni's family and this was the time of the cattle disaster. When Lechieni [*Masiani*] led me away as a bride to my new home, we rested at Lolenpoti Hill at Bissel, and then caught a bus to Kajiado and then a train to Magaat in Loodokilani. This was the first time that I had seen a lake and I wondered what it was. Also, I had never seen modern houses, and when I saw their lights I thought that they were stars that had dropped down from the sky and come to earth.

Then we went on to Enkare Ngiro and I gazed in silence. I had never been there before, and it was hot and there were stones and mosquitoes. It was difficult for I did not know the people. At first, I wanted to go back to my parent's home when Lechieni beat me. I tried to run away, but I didn't know how to get there and I lost my way. So I stayed.

After all, it was a good place, for the cattle liked it and we stayed there for two wet seasons and a dry season. Eventually, I came to know the place and the people as ours and I came to like it, for Lechieni also liked us. I liked him because my father had given me to him. He was a rich man with many cattle, a large flock, and donkeys. Then there were also older women to help us look after the children. We did not want for anything.

However, I did not bear children quickly and stayed childless until the Putolek age-set had been circumcised. I bore Taeto and then I had Sereti and Nasajo, and then I had this child here. I also had that child Minit whom I gave to Kunaiju to adopt, for it was I who bore her. So I now have four children, but I have given birth to five..

Now Minit is no longer my child. When someone wants to marry her and brings Kunaiju gifts – perhaps some tobacco or some money – Kunaiju will share some of this with me, and say 'Mother, take this for it is for our child. But it is only Kunaiju who will give me these things – not Minit. Then she will be initiated, but not in my hut.

I gave this child of mine called Minit to Kunaiju so that we could call him 'Minit's father'. He had married a woman who had no children and she kept running away. Lechieni and I discussed the matter and decided to give Minit to this woman so that she would settle down with us. He begged me and I had to say that it was what I too wanted for I trusted Kunaiju. So Lechieni and I agreed with one another and we both gave her away, for an elder does not take away a woman's child without first begging her.

Unfortunately, this woman who had been given Minit continued to run away and also treated Minit badly. I hated it when I realized this. But I had given her away and could do nothing about it. I would say to Kunaiju, 'Why is that child being treated badly after I have given her to you?' Then when Minit came to Kunaiju crying, he would say to her,

‘What has hurt you, my child?’ He would then beat this woman so that she would stop smacking the child and leave her alone.

That was all some time ago, before this woman ran away for good. Now Meelio, Kunaiju’s next wife, has taken care of Minit and became her mother. Meelio is all right. She massaged fat onto the child’s body and accepted her. Then she had a child of her own. So now she will stay.

If my own daughter is to be initiated for marriage, I get things ready and brew beer. I don’t want to drink it for we women don’t drink beer and I am still small. Although we might surreptitiously drink just a little when a daughter is initiated [squeak] – just to taste it. Lechieni would hate it if he knew that his wives drink beer. It makes people go crazy and they have no respect. But I like to feed the Maasai elders well. They have beer to make them drunken.

Lechieni used to drink beer when we were younger, but it’s only recently he has started to beat us when he is drunk. When we were still young wives, he would whip us if we were lazy while herding, but only gently like children, for he was frightened that we would run away and leave him. But once we had borne children, then he would beat us more severely. I don’t like being beaten. It makes me angry and I hate it.

When Taeto was a baby, Lechieni beat me hard. He then threatened to put Taeto onto the fire. He did not dislike the child. It was the beer. I begged him not to put the child on the fire. He then grabbed me by the throat. At first I tried to defend myself and to grab his throat as well. So we wrestled over that child. I was frightened of him because he was a man. But I did manage to throw him to the ground and picked up my baby to run away to papa’s home.

When I reached papa’s home, I told him that I no longer wanted to stay with Lechieni. But he came to fetch me, leading other elders to support him and imploring papa to let me return. He said that he would give papa some cattle. I said to papa ‘I only want this child of mine to stay here in your home. I don’t want Lechieni to give you any cattle.’ Lechieni then said ‘I wanted to beat that daughter of yours when I grabbed her, but I did not grab the child to hurt him, for he is a fine child. I’ll stop beating her for that was only because of the beer. So I went back to stay with Lechieni and he came to like me – even now.

