

**105 Maasai Proverbs Collected From Social Media
Forums**

by

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Introduction to this collection

This collection of Maasai Proverbs from Social Media forums (especially Facebook) is the first fruit of my interest in social media and how it is being used to advance the cause of African cultures by Africans, Africanists and the entire humanity. I am in the process of collecting other proverbs from other Kenyan language groups, so far having collected some proverbs from the Luhya, Kikuyu, Kalenjin, Luo, Kamba and Meru languages. It is hoped at the end of these efforts, a good picture of how proverbs from Kenyan languages are used in the social media will emerge especially through a detailed study and analysis of these social media forums.

This effort of collecting and collating various Kenyan language proverbs from the social media has started with proverbs from the Maasai people. The Maasai are a Nilotic speaking people living in the great Rift Valley of Kenya and Tanzania. Traditionally they have been associated with keeping large herds of cattle, sheep and goats. They have been largely an independent people with varying interactions with various neighboring communities both in Kenya and in Tanzania. Their independence with little room from manipulation by external forces has been associated with their ability preserve their cultures and traditions to the present. Oral culture as encapsulated in their proverbs has been one way of preserving and perpetuating their cultures into the present times.

The Maasai people have also been adapting to new changes in society brought about by modern education and advances in technologies. The use of traditional art forms like proverbs alongside new technologies is what inspired the collection of these Maasai Maasai proverbs from the social media and the internet. By going through various pages, it has been very refreshing to see the compatibility of proverbs use with new technological advances in communication such as internet. Some selected Facebook pages from where many proverbs were collected include Maasai proverbs (indung'eta e rashe), <https://www.facebook.com/groups/100624011542/>; Maasai proverbs teachings, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1399785203627037/>

The “Maasai Proverbs From Social Media” collection has benefitted from the efforts and support of the following people. I thank the Kenyan Proverbs Working Group especially father Joseph Healey and Cephas Agbemenu for their criticism and encouragement in the course of collecting the proverbs. I am also grateful to Julius Naikuni, my student friend who helped me with the translation of the Maasai proverbs into English.

A word on the organization and methodology of compilation of this collection: This collection is organized around a style in which the original proverb is rendered in the Maasai language in **bold** and marked with the word (**Maasai**) in bracket at the end. A literal translation of the proverb is then done in English and appears in *italics*. A last rendering is a Swahili translation of the proverb in plain font but marked (Swahili) in bracket at the end.

As it emerged at the end of this exercise, only proverbs were collected and are presented in the pages that follow. But I am certain there are more proverbs that will continue to be posted as other social media groups of Maasai proverbs users emerge in the internet. Proverbs that start with the following 10 letters of the alphabet have found their way in this collection: A, E, I, K, M, N, O, S, T and U.

Thank you.

Joseph Kariuki
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A

1. Ainyoo pee iton enaa enkitok nayamishe? (Maasai)

Why do you behave like a woman whose son has just married?

Kwa nini unakaa kama mwanamke ambaye mwanaye ameoa karibuni?(Swahili)

2. Atejo apa oledukuya mongoi mpira Enkai niarr olaisimani (Maasai)

The predecessors said that lies go up and kills a robber.

Waliotangulia walisema uongo huenda juu nahuuu mwizi (Swahili).

3. Ayia amu ayia nalelek (Maasai)

Okey! Because it's that easy to say it.

Sawa! Kwasababu ni rahisisana kuisema (Swahili).

E

4. Edol enkerai ilainyamok eituedol menye (Maasai)

The child may see thieves before the father does.

Mtoto anaweza ona wezi kabla ya babake (Swahili).

5. Edoorie enker modooni nkuta (Maasai)

A blind sheep might chance across rain water.

Kondoo asiye ona anaweza jaribu kuvuka maji ya mvua (Swahili).

6. Eelaenkishui nkatitiri (Maasai)

Life has seasons.

Maisha ina mizimu (Swahili).

7. Eikasha aisananisho nibikoo along karsisisho nie irakiti (Maasai)

It is better to be poor and live long than rich and die young.

Afadhali kuwa maskini na uishi sana badala ya kuwa tajiri na ufe ukiwa kijana (Swahili).

8. Eisapuk eukongu enkai (Maasai)

The eye of God is large.

Jicho la Mungu huona kwa upana (Swahili).

9. Ejo orkonai “oo duo naata omom, kake kegol enkeju al” (Maasai)

The hyena said, "It is not only that I have luck, but my leg is strong."
Fisi alisema, “si vile nina bahati, ila ni mguu wangu una nguvu” (Swahili).

