

Citation: Korobe, B. (2021). Dynamics of Turkana Socio-Political Organization and Implications on Internal and External Relations: an analysis of the Moiety & Age-set System. *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies*. 5(10), 20 – 43.

Dynamics of Turkana Socio-Political Organization and Implications on Internal and External Relations: an analysis of the Moiety & Age-set System

By

Boniface Korobe

Culture, Heritage & Arts Advisor to the Governor – Turkana County, Kenya
bonirobe@yahoo.com

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to examine the Dynamics of Turkana Socio-Political Organization and Implications on Internal and External Relations focusing on the analysis of the Moiety & Age-set System. The contention of this article is that age organization has been the subject of anthropological enquiry for many years, and yet, there has been a scholarly misunderstanding among anthropologists and sociologists regarding the basic concepts of age-groups, age-grades, graded age-group and generation-set systems. The greatest area of theoretical disarray is in the study of age-set and generation-set systems; the fact that there is no clear-cut distinction between them proliferates the probability that they are misconstrued. This article argues that, the Turkana generation-sets and age-sets are complementary and inseparable socio-political and socio-economic systems *sui generis* that organize people's lives, and prescribes ritualized norms of behavior for socio-political and socio-economic cooperation. The reference point is the theoretical models concerned with socio-cultural evolution, kinship, and social structures, and my own understanding, both as an insider and ethnologist, of the Turkana culture and traditions. The findings suggest that, the Turkana generation-set & age-set organisation is built around alternating generation moieties, distributing all people of the society into two horizontal categories, namely: 'Parents' and 'Children', and non-overlapping age-sets cutting across moieties. The findings further indicate that, as the initial kinship group of the Turkana society increased in size, moieties begot clans, and as clan members multiplied and dispersed to disconnected geographical locations for survival, it became difficult for kin groups to congregate their members for concerted group action. As such, age-sets evolved, not as an alternative to, but rather provide an extra integration to that of moieties and fuse together the social & ritual function of moieties with the practical aim of age-sets, which is to unify and organize unrelated members of kin-groups in disconnected parts of the land for socioeconomic survival.

Key words: Turkana, Kenya, Moieties, generation-set, genealogical, kinship, age-set, Patrilineal

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Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The discussion on whether the Turkana social organization is based on generation-set, age-set system, or a blend of generation and age sets, has continued to be a subject of much debate in the scholarly literature about the Turkana dual organization. The confusion deepens when the same is discussed in the context of Ateker generation-set system ignoring groups' dynamics and the direction each group has taken over the years in response to emerging challenges. The view e.g. by Muller-Dempf that the principal purpose of generation and age sets among the Ateker groups is to separate rivalling groups of society and provide a set of rules of behavior to organize and settle conflicts within society, leaves out one of the key roles of age-sets, which is to organize and unify unrelated members of society in disconnected geographical locations whenever group action is needed for socioeconomic survival. Isn't it therefore time to start viewing the Turkana generation-set and age-set [dual organisation] system not only in terms of generation and age ranking of individuals for socio-political purposes, but view it also in terms of its socio-economic significance?

Conceptual Clarifications and Literature Review

Many ethnic groups across the world are divided into two equal parts referred to as moieties. In moiety (dual organization) system, one part is like the other qualitatively, structurally and functionally. Thus, one moiety is like its counterpart, they are inseparable, meaning one cannot exist without its counterpart. They are coequal parts of a tribal whole. Moieties, can be *Kinship-based* or *Non-kinship*. A moiety based upon kinship is similar to a *clan* except that the number of clans composing a tribe may vary, whereas moieties are constantly two, no more, no less. In societies where kinship-based moieties are exogamous and unilateral, husband and wife may not belong to the same moiety, and their children have to belong to the moiety of one parent only. If they belong to the moiety of the mother, the moieties are termed as matrilineal; if to the group of the father, they are termed as patrilineal.

Moieties are of two categories: generational and non-generational moieties. Non-generational moieties divide the society vertically into two categories by grouping lines of people following descent and filiation. The working principle of 'non-generation moieties' is that belonging to a moiety is inherited from generation to generation via descent; thus, marrying someone of the same moiety as oneself is considered incestuous. On their part, 'generational moieties' divide the society into two horizontal categories by uniting families and groups of people who are at the same genealogical level. The operating principle here is that a person has to find a spouse within his or her own generational moiety since one cannot marry a person who is classified as one's mother, father, aunt, uncle, son or daughter. However, in all cases, whether the moieties are generational or not, exogamous or not, unilineal or not, or aligned on the basis of season, geographic position, name bestowal, or other criteria, they serve to divide society into two complementary groups that have reciprocal duties and rights, competition, and cooperation.

Scholars of social evolution agree that segmentation of human society into moieties, lineages or clans is a means of making life easier in the struggle for survival (Cf. White,

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1959). Like clans, moieties increase the size of the cooperative group (the entire tribe) on the one hand, and promote solidarity and unity on the other hand. It accomplishes this by extending the radius of kinship organization by supplementing known genealogical reckoning with assumed genealogical relations (ibid., 1959). Any member of my moiety becomes my sibling, a member of my parent's moiety becomes my parent because of assumed genealogical connection. Instead of a tribe achieving integration on the basis of lineages or clans, it now achieves it on the basis of only two moieties.