On another occasion, when a morani had stolen one of our sheep, Lechieni cut my arm with the blade of his spear – just here [*shows the scar*]. He said to me, ‘Didn’t you know that the morani had stolen it?’ I did not run away, for I knew that I had been lazy. Then Kinai took his father’s arm and said ‘Leave her alone’. But my papa came when he heard and said, ‘Why did you cut her mother’s daughter with a spear?’ And Lechieni offered him some small stock. I said to papa ‘Let’s not bother with small stock. I don’t mind being cut this time, for I like my stock and I want to learn to look after them better.’ So we stopped arguing, and Lechieni has never cut me again. I don’t want to go back to my father’s home any longer. That’s all over. I now have three brothers in this area and I know their homes.

Soibe is Lechieni’s youngest wife. I am two years senior to her, but we are similar. She also has four children, but she bore them quite quickly. Whereas Pilanoi has been here longer than Soibe but she has only born one child by the grace of God. She was married very quickly after Lechieni was invited to take her away. Have you seen the white scar on Soibe’s forehead?

*[A woman who has repeated miscarriages is assumed to have had sexual relations with her husband or lover after her pregnancy had been established, threatening fertility more generally. When this occurs, women from over a wide area may gather to punish her and to protect their own fertility in a mobbing known as 'olkishiroto' (the wailing).
[PS]*

Sereiya (ctd). Soibe had several miscarriages because of her lover – just one man of Kuloliki age-set who kept seducing her while she was already pregnant. The women gathered to punish her in the morning, calling wives from all the villages. ‘Come along ... Come ... Come ...’, they called as they ran towards us. We tried to protect Soibe when they came, begging them to let her alone, and grabbing their hands to protect her. We held up grass and said, ‘Grass. Here is grass.’ And they just said, ‘Get out of our way, you *imbusu*.’ And they got on with it, while we implored them. The leading women rushed through Lechieni’s gateway, and called out to Soibe ‘Come out, come out’, and they dragged her from her hut into the yard. They first slapped her face again and again, and kept spitting on her in contempt. Then they called out, ‘Bring a razor here.’ They grabbed her and cut a piece of flesh off her forehead and her blood flowed down. Then they said, ‘Bring some milk’ and they poured this over her so that it mixed with her blood, falling onto the ground down there. For it really was a terrible thing that she had done, and the women really hated it.

Even so, we are great friends and I don’t mind that Soibe is Lechieni’s favourite wife. Like other young wives, she has become the one that the elder likes, whereas we others are more senior.

Pilanoi’s narrative (Masiani’s junior right-hand wife).

When I was led here, I was only a small child, truly not very big and I really liked the people here. For Kinai gave me a cow, and Kunaiju gave me a cow, even though he was still small. Telalia was the senior wife. She would pick up her stick and say, ‘Get out children – go and look after the sheep and goats!’ We would run and say ‘Mother has summoned us’. For she was the senior wife who had met us when we first came as new brides. She is as old as Lechieni and we would fear them both. That woman really loved us small, small ‘children’ that she had acquired, and we respected these very senior people.

Telalia and her cronies drink beer, for they are now old people. There is no longer anything that they need to get permission for. Whereas we are younger, and she tells us, ‘Leave beer alone so that you can pick me up when I fall down’ – perhaps because she has now become old or because of beer. So we leave off drinking it for the time being so that we are still able to return that lamb that has strayed from the flock or get hold of the calf that is over there. When younger people drink, it’s bad because it makes them crazy and they can fight one another for nothing. That would harm us and it’s something we fear.

At celebrations some elders may say ‘Have some of this beer, Pilanoi’, and I say ‘No – we wives don’t drink. We dare not’ It’s Lechieni [*Masiani*] that we are afraid of, for drink makes people crazy and he can beat us hard. He previously said to us ‘Leave it

alone, completely until your boys are circumcised. Then you can drink it among yourselves.’