10. Ekueniyie olchata oika oloinosita enkima (Maasai)

Freshly cut firewood laughs at the one that is already burning, not knowing that the same fate will befall it.
Kuni iliyo katwa hivi karibuni hucheka ile inayochoameka bila kujua itachomeka vile vile (Swahili).

11. Elelek osotua oitobiruni alang, eput enkiteng enyewa kule (Maasai)

It does not take as long to settle a quarrel as it takes a cow's udder to fill with milk after she has been covered.
Haichukui muda mlefua kutuliza mfaragano kama vile matiti ya ngombe hujaza baada ya ugonjwa (Swahili).

12. Elong enchikat enkutuk enosiadi/olkurum (Maasai)

The fart of the mouth and that of the bottom are not the same.
Kutoa ishara ya harufu mbaya kwa mdomo na kutoa kwa ukweli harufu mbaya kwa matako sio jambo moja (Swahili).

13. Emunyak olayioni oinepua menya (Maasai)

The words of the elders are blessed.
Usemi wa wazee umebarikiwa (Swahili).

14. Engai tajapaki toinaipuko inona (Maasai)

God, shield me with your wings.
Mungu, nilinde kwa mabawa yako (Swahili).

15. Enkalem naitoris ilewa (Maasai)

A (circumcision) knife equate all men.
Kisu cha kutahili husawazisha wanaume wote (Swahili).

16. Enkongu naipang’a engen (Maasai)

Clever is the eye that has traveled.
Jicho lililo tembea ndilo elevu (Swahili).

17. Enap oloitiko isirat enelo (Maasai)

A zebra takes its stripes wherever it goes.
Punda milia hupeleka milia yake popote aendapo (Swahili).

18. Eoroo keon aitalam ilchoreta lenyenak enaa osikiria omwuoi (Maasai)

He separates himself from his friends like a sick donkey.

Yeye hujitenga na marafiki wake kama punda aliye mgonjwa (Swahili).

19. Epaash keeya wenkishui (Maasai)

Life and death are not alike.

Uhai na kifo sio jambo moja (Swahili).

20. Erruesh olenkaina enaimurruai (Maasai)

The elephant can be tripped by creeping plant.

Ndovu anaweza angushwa na mumea anayetambaa (Swahili).

21. Esuj erashe ng'ejuk emusana (Maasai)

A new idea follows an old one.

Wazo mpya hufuata wazo mzee (Swahili).

22. Esulaa olchani otuurorori oioitashe (Maasai)

The withered tree will destroy the healthy tree when it falls down.

Wakati mti uliyokauka una anguka, una haribu mti uliyo na nguvu (Swahili).

23. Eukoshoke naitau osotua (Maasai)

It is the belly which daily gives thanks.

Tumbo ndiyo hupeana pongezi kila siku (Swahili).

I

24. Ikingas ake olemaii nikitoki olengeno (Maasai)

We begin by being foolish and we become wise by experience.

Watu huwa wajinga mwanzo lakini huerevuka kwa mazoea (Swahili).

25. Imawal olbuket torono olikai (Maasai)

Don't reply one wrong with another.

Usijibu jambo mbaya na lingine mbaya (Swahili).

26. Imeipul elejara endap enkaina (Maasai)

A lie cannot fill the palm.

Uongo hauwezi kujaza panja la mkono (Swahili).

27. Imelakua aig inchu (Maasai)

Home is not far away when you are alive.

Nyumbani sio mbali wakati uko hai (Swahili).

28. Imelama iltuli wenkop (Maasai)

The buttocks and the ground do not remain long apart.

Matako na ardhi hazikai mbali kati yao kwa muda mrefu (Swahili).

29. Imemurata olayioni oota menya (Maasai)

He who has a father is still not circumcised.

Aliye na babake hajatahili bado (Swahili).

30. Imemurut emurt elukunya (Maasai)

The neck cannot become the head.

Shingo haliwezi kuwa kichwa (Swahili).

31. Imerujunye enkoshoke ekitok nemenuta (Maasai)

The belly does not swell if a woman is not pregnant.

Tumbo haliwezi fula kama mwanamke hana mimba (Swahili).

32. Imesarisara nyayie, bara kino (Maasai)

Do not jump about, for there is no use in jumping about.

Usirukaruke pahali moja, kwa maana hakuna haja ya kurukaruka (Swahili).

33. Imewal endunget erasha kewan (Maasai)

A proverb does not answer itself.

Methali haiwezi kujijibu yenyewe (Swahili).