Before all else, it is important to make a clear-cut distinction between an age-set, a generation-set, an age-grade, and a graded age-group based systems with examples illustrating how each of them works. An age-set is a formalized grouping of individuals of similar social age, formed at a certain point in the life cycle, members of which make subsequent transitions between strata as a group, and retain group identity throughout the bulk of their life course (Kertzer, 1977). Ember and Ember (1977) define it in terms of functions as, "pan-tribal groupings in which age, and not kinship, is the basis for political organization". Hoebel (1972) defines both age grade and age-set as, meaning "an organized association that includes all members of a tribe who cooperate for specific purposes". Stewart gave the following rules characterizing age-sets: the ordering, two group, no-overlapping, the enrolment, no resigning, no rejoining, single membership, and dissolution characteristics. This should not be confused with age-grade, which refer to formalized age strata, each involving a distinctive array of social roles; or a generation-set which refers to a formalized grouping of individuals based on genealogical age, that is, one's membership is determined by the generation-set membership of one's ancestors (typically one's father), (ibid, 1977).

Anthropologists generally define 'age-set' as, a social category or corporate social group, consisting of people of similar age, who have a common identity, maintain close ties over a prolonged period, and together pass through a series of age-related statuses. This is in contrast to graded age-group systems, in which individuals are grouped into cohorts of approximately the same age and a cohort proceeds through the grades in sequence. Age-sets in societies where they are found, are formed by the periodic grouping together of young people usually men into a corporate unit with a name and a collective identity. As its members grow old, the age-set stays together and increases in seniority as older age-sets die off and new ones are formed beneath it.

Age-sets and the systems within which they exist can be regarded as either cyclical or progressive. In a cyclical system, there is a finite number of sets and each recurs over the course of a few generations, with new membership. In progressive systems, an age-set appears once, and when its members have died, it ceases to exist. This is typical of the Turkana age-set system.

Two questions have kept on begging answers: whether generation-set systems are to be seen as varieties of kinship groupings or whether varieties of age-set systems. Concerning these questions, Stewart sees generation-set systems as "distorted age-set systems", although he recognizes that most anthropologists have seen them as "an intermediate form between age-groups and descent groups".

Turkana Generation Moieties: Origin, Structure and General Principles

Turkana male society is patrilocally segmented into two equal moieties, namely: *Ngimoru* (mountains) and *Ngirisae* (leopards). The terms *Erisait*, *pl. Ngirisae* and *Emorut*, *pl. Ngimoru* denote both the moieties and men of those moieties. Women remain in their fathers moieties until marriage when they take up the moieties of their husbands. *Ngirisae* (fathers) beget

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Ngimoru (sons), in the next period *Ngimoru* (sons) become *Ngimoru* (fathers) and beget *Ngirisae* (sons), who again in the next period become *Ngirisae* (fathers) and beget *Ngimoru* (sons), and the cycle recurs.

In Turkana, there are no *filius nullius* or *filius populi* children, children born out of illegal relationships by unmarried daughters of a man are integrated as his own; although they are genealogically a generation below his children, they nonetheless join their own mothers and uncles as siblings and are fixed in the family's structure as core members of the family. As such, a boy's placement depends on that of his legal father (mother's father); the son of an unmarried mother joins the moiety, which his mother's father (his pater) does not belong. If the unmarried mother's father belongs to *Ngimoru*, her son becomes an *Erisait*, pl. *Ngirisae*. If the woman marries later, the placement of her subsequent sons depends on the moiety of her husband (their father). There are always two moieties in formal existence at any time: The *Ngirisae* and *Ngimoru*, as a set, they simultaneously produce the next generation-set of *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae*.

A man, his brothers, and paternal male cousins, all their wives, all the unmarried daughters & their non-marital daughters, non-marital daughters of all these belong to one moiety – the father's moiety. A man's sons, his brothers' and paternal cousins' sons, and all the non-marital grandnephews and great-grandnephews if any, belong to the moiety immediately following his own – the son's moiety. His married daughters, his brothers' and cousins' married daughters join the moieties of their husbands. Principally, adjacent generations relate as fathers to sons, and the alternate ones relate as grandfathers to grandsons. Turkana generational patrimoieties are characterized by the following three universal cardinal rules:

1. Parents [referring to fathers] and children [referring to sons] will never be in the same moiety.
2. There are only two moieties in formal existence in the society namely: *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae*.
3. All the people of Turkana society have to be in one of these moieties – *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae*

As Turkana society is divided into two halves only – the *Ngirisae* and *Ngimoru*, it means, if *Ngimoru* are the fathers, their sons will be *Ngirisae*. The question then will be, where do we place the children of *Ngirisae* (grandchildren of *Ngimoru*) and their children's children (great grandchildren of *Ngimoru*)? Take note that, we cannot subdivide the society again as this will go against rule number two, and we cannot include them in *Ngirisae* division as this will go against rule one. The only solution to this without breaking the three cardinal rules is to include the children of *Ngirisae* in the *Ngimoru* division and the children of *Ngimoru* in the *Ngirisae* division. Hence the children of *Ngirisae* are *Ngimoru* and the children of *Ngimoru* are *Ngirisae*. See the figure 1 below.