When I go to the shops at Namanka, I may buy beer and drink a cupful very secretly – ‘I dig it into the ground’. I don’t want Lechieni to know at any time that I am doing this. When Lechieni goes away, I may pinch a little beer in a cup and when he returns, I wipe my mouth and make it look as though I haven’t drunk. For the one person I really fear is Lechieni. If he found out, Lechieni would kill us and slit our throats. He would hate it. Even now, he can really beat us with a stick until our body swells up and blood streams from our noses. He roasts the stick in the fire and says, I will hit you with this burning stick.

When Lechieni beats you, you hate it at the time, for perhaps one hour. When he is beating you, others may say to him, ‘Stop it, stop it’. When he has finished beating you, you run to your hut and cry and cry. You are angry, and say to yourself that you really are going to leave him this time for he is abusing you every day, and you have kept on saying to yourself that you will go. You ask yourself: ‘Why should he beat me? He has abused me and now I feel deprived. I’ll run away and leave him’. But when you have finished crying and sulking in your hut, you remember your child and say to yourself: ‘And if I go then my child will be deprived. Let’s leave it as it is. I won’t go. Let him beat me just this one more time. I have been punished. I dare to go away, but I am secure here.’ Then I don’t think about it any more.’

I have just this one child – a boy given me by God. It is God who decides and not me. God may finish off the herd, but cattle only give milk. To have a boy is lucky, for he can beget many children, even if I have no other children and the herd is finished.

Soibe’s narrative (Masiani’s junior left-hand wife)

When I was a child, I had a morani lover of Kuloliki age-set whom I had danced with. He was the one man I wanted to marry. Papa hated the idea and told me not to go to him. Then I was married to a very old member of the Lechieni family who died within three days of taking me to his home. So I was led back to papa’s village. Then papa said that I was too young to become a widow. He wanted me to have a husband, so he invited Lechieni [*Masiani*] to take me instead.

So Lechieni became my husband. I was the youngest of his wives and the last to be married. I too was led from Matapato to Loodokilani, but by foot and we stayed at various places on the way.

When I was married, I had been asked ‘Do you want this man? Do you?’, and I had replied ‘Yes’. But I hated Lechieni and did not want to go, so I stole away to return to papa’s village. When I got there I was beaten by his brothers, who were age mates of Lechieni. I was beaten and beaten until I agreed never to run back again

But he kept beating me and I kept changing my mind and continued to run away and keep up my secret affair with my morani lover. I was beaten and beaten, and papa said to Lechieni ‘Take her away. Take her. Take her now’. I could see that papa really hated it, and I came to hate that morani who had brought me so much trouble. For at that time, I did not know any better. I was just a child. So at last I stayed with Lechieni and I became his favourite wife. We came to like each other very much, and now I have four children.

However, having children is not easy. I was at a recent women's festival (*emasho lenkituak*)

[The 'emasho oonkituak' ceremony may be performed when women's concern over their infertility spreads like an epidemic. The elders then may sacrifice a heifer and share its parts with the women to restore their fertility (and confidence). The choice of a fertile animal for sacrifice has unpropitious undertones that aim to annul the forces responsible for the women's misfortune. PS]

Soibe (ctd). The women were at the spot where the elders came to bless us. We all wore black cloths, which we only wear when a heifer is to be sacrificed. One by one, the elders gave us brisket fat and finger amulets from the animal so that we would bear children, while we danced, circling round and round. Then one of us accidentally kicked up the skull of a warthog that had been buried by a sorcerer. We started shaking... shaking... shaking... shaking... shaking... and crying, and when you cried, you would fall on your back in a dead faint. The whole lot of us fainted in one place ... completely. Milk spurted from young mothers' breasts, and babies struggled in the wombs of pregnant women – like this. We were all completely finished, almost dead, and when the women woke up, they would cry and go berserk. We all cried, everyone in the Meto area.

It was just sorcery. Even the elders' spittle [*blessing*] did not cure us. It was the same for all women: for those that had received the fat and the amulets and for those that had not. Then the elders said, 'Let's get out of here, for there is an evil spell around.' So the elders picked us up, and we left the place, groaning all the time. Your husband would come and pick you up and lead you home.

Then Lechieni and his Terito age-mates cursed and cursed that man who had ensorcelled the heifer, for he too was a Terito. He had brought a dreadful spell on many people, and he went away and died in the bush.