34. Imikinya orkikue lolikai (Maasai)

A person does not itch from a thorn that is not his.

Mtu hawezi sikia uchungu juu wa mwimba usio wake (Swahili).

35. Inkinter emodai peisuj engeno (Maasai)

Foolishness first, then wisdom.

Ujinga kwanza harafu hekima (Swahili).

36. Iyiolo ake enigua kake imiyiola enilo (Maasai)

Be as familiar with observation as you are with the place you live.

Fahamu kile unaona kama vile unafahamu mahali unapoishi (Swahili).

37. Iyiolo ake eningua kake imiyiolo eniloito (Maasai)

You know where you come from but you don't know where you are ending to.

Unajua mahali utokako lakini haunjui mahali utaishia (Swahili).

38. Iyiolo ake enilo kake miyiolo enikijokini (Maasai)

You only know what you say but you don't know what you will be told.

Unajua tu kile utasema, lakini hauwezi jua kile uta-ambiwa (Swahili).

K

39. Keeku nameni eriroi (Maasai)

Even that which is despised can triumph.

Hata jambo/kitu/mtu nayedharauliwa anaweza faulu (Swahili).

40. Keidurr iltung'anak kake meidur ildonyo (Maasai)

Nobody can say he is settled anywhere forever: it is only the mountains which do not move from their places.

Hakuna anayeweza sema atakaa mahali fulani milele, ni milima tu isiyo hama (Swahili).

41. Keshoroo olchata eurori kulikae (Maasai)

A falling tree will cause others to fall.

Mti unaoanguka unafanya miti ingine kuanguka (Swahili).

M

42. Mamoda amu mashulare olenkaputi (Maasai)

Am not a fool because I do not live in the same homestead as my in-law.

Mimi sio mjinga kwasababu sikai kwa boma moja na wakwe wangu (Swahili).

43. Medany orkimojino oboelashei (Maasai)

One finger does not kill a louse.

Kidole kimoja hakivunji chawa (Swahili).

44. Mediding enkan'g'u enaimin (Maasai)

The eye cannot penetrate darkness.

Jicho haliwezi ona gizani (Swahili).

45. Medol ilala osina (Maasai)

Teeth do not see poverty.
Meno hayaoni ufukala (Swahili).

46. Mee sarsar nyayie, barakino (Maasai)

A lion can run faster than we can, but we can run further.
Simba anaweza kukimbia haraka sana kutuliko, lakini tunaweza kimbiba mbali (Swahili).

47. Meek olekaina ilala lenyanak (Maasai)

The elephant does not get tired of his tusks.
Ndovu hachoki na pembe zake (Swahili).

**48. Meeny enkutuk nainosa inkik eitoki anya eilata memeeny anainosa eilata eitoki
anya inkik (Maasai)**

*A mouth that has eaten fat does not refuse to eat excrement and that which has eaten
excrement does not refuse to eat fat.*
Mdomo ulio kula mafuta utakula mafi, na ule uliokula mafi utakula mafuta (Swahili).

49. Meeta empur nemejo nanu eedo kidong'oe (Maasai)

There is no lizard that does not claim to possess the longest tail.
Hakuna mjusi ambaye hasemi hana mkia mrefu saidi (Swahili).

50. Meeta enkiteng olopeny (Maasai)

The cow has no owner.
Ngombe hana mwenyewe (Swahili).

51. Meeta orenejep erubata (Maasai)

The tongue has no joint.
Ulimi hauna mfupa (Swahili).

52. Meetai embaye nalo aa nabo (Maasai)

There is no arrow that goes alone.
Hakuna mshale unaenda peke yake (Swahili).

53. Meetai enkerr sampu (Maasai)

There is not such a thing in the world as a sheep of many colours.
Hakuna kitu duniani kama kondoo wa rangi aina nyingi (Swahili).

54. Meetai oidipakine oitumurua akeetae (Maasai)

There is no one who has finished, there is only who is still at it.

Hakuna mtu ambaye amemaliza, lakini kuna tu yule anayeendelea kufanya jambo fulani (Swahili).

55. Meetai osina lankolong Nabo (Maasai)

There is no poverty of a single day.

Hakuna ufukala wa siku moja (Swahili).

56. Meetai tonyoraki maaibai (Maasai)

There is no one way friendship (i.e. friendship is mutual).

Hakuna urafiki wa upande mmoja, ila urafiki huzaindia pande mbili sinazohusika(Swahili).

57. Meibung'ayu esiere embulati (Maasai)

It is not possible to hold a walking stick as well as the stomach.