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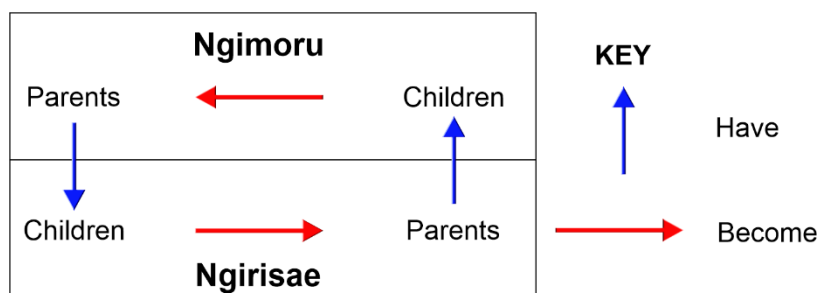


Figure 1: Shows the Turkana generational moieties: parents and children cycle

Source: Korobe, 2021

In figure 1 above, every man can be a father and son at the same time; if a man is of *Ngimoru* moiety, as son, his father belongs to *Ngirisae* moiety; as father, his son will belong to *Ngirisae* moiety; and his grandson will belong to *Ngimoru*. To sum it up, a man is always in the same moiety as his grandparents and grandsons while his parents, sons, great grandsons and great-grandparents will be in the opposite moiety.

One may ask, why categorize the entire tribe into two distinct group of relatives – ‘fathers’ and ‘sons’. The reason for this can be attributed to the Turkana classification system of relationships. According to Radcliffe-Brown (1871), grouping kin terminologically effectively promotes solidarity among the members of the group and enjoins the members to mutual support, loyalty and affection in the struggle for the group’s survival. If the purpose of grouping kin terminologically, is to relate persons to one another, organize them into a group or aggregation, and to direct, regulate and control their behavior toward one another, then, the Turkana, through their kinship classificatory system, achieved this by relating an individual to all the people through only two distinct groups of relatives ‘fathers’ and ‘children’ – the *Ngirisae* and *Ngimoru*, to reach the boundaries of the entire tribe. In this way, every individual will become related, in a way that is significant in the social life to every other individual in society. For example, it is not uncommon to find a Turkana who is asking for a favor from another to initiate the request by saying, ‘*ani kirai emorut, irai lokookang, ani boca kirai erisait, irai ekakile/akanaket or ekakibaket*’ - [If you are an *emorut*, you are my son, and if an *erisait*, my husband/my generation group]. As a relative, even though one not based on genealogical reckoning but assumed kinship reckoning, the person begged is compelled to concede the request and offer the support requested as though he is the son or husband, to the beggar.

The Turkana have six designated kinship terms: *Apa* – Father & father’s brother, *Ito* – mother, *Amae* – Uncle (mother’s brother), *Eya* – Aunt (mother’s and father’s sister), *Apa* – grandfather (father’s and mother’s father), and *Ataa* – grandmother (father’s and mother’s mother). All the other kinship terms are derived from these six. Take note that, the term brother embraces more than one kind of relationships in the ego’s own generation and the term father embraces more than one kind of relationship in the ego’s father’s generation. Ego’s father, his father’s brothers, his father’s parallel cousins are designated by father’s and their children are designated by sibling term; as such, all males in any given generation are considered as siblings. Refer to figure 2 below.

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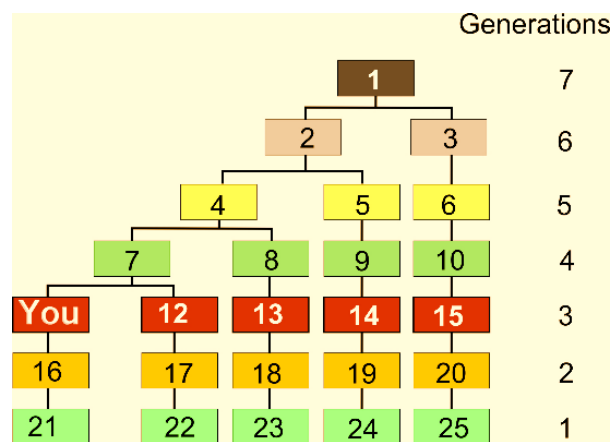


Figure 2: Shows Turkana Kinship and descent tree
Source: Korobe, 2021

In figure 2 above, my great great-grandfather (1), my great-grandfather (2) and his brother (3), my grandfather (4), his brother (5) and first cousin (6) are grouped as grandfathers *Apa*, *pl. Ta-apa*; my father (7), his brother (8), his first cousin (9), and second cousin (10) are all my father's *Apa*, *pl. Ta-apa*; their sons (12), (13), (14) and (15) are all my brothers *Lokaato*, *pl. Ta-Lokaato* or *Lokaapa*, *pl. Ta-lokaapa*; my son (16) and all the sons of my brothers (17, 18, 19, and 20) are my sons – *lokoku*, *pl. Ta-lokoku*; and my grandson (21), and all the grandsons (22, 23, 24, 25, and 26) are my grandsons – *Itatait* or *Etatait pl. Ngitatae*. My father will call his male parallel cousins 'brothers' – *Lokaato*, *pl. Ta-lakaato* or *Lokaapa*, *pl. Ta-Lokaapa* which means that they are also my 'fathers' and their sons are all my 'brothers'. My father's parallel cousins extend indefinitely from his own line of descent in degrees that we can designate with numbers and all these male cousins are my 'fathers' and their sons my 'brothers'. Outside my own family, all men in my parents' generation will be my 'fathers' (my father's brothers). Persons on my own generation level will be my 'siblings' (my parallel cousins). In principle, it means, I have two sets of relatives cutting across my family, lineage, clan and tribe, a group of 'fathers' and a group of 'siblings' extending outward *ad infinitum* on my patrilineal line.