So the elders went to a different diviner and he came to cure us, using an unpolluted hide when he consulted his oracle. We were washed in cow's urine and anointed with running water. This protected us and we then started to have children again.

Appendix: Note on Translation
(by Paul Spencer)

This work is based on a series of taped dialogues with members of Masiani's family. These were transcribed and translated with Kinai's help. As neither of us knew any Swahili, we had to work together conversing in Maa, and this was a significant step for improving my rusty grasp of the language early in my research.

The influence of the audience is an aspect of these narratives that is lost in the translation. Masiani's account of getting lost after a raid (Chapter 4) created an appreciative stir as an old soldier shooting-the-line with string of anecdotes. His claim to have killed a leopard and then displayed its hide as a trophy (Chapter 5) raised incongruous gasps and laughter. His mimicry and graphic rendering of a group of elders sealing a curse as they farted into a gourd of beer (Chapter 4) gave a vivid touch that delighted his audience. His boastful account of ousting the previous age-set of moran from their pedestal (Chapter 4) seemed a deliberate attempt to humiliate a survivor of this age-set who happened to be present but was now too old to rise to the occasion. However, most of his audiences were younger elders and it was these that his self-centred reminiscences of bygone times were aimed to impress. I would add that this was not altogether an impromptu set of narratives. Thus, Masiani's account of falling into a pothole (Chapter 5) was surely prompted by my question concerning his memories of his mother who died in a similar accident (Chapter 7), although I was not aware of this at the time and never had a response to my question. Again the text does not convey the uncharacteristic expression of sadness on his face, even a tear in one eye, when he briefly mentioned his manyata lover who was taken away by the elders for marriage elsewhere (Chapter 5). She ran back to Masiani and they were married - at a considerable price. At this point in his narrative (when no other elders were present), Masiani's emotion visibly slipped: 'She was an ideal woman – and then she died very soon afterwards.'

In processing this material, the transcription of each set of recollections was divided into convenient numbered paragraphs, with a prefix A-F. This exercise was prompted by Masiani's popularity as a raconteur, and my initial dialogue with him in the presence of other elders were prefixed 'A'. Then some months later, I interviewed him without an audience to clarify and extend some of his points. The record of these were prefixed 'C'. Meanwhile, I had approached other members of his family, and my recorded dialogues with them were prefixed 'B' (Telelia), 'D' (Kinai), 'E' (Kunaiju), and 'F' (Masiani's three junior wives).

To give some shape and coherence to each narrative, I have rearranged their recollections chronologically and taken the liberty of translating these as freely as seemed compatible with the recorded texts. In due course, I plan to lodge my notebooks, tapes, transcriptions and initial translations with the archive at SOAS. Another liberty that I

have taken in this translation is to use pseudonyms for all the characters. In order to facilitate the reading of these narratives, I have generally avoided the teknonymic ‘father/mother of so-and-so’ which is used within the Maasai family and local community. The main exception to this, which I have retained, is the formal use of the family name when women refer to their husbands, as in ‘Lechieni’ for Masiani (cf. Mr Chieni).

The broad reordering of the text, from the original recollections and listing to their final presentation in this work is indicated in the following chapter by chapter sequences.

2. MASIANI’S FAMILY HISTORY

Leshishi. The Origin of Masiani’s family (A120-6, C393-9, A127-8)

Masiani’s father, grandfather and family reputation (A140-4, A129, A145-9, A131)

3. BOYHOOD : c. 1910-1928

Lekurok Masiani’s guardian uncle c. 1911 (A132, A151-2, C114, C111-2, A153, C431, C112, C431-2, C113b)

Going as a boy on a raid with Dareto age-set c. 1919 (A810-27)

Masiani challenges Lekurok, herd divided (C114c, A211, C115b, A213-6, C116e, C117a, C114a, C116c, A212, A134, C116b, A135, A217, C117b, A154)

4. MORANHOOD AND THE MANYATA: c. 1928-1933

Circumcision c.1928 (A158, C115d, A642, A159, C121-2, A444-9, A231-2, A382)

Founding the Terito Manyat (A831-2, C361-6, A646-9, A136, A240-5, A233)

Abortive raid on the Kamba c. 1932 (A341-8, A413-4, C162-4, A415-433, C391)