Hakuna jinzi ya kushika mkwaju na kushikilia tumbo wakati ule ule(Swahili).

58. Meidim olenkaina enkingara (Maasai)

An elephant is not able to endure beating from many.

Ndovu haiwezi vumilia kichapo kutoka kwa watu wengi (Swahili).

59. Meikooyu olelipong (Maasai)

You cannot advise a man who is after a woman.

Hauwezi shauri mwanaume anayefuata mwanamke (Swahili).

60. Meishaa elukunya nabo engeno (Maasai)

One head cannot contain all knowledge.

Kichwa moja hakiwezi kuwa na maarifa/ujuzi wote (Swahili).

61. Meitang'e oltung'ani olkikuei leme olenye (Maasai)

A person does not itch from a thorn that is not his.

Mtu hawezi sikia uchungu kutoka kwa mwimba usio wake (Swahili).

62. Meiting enkoitoi musana (Maasai)

The daily path never ends.

Njia ya kila siku haina mwisho (Swahili).

63. Meituku olkine ng'iro (Maasai)

It cannot be cleansed with a brown he-goat.

Haiwezi safishwa na mbuzi ya rangi ya kahawia (Swahili).

64. Meituraa oloitiko isirat (Maasai)

The zebra cannot do away with its stripes.

Hakuna jambo punda milia inawezafanya dio isiwe na milia zake(Swahili).

65. Meji olayioni kaji itopokie (Maasai)

A boy is not asked where he recovered.

Kijana wa kiume hawezi ulizwa mahali aliponea (Swahili).

66. Mekintalang' olwuasa enabelibel (Maasai)

The boaster will not cross the valley.

Anayelinga hapiti mabonde (Swahili).

67. Melam iyekenyi enetoikitio (Maasai)

Baboons do not go far from the place of their birth.

Nyani hawaendi mbali na mahali walipozaliwa (Swahili).

68. Memurut emurt endukuya (Maasai)

The neck does not go beyond the head.

Shingo haipiti kichwa (Swahili).

69. Memut elukunya nabo eng'eno (Maasai)

One head cannot consume all knowledge.

Kichwa kimoja haiwezi tumia maarifa yote (Swahili).

70. Menang' silig kewan (Maasai)

Facing backwards does not perform itself.

Kuangalia nyuma haiwezekani kivyake (Swahili).

71. Menya engileleng'I emala (Maasai)

A particle of goat dung cannot be eaten by a large gourd.

Chembechembe ya mafi ya mbuzi haiwezi kuliwa na tango kubwa (Swahili).

72. Menya enkoshoke enyamu (Maasai)

The stomach cannot steal and if it did, it would show.

Tumbo haiimbi na ikiimba, itaonyesha (Swahili).

73. Mme taa tumoto nagol barata (Maasai)

It is not acquisition that is difficult, it is retention.

Si kupata ambayo ni shinda, shinda ni kuweka ulichopata (Swahili).

74. Meoki oinoti inkipa otisinyunye ake otii (Maasai)

The birth fluid of one's child is not drunk.

Watu hawakunywi maji maji ya uzazi(Swahili).

75. Meoshoio esipata elekunya (Maasai)

Man is always beaten by his own tricks.

Mtu hushindwa na hadaa zake/kundanganya kwake (Swahili).

76. Mepong' empito emeima oltidu (Maasai)

An piece of knowledge is followed by another.

Ujuzi hufuata mwingine (Swahili).

77. Mepuo Otumi tenkop enye (Maasai)

Men cannot move out of their inherited land.

Watu hawawezi kutoka kwa ardhi wario ridhi(Swahili).

78. Meraakinoo enkare oloipangi (Maasai)

You cannot force water up a hill.

Hauwezi fanya maji ipande mlima (Swahili).

79. Merumayu ne nkai tentakule (Maasai)

That which is Godly cannot be pushed away with the fore arm.

Mambo ya Mungu haiwezi kuvurutwa kwa mkono (Swahili).

80. Meyek olenkaina ilala lenyena (Maasai)

The elephant is never tired of its tusks.

Ndovu haiwezi chokechwa na pembe zake (Swahili).

81. Miarie orngatuny engudi (Maasai)

Don't fight a lion with a stick.

Usichape simba kwa kijiti (Swahili).

82. Mikiar eitukiliki (Maasai)

You will not be beaten when you think before acting.

Hauwezi kuchapwa ukifikilia kabla ya kufanya jambo (Swahili).

83. Milo agilaa inket eigisito inmuran (Maasai)

Do not go gathering fruit when a dance is taking place.

Usiende kutafuta matunda wakati uimbaji unaendelea (Swahili).

84. Milo ongata miata olikitaiu entubuloi (Maasai)

Do not go to the plains without somebody to take the dust out of your eye.

Usiende kwa uwanja bila mtu wa kukutoa vumbi kwa macho yako (Swahili).

85. Mincho enkoshoke kintaa osunji (Maasai)

Do not allow the belly to make you useless.

Usikubali tumbo ikufanye mtu bure (Swahili).

86. Minkar orpashe lolokai ompaka niduaki kewan (Maasai)

Do not repair another man's fence until you have seen your own.

Usitengeneze ukuta wa mtu mwingine hadi umeona ukuta wako (Swahili).

87. Mintobir ingilani enkerai meino (Maasai)

Don't make a cloth for carrying a child in before the child is born.

Usitengeneze kitambaa ya kubeba mtoto kabla hajazaliwa(Swahili).

88. Mior enkaji elikai meoro enino (Maasai)

Do not sweep someone else's home while yours is dirty.

Usisafishe nyumba ya mwenzio ilhali yako iko na uchafu(Swahili).

89. Mitui olchata onye enkima itiinaake (Maasai)

You are not like firewood which is burnt, you are always there.

Wewe sio kama kuni iliyochomeka, uko pale pale kila wakati(Swahili).

90. Mitum errap etii enkuoo ntare (Maasai)

You cannot obtain an arm band while the ram is with the flock.

Hauwezi pata bendi ya mkono ilhali kondoo wako kati ya mifugo wengine (Swahili).

91. Mitum erap metii enkuoointare (Maasai)

A bargain cannot be held in the palm of the hand.

Maafikiano hayawezi shikiliwa kwa panja la mkono (Swahili).

92. Mitum kinyil oloroki (Maasai)

You do not obtain it with greasy knees

Huwezi kupata kitu ukiwa na magoti yenye girisi/mafuta(Swahili).

93. Miutaki olmang'atinta masaa (Maasai)

Do not show the hawk how to fly.

Usionyeshe mwewe jinsi itapaa kwa hewa (Swahili).

N

94. Naloikino imotiok enkima (Maasai)

Pots alternate on a jiko

Nyungu hubadirishana na jiko (Swahili).

95. Noosa taakeyie emolok omikitaduariki (Maasai)

Eat a sweet until it becomes bitter.

Kula peremende hadi iwe kali (Swahili).

O

96. Ore enchipai na endaa (Maasai)

Happiness is as good as food.

Furaha ni nzuri kama chakula (Swahili).

97. Ore enemeshula inkiku nemeshula enkiguana (Maasai)

The village which is not discussed is not built.

Mtaa usio zungumziwa hauwezi kujengwa (Swahili).

98. Ore lukera naa olaba oibor (Maasai)

The children are the bright moon.

Watoto ni mwezi ulio angaza (Swahili).

99. Ore olemeidion enikilanya naa kejo kemwoi (Maasai)

He who is unable to dance says that the yard is stony.

Asiyeweza kudansi husema mahali wa densi ina mawe (Swahili).

100. Ore pee kilotu oboitare olomoni, nemirikino akei ajo, kegoro tinirrag teimbata masaa enyenak (Maasai)

If a stranger comes to stay with you, do not forget when you lay aside his weapons that he is hungry.

Wakati mgeni amekuja kukutemebelea, usisahau baada ya kuweka vifaa vyake vya vita chini ati ana njaa (Swahili).

- 101. Ore sininye esidai oneyado olgos nepi inkonyek, nemedol entaisere (Maasai)**
Even the ostrich, with its long neck and sharp eyes, cannot see what will happen in the future.
Mbuni hata akiwa na shingo yake ndefu na macho mazuri saidi hawezi ona vile kesho kutakuwa (Swahili).

S

- 102. Shorelai kishoriki enapiak (Maasai)**
My friend, you bring me evil.
Rafiki wangu huniletea shari(Swahili).

- 103. Sidai enkiteng anaa olopeny (Maasai)**
A cow is as good as a man.
Ngombe ni nzuri tu kama mtu (Swahili).

T

- 104. Turia oldie lenkaputi (Maasai)**
Keep away from a dog that gave you a wife.
Usikarimbie “mbwa” aliyekupatia mke (Swahili).

U

- 105. Usuja imbaa anaaainkolongi (Maasai)**
Events follow one another like days.
Matukio hufuatana kama siku (Swahili).