Through terminological grouping of relatives, we have seen how the Turkana classification system of relationships has effectively organized all individuals in the tribe into a network of two distinct patrilineal groups of relatives – 'fathers' and 'Sons'. This pair of distinct groups, existing patrilineally, in a 'Father – Son relationship' is in effect the Turkana Moieties – *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae* or what P.H. Gulliver calls Alternations. One may wonder why the Turkana would group all the people of society into a network of a discrete set of relatives. The purpose is to extend the radius of kinship group by supplementing known genealogical (family, lineage and clan) reckoning with assumed genealogical relations; such that, any member of my moiety becomes my relative because of assumed genealogical ties. The overt behavior and attitudes of persons designated by kinship terms toward one another and in terms of the relationships designated by these terms constitutes the Kinship system (Cf. White, A. L. 1959).

Having established that Turkana generational patrimoieties are as old as the terminological grouping of kinship relationships and initially kinship-based, two questions

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remain open: (1) how were they distinguished or known before they came to be designated by *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae* terms; and (2) how did they lose the exogamous characteristic. Moieties may or may not be designated by name (While, 1959). This is to say, moieties not designated by ‘absolute’ names were known to people themselves by ‘relative’ and distinct names. In societies with generational moieties which have no designated or absolute names, a man’s moiety is known by ‘relative’ name determined by the generation of his father, if the father is in generation ‘A’ that is, father’s generation, automatically the man belongs to the adjacent generation of sons’, which is ‘B’. So, in the olden days, a Turkana man was said to belong to one of the two adjacent generations of ‘*grandfathers and fathers*’, ‘*fathers and sons*’, or ‘*sons and grandsons*’, and in addition to this, he would be known by the distinctive name a generation receives on inauguration – *Asapan*. When a generation of sons is born and comes of age, it usually develops a unique peer personality, which in many cases is used to distinguish it from other generations.

In the past, when a generation of sons is inaugurated at *Asapan* ceremony, it receives a distinct name. More often than not, such a name is coined from a shared unique social and biographical experience at the time its members come of age, and lives with it until all its members die off. This is to say, although the terms *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae* designated for moieties came into place in mid eighteenth century, from the earlier discussion on origin of moieties, it can be concluded that, Turkana moieties existed and were known to the people themselves by both the classificatory terms (relative names) and distinct names. Secondly, after incorporation of non-overlapping birth cohorts (age-sets) into the generation-sets, two names viz *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae* were permanently given two adjacent generations. From then to date, adjacent generations begun to take their names alternately from a set of two names – *Ngirisae* and *Ngimoru* which constitute the ‘Turkana alternating generation moiety system’. On *Asapan*, newly formed birth cohorts (age-sets) receive distinct names within their respective moieties.

As to the second question regarding how the Turkana moieties lost their exogamous characteristic despite them originally having been kinship based, there are two ways of looking at it. Firstly, moieties may originate as kinship groups, acquire ritual functions, beget clans, and eventually lose their exogamous character (Cf. White, 1959) as regulations of marriage are taken over by clans. Secondly, Turkana moieties are ‘generational moieties’, as such, a man is prohibited from selecting a wife from his parents’ generation, but permitted to marry from his own generation. However, not everybody in a man’s generation is eligible for marriage; a man has to look for someone who is not closely related or directly linked to him genealogically. Take note that, as Turkana society continued to increase in size genealogical kinship distance between individuals widened to the extent that people lost kinship links and become ignorant of how they are related to each other outside their close circle of relatives viz families, lineages and clans. As such, clan exogamy regulations kicked in to prohibit marriage between people considered closely related thus allowing marriage outside this circle regardless of their moiety membership.

Given that the period during which children are born and grow up, and begin to have children of their own is twenty [20] to thirty [30] years, a new generation emerges after every [20 – 30] years, [20] being the age at which Turkana girls get married and produce a new generation. Men on their part, marry after initiation, on average at the age of thirty [30], meaning, they are likely to produce children after [30]. In effect, a set of consecutive ‘generation moieties’ produce the next set after every [30] years. The global age interval between adjacent generations is about [30] years. In this article, the generation age interval

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between two adjacent generations is based on [30] years, which on average, is taken to be the age a Turkana man is able or is legitimately allowed to marry and procreate children of his own.

Therefore, within a lifetime of a generation of brothers, say a hundred [100] years or so, a generation of grandfathers of about [100] years, fathers of about [70] years, sons of about [40] years and or grandsons of [10] years old, may coexist. At the beginning of the next period, the grandfathers die off, the fathers themselves become grandfathers, the sons become fathers, grandsons become sons and a new generation of grandsons is born. Thus, there are atleast; (1) four "overlapping" generations of people living at any one time, and (2) two successive generations are always in a 'father - son' relation and the alternate ones relating as grandfathers to grandsons.

Due to the generations overlap, grandfathers and fathers may both produce children at the same time, as may fathers and sons. Consequently, there may be fathers and sons of equal age or even sons who are older than fathers, and/ or sons of older fathers may be of equal age or even older than the youngest fathers (Cf. Gulliver, 1958; Muller-Dempff, 1991, 2017). In instances where a generation's lifespan is lengthened by other sociological factors, one generation may overlap a few more generations. For purposes of this article, I will explore four factors that lengthen Turkana generations: (1) time difference between two consecutive generations, that is the age difference between the father and son, or age at which a man marries and begins to have children; (2) genealogical placement of children born out of wedlock – (non-marital children); (3) genealogical and generational placement of children born by widows and levirate unions, and (4) polygyny.

Generation age difference: Firstly, when a man 'A' for instance marries at the age of 25 years, he is likely to have a child (B) the same year. By the time 'A' is fifty [50], 'B' would have turned twenty five [25], meaning both man 'A' and man 'B' are likely to have children 'B2 & C' at the same time, where 'B2' is the son of man 'A' (actually the brother of 'B'), and 'C' is the son of man 'B' (actually a grandson of man 'A'). At the time 'A' is seventy five [75], man 'B' is fifty [50], and man 'B2' and man 'C' are twenty five [25], meaning, men 'A', 'B', 'B2' and 'C' are likely to have children 'B3', 'BC', 'B2C', and 'D' at the same time, where 'B3' is the son of man 'A' (actually the little brother of man 'B' and man 'B2'), man 'BC' is the son of man 'B' (grandson of man 'A'), man 'B2C' (a grandson of man 'A') is the son of man 'B2' and man 'D' (grandson of 'B', 'B2', 'B3') is the son of man 'C'. See figure 3 below.

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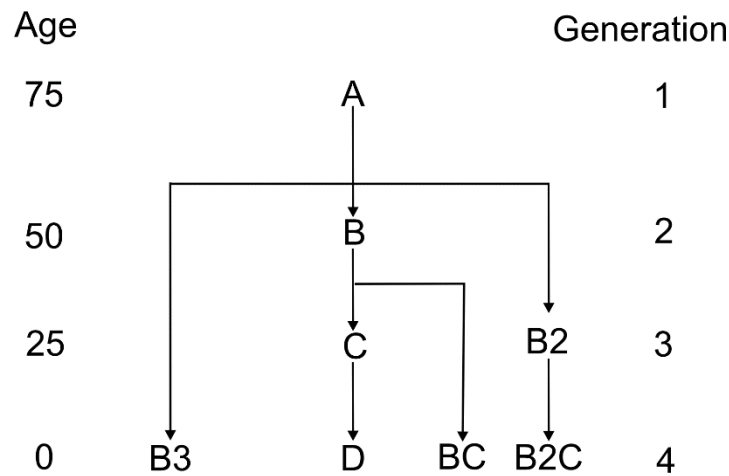


Figure 3: Shows how the Turkana generations overlap
Source: Korobe, 2021

In figure 3, man 'C', the grandson of man 'A' is of equal age with 'B2' his father's younger brother, and older than 'B3', his father's youngest brother; man 'D', the great grandson of 'A', the grandson of man 'B' is of the same age as (a) 'B3' his grandfather's youngest brother, (b) 'BC' his father's brother, (c) 'B2C' his grandfather's younger brother's son.

The placement of children born by widows and levirate unions extends Turkana generations. The Turkana entertain a custom of wife inheritance by the deceased's brothers, elder sons or man from the patrilineage. When for instance a young man of thirty [30] years inherits his father's youngest wife aged twenty five [25] years, he has up to twenty five [25] more years to produce his own brothers with the widow, (the children produced by the 'heir' are regarded as his father's so he produces his own brothers). This means that, by the time he is 55 years, he is likely to produce his last born with the widow (actually his last-born brother). If the last born, (his brother) lives for 100 years, it means, the lifespan of his generation is lengthened by 100 years making it (55+100) 155 years. Looking at it differently, if the guy's eldest brother was born 30 years earlier than him (heir), it means, the generation of brothers begun 30 years earlier, therefore (30+55+100) extends the lifespan of their generation to hundred eighty five [185] years. Considering the generation age interval, it means that, this generation spanning [185] years, is likely to overlap upto six succeeding generations, that is $(185/30 - 185/25)$.

The placement of children born out of wedlock also extends the lifespan of a generation in a significant way. This happens when for instance, at fifty [50], the last-born girl say, thirty [30] years younger than her elder brother, gives birth to a son out of wedlock. This means that, at the time she gives birth, her elder brother would have turned [80] years old. The custom places non-marital children in the same generation as their mothers and uncles as siblings. Assuming the non-marital child was the last-born in that generation and lived for [80] years, on death, he would have extended his mother's and uncle's generation by another [80] years, bringing the lifespan of their generation to hundred sixty [160] years. If the non-marital child were a girl, she would be treated as her mother's sibling, if both the child and child's mother are non-marital, they will be placed in the child's mother's (grandmother's)

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generation as siblings. In this case, when she (non-marital child) gives birth to a non-marital son, he (son) will be treated as though he is (mother's and grandmother's) brother, as such, he will be placed in the same generation as his uncle (actually his granduncle). If the grandchild lives for say 80 years, the generation's lifespan calculation will be as follows: (the age difference between the siblings i.e. brother and sister, which is thirty [30] years, plus the age at which the sister gives birth to the non-marital daughter, [50] years, plus the age at which the non-marital daughter gives birth to non-marital son [50], plus the age of non-marital son [80] years). This brings the lifespan of the generation to two hundred ten [210] years.

Polygyny: When a man marries he begins to produce the next generation of sons. If he marries one wife, the woman has upto [30] years to bear children, meaning if she had boys only, the age difference between the first-born son and the last-born son will be around [30] years. If the last-born son lived for [90] years, it means, the generation of brothers lived for about [120] years. However, if the last-born son had another group of brothers from a junior matricentric unit – *Ekal* (wife-mother, her dependent children and non-marital children of unmarried daughters), whose last-born is [30] years younger than him (last-born of the senior matricentric unit), assuming the last-born from the junior matricentric unit lived for [90] years, it means, his generation of brothers and step brothers would have been lengthened by another [30] years bringing their generation length to about [150] years. In summary, it can be generalized as follows:

- a) That, at any one given time (in example 1 above), a generation of grandfathers coexists with a generation of fathers, generation of sons and generation of grandsons;
- b) That, at any one given time, where a generation of brothers is prolonged by placement of non-marital children born by sisters, children born to widows, and levirate unions, a generation of grandfathers may coexist with a generation of fathers, generation of sons, generation of grandsons, generation of great grandsons and or a generation of great great-grandsons;
- c) That, every male person is son, he may also be a father, grandfather, a grandson, great grandson or great great-grandson;
- d) That, if there is a fixed group of men who can, as a group, be called 'the grandfathers', then all their sons are 'the fathers' and all the sons of the 'fathers' are the 'sons', and all the sons of the 'sons' are the 'grandsons' and the sons of the 'grandsons' are the 'great great-grandsons' etc.
- e) That, generation-sets are groups of brothers (including non-marital nephew, grandnephews etc.), and each generation-set produces the next one, consecutive generation-sets being always in a 'father-son' relationship, the alternate ones being in a grandfather to grandson relationship;
- f) That, generation age difference is twenty five to thirty [25 – 30] years.

Turkana Moieties: Social and Ritual functions

The Turkana moieties are characterized by moiety reciprocity in connection to food sharing, exchange of reciprocal services in feasts, initiations and rituals. Moieties prescribe the rules for food (meat) sharing and norms regulating conduct of business during meat feasts and social functions. When an animal is slaughtered at home the carcass is shared according to kinship relationships – (family size & structure) and extrafamilial relationships with women of the neighborhood. When beneficiary households receive their portions, they redistribute portions designated for neighbors and cook the ones reserved for men (including the men of

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the neighborhood) and serve them according to their moieties. Meat distribution differs when a small animal is slaughtered at home or eaten at the tree of men.

When an animal is slaughtered at the homestead, the men drawn from the youngest generations *esorokit*, *pl. ngisorok* (youngsters) cut up the carcass into the following whole parts – *Ekinier*, *pl. Nginerin*: (1) fore legs – *Akwaat*, *pl. Ngakwaas*, hind legs – *Amuro*, *pl. Ngamuroi*; (2) the thorax, neck and head – *Ngicocoku/emosiring or emorising*; (3) Sternum/breastbone and belly meat – *Atorobu*; (4) the loins and the surrounding meat – *Egur*; (5) the Sacrum/Coccyx – *Acir*; (6) Pelvis – *Ekalokot*, *pl. Ngikalokoi*; (7) Entrails – *Ngiboro a akook*. After cutting up the carcass into *nginerin*, it is distributed to matricentric units and beneficiaries as hereunder:

- a) The Left hind leg – *Amuro nakitalio*: part of it, that is, *Akolokiding* – (*femur*) remains at the senior or 1st matricentric unit, but may be split into two, and half is given to the mother of the household head should she be still alive, the other portion is consumed by the household members or redistributed as need may arise. The lower part of the leg, that is, *Ekipisit* – (*tibia*) is roasted and served to men of *Ngirisae* moiety. This piece of meat is traditionally accompanied by lower ribs – *ngamaran or ngisiepion*
- b) The right hind leg – *Amuro na a lo teten* is cut up into smaller pieces from the joints and distributed to the women of the neighborhood.
- c) Sternum or breastbone and the belly meat – (*Atorobu*): this is cut up into several pieces, the belly meat – *Ngakwalikwalia* and lower part of the sternum – *Aukit* remain in the *ekol*; the upper part of the sternum – *Nabokolem* and the (thoracic bones) cut from the loins – *Ngamejekwa* goes to *Ngisali (Ngimoru)* men
- d) Loins and the surrounding meat – (*Egur*) is cooked for the men of *Ngirisae* moiety.
- e) Sacrum/Coccyx – (*Acir*) is cooked and served to the *Ngirisae*
- f) Pelvis – *Ekalokot*, *pl. Ngikalokoi* they can be cut into two or four pieces and shared to a man's relatives; the 3rd wife, and 4th or the junior wife (*ateran*) each receives a hipbone/half pelvis.
- g) Liver – *emany* is cut into several pieces and shared among the matricentric units, part of it is cooked and served to both the *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae*
- h) Head, neck and thorax – *Ngicocoku/emosiring or emorising* is shared to the 2nd matricentric unit – *ekal lokesidean/lo a ngiarei* from where it is subdivided into smaller portions. The neck – *eluute* can be cut along the neck bones into smaller pieces and gifted to women of the neighborhoods. The head is split into head and jaws, women consume the skull meat, and the youngsters eat the jaw-meat. The tongue is cooked for the head of the family and some of his men to be consumed later at home not the tree of men.
- i) One foreleg – *Akwaat* is given to the married sisters of the head of the family (*awi*).
- j) One foreleg is cut up at the 2nd matricentric unit, the upper part - *akolokiding* is split into two, cooked and served to the men of *Ngimoru* moiety. The lower part, *ekipisit* is roasted and served alongside the lower ribs – *ngamaran* to the men of *Ngimoru* moiety. The scapular (shoulder blade) – *eseget* is split into two and utilized at the matricentric unit by household members, part of it may be shared to neighbors or relatives in need of meat.
- k) The four stomachs – *aboi*, *pl. Ngabooi* namely: Rumen – *aboi*, Omasum – *apinika*, Reticulum – *amekienyi*, and Abomasum – *atenus* are cut into several pieces and

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shared among the matricentric units, some pieces may be gifted to the women of the neighborhoods.

- 1) Intestines – *Ngamaliteny* are cut and cooked for the youngsters

Goat's carcass, is distributed as follows: (1) 1st matricentric unit: *ngikalokoi*, *atorobu*, *egur*; (2) 2nd matricentric unit: *emosiring/emorising*, *Akwaat*, *akou*; (3) All children share: *ngamaliteny*, *etau*, *atorobu*; (4) *Akidut ngikudunyet* (gifting neighbors): *amuro*; (5) *Ateran: ekalokot*; (6) *Apese* (daughter) of the matricentric, is given *akwaat*, *ngamaran*; however, if the family head's sister is present, she gets *akwaat* and the lower ribs, the daughters eat *atenus* only; (7) *Akou*, *akwaat na aloteten*, *esiep* go to men regardless of their moieties; (8) *elute*, *acir*, *amekenyi* go to the grandmother.

Meat distribution at the tree of men

When men come together for meat feasting *Ngimoru* sit on the left side of the *Akiriket* – (open circle in an open space) and *Ngirisae* on the right side. When a man of *Ngimoru* moiety kills an animal for men, the most senior man of *Ngimoru* cuts the *Apol* – (side of loins and the Kidneys), he gives half of it to the senior most man of *Ngirisae* to eat with his coevals and shares the remaining among his equals. The most senior man of *Ngirisae* cuts the *Elamacar* – (Testicles and the nearby meat) and the *Emany* – (liver) and gives half of it to the most senior man of *Ngimoru* to share with his group and eats the remainder with the most senior men of his group. These special pieces of meat are called *etal*, *pl. ngitalio*. (*Ngitalio* is the Turkana word for rituals). When it is a *Ngirisae* man killing the animal, the above process is reversed. When elders are done with the cutting and eating the *Ngitalio*, the most senior men of each moiety receive and distribute the remaining chunks of meat – *Nginerin* to their members as per the custom as follows: *ngamaran nakewasiak* (lower ribs) and *ngamaliteny* (Intestines) are consumed by members of the two moieties.

Ekecuman, *pl. ngikecumak* – Spearer/goat owner, regardless of his moiety receives the right hind, – *Amuro nakitalio* (ritual leg); the lower part of the foreleg – *Akodos*, *pl. ngakodoso* may go to him or to the man tasked to spear the goat.

Ekapeon, *pl. Ngikapeok* – Roasters, consume the heart – *Etau*, spleen – *Etid*, omasum – *Apinika*, and the middle piece of the foreleg – *akilelyang*, *pl. ngakilelyanga*. *Ekadungon*, *pl. ngikadunguok* – the man cutting the carcass receives the middle part of the second foreleg – *Akilelyang*.

Ngimoru men receive the following: The right fore leg – *Akwaat*, the Dorsal meat including chuck, upper ribs, neck and Head – *ngicocoku*, abomasum – *Atenus*, *ngikora* part of intestines, ½ *ngamaliteny nadapal*, *eseget*, *ekipisit lo amuro*, *Aboi* (Rumen filled with membrane fat and blood), reticulum (*amekenyi*), *akidongit*, *akalokiding/akilelyang na a akwaat*.

Ngirisae men: receive the following: the sternum/breast bone together with the flank to the testicles – *Atorobu*, sacrum and pelvis – *Ngikalokoi*, the central part of the intestines – *ngasuruny*, ½ of intestines – *ngamaliteny nadapal*, Loins/Lumbar meat – *egur*, *Atenus*, *eseget*, *akodos*, *akaloking*.

The Principle of Seniority

Next, is the question of seniority between *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae*. Claims of seniority between the two moieties are widespread among the Turkana, but no explanation is usually given for the same (Gulliver, 1958). According to Gulliver, the two groupings *Ngirisae* and *Ngimoru* do not refer to tribal generations, for they are coexistent among a crowd of males of

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the same age such that about half will belong to each; to him alternations provided a basically social classification rather than physiological. He states, “although there was a fairly general notion expressed in widely separated parts of the country that, *Ngimoru* are in some vague way senior (*luapolok*, the big ones) as an alternation to leopards, but no one could explain the reason for it, nor was there much if any significant difference in behavior, status, or privilege.”

I think the generalization made by Gulliver is incorrect; it disregards the structural characteristic of the Turkana moiety system. Turkana moieties are generational. Generational patrimoieties (patrilineal) across the world for example among Warlpiri and Mardi, the Western Desert individuals of Aboriginal Australia are characterized by a close relationship with kinship terminology and with conduct towards relatives. As accurately put by (Berndt and Berndt 1992 [1964]: 87), inside an individual's own generational level are to be found, ‘equivalents’: siblings, cross-cousins, age-mates; the generational level above him incorporates those with some authority over him: father and siblings, mother and siblings, their age-mates, and all those in their generational level etc. As such, the relationship normally incorporates in some measure privileges available only to fathers because of their senior status, restrictions to sons, inter-generational avoidances, respect and obedience to fathers by the sons’ generations etc.

Contrary to Gulliver’s view, the Turkana generation patrimoiety system is both sociological and physiological; horizontally, an indefinite number of consanguine relatives in a generation are placed in one moiety and their descendants placed in the other moiety; vertically, a generation of men composed by *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae* fathers, coexisting as halves of a tribal whole, simultaneously produces the next generation of *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae* sons who again in the next period simultaneously produces the next generation and the circle recurs, two consecutive generations always being in a father-son relationship and the alternate ones being in a grandfather-grandson relationship. However, the question about seniority between *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae* still remains open.

During meat feasts men usually separate into two groups according to their moieties and sit slightly apart at the *Akiriket*, with the *Ngirisae* sitting on the right-hand side of the semi-circle and *Ngimoru* on the left side. The most senior members of the two moieties sit at the centre of the *Akiriket* according to their positions in their respective age-sets, extending outward in a descending order to the most junior men at the far ends of the crescent. Another scholar of Ateker generation/age-set systems, Muller-Dempf, corroborating Gulliver’s assertions states that, “There is no reference made to a senior generation that would hold the political ritual control over a junior generation...the elders (*Ngikasukou*) of the two alternations exert such leadership”.

Furthermore, the manner in which elders make statements and invocations at the *Akiriket* gives credence to the observations made by Gulliver and Muller-Dempf. For example, it is not uncommon for a man to begin salutations by saying, “*Ngide a Ngimoru ka Ngirisae, naa!*” (You, the sons of *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae*, I greet you all!). This manner of address where all the men present regardless of their ages are recognized as sons of moieties is a clear exposition of their equivalence and duality in the generation-sets. See figure 4.

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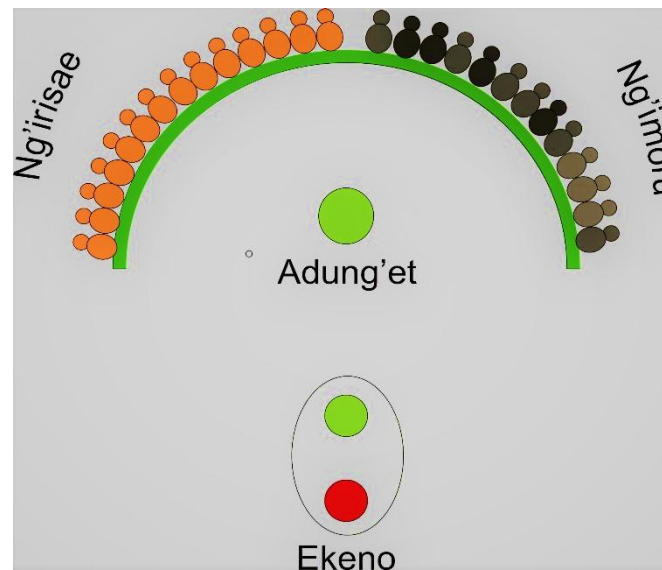


Figure 4: Akiriket
Source: Korobe, 2021

From where I stand and of course where you stand, the question of seniority between the two can only be likened to the ‘Hen or Egg’ causality dilemma. It is indeed very difficult, in terms of functions for anyone to claim one moiety is junior or senior to the other, unless of course in the context of coevality of individuals in the age-sets composing a particular generation-set.

Be that as it may, there are two possible explanations for persistence of *Ngimoru*’s seniority claim. In the prehistoric days when the tribe was relatively small, numbering maybe a few hundreds or thousands, and members of consecutive generations individually were known to one another, it may have been possible for individuals to track down the surviving members of their older generation (fathers) to death for the younger generation of sons to claim seniority. I once observed a ceremony in Ileret, a small rural town east of Lake Turkana, where a young group of Dassanach variously called *Ngimalire*, *Shangilla*, camped for three days at the homestead of an old man, said to be a surviving