Fighting among moran (A425-6, C165, A632-8, A238, C135-7, A162-5, A660-668, C151, A833-4, A220-4)

Moran and sex (A238, A783, A350-6)

On becoming an elder (A381, A411a, A412, C421-3, A440-3)

Masiani’s raid as a young elder (A460-484, C141-7)

5. MARRIAGE AND ELDERHOOD (c. 1933-1967)

Masiani’s early marriages (A360-2, A370-7, C131-4)

Masiani’s age-set punishment c. 1937 (C170-1, C381, C435-6, A537-8)

Terito age-set ‘eating meat’ c. 1937 (C434, C310-4)

Masiani sets fire to his herd c. 1945 (A761-5)

Migration to Loodokilani (A538, C381-2, A531-2, A551-3)

Masiani rebuilds his stock. (A850-854, A859-864)

Masiani’s leopard trap. (A864, A871-881, C383-4)

Masiani’s potholing. (A330-8)

Masiani’s private lion hunt c. 1962 (A280-6, A310-327, C231-6)

Masiani’s accumulation of wives (A533-5, C210-2, A363, A755)

Women’s fertility dance (A757-9)

Expulsion from Loodokilani (A539-548).

6. SENIOR ELDERHOOD (c. 1967-1976)

Return to Matapato (A545)

Planting the Prophet's charm (A510-529)

Elders drinking (A457-9, C191-3)

Masiani's second age-set punishment c. 1968 (A610-631, C174-C185)

The raid on Masiani's village to form a manyata for Ngorisho age-set c. 1972 (A843-7)

Kinai's and Kunaiju's marriages (A720-6, A666-8, A426)

Masiani's control over his sons' cattle. (A730-8, A741).

7. TELELIA'S NARRATIVE: MASIANI'S SENIOR WIFE

Tareto age-set eunoto (B231-233)

Masiani's childhood (B114, B162-163)

Meat feasts with moran (B166, B222, B228)

Initiation and marriage (B112, B166-167, B225)

Terito age-set manyata (B234-237)

Telelia's affair with her lover (B119-121, B214-225)

Birth of Telelia's first child (B113, B155, B167-169)

Subsequent early marriage (B116-117, B121, B171, B223)

Wife-beating (B 174, B211-213, B215)

Growth and loss of herd (B116-117, B171-172)

Period in Loodokilani (B114-116, B125, B127, B153, B158-159, B281-291)

Kidnap leading to return to Matapato (B251-264)

In Matapato as a manyata mother (B118, B123-126, B128, B136, B142-5, B154, B156-159, B271-272, B292-295)

Telelia's role as a mother (B138-141, B242-245).

As a manyata mother again (B116, B122-123, B138-139, B161, B241, B265, B311)

8. KINAI'S NARRATIVE: MASIANI'S SENIOR SON

Kinai's fear and love of his father (D111-5, D190-8)

Kinai becomes a non-manyata morani (D131-3, D143-7, D316-8)

Kinai's moranhood . (D134-142, D231-2, D317)

Masiani's vow to build up his flock. (D320-5)

Being tied down to herding cattle (D128-9, D151-3, D123)

Masiani arranges Kinai's two marriages (D334, D124-7)

Kinai separates from his father (D161-87, D220-7, D332-3)

The critical drought of 1976 (D116-122, D211-4, D241-9)

9. KUNAIJU'S NARRATIVE, MASIANI'S FAVOURITE SON

Growing up in Loodokilani (E111-115, 147)

Confrontation over Kunaiju's moranhood (E116-132, E139-143, E148-149, E239-256)

Keeping friendships in Loodokilani (E143-146, E236-8)

Moranhood in Matapato (E133-138, E211-219)

Eunoto (E151-157, E163-167, E217-221, E229)

Drinking Milk and adjusting to elderhood' (E158-177, E215-216)

Marriage (E181-198).

Dependency in elderhood (E146, E231-235)

10. NARRATIVES OF MASIANI'S THREE JUNIOR WIVES

Sereiya's narrative (F111-132, F271-285)

women's mobbing (F291-297)

Pilanoi's narrative (F211-218, 251-263)

Soibe's narrative (F133-141)

women's festival (F142-158)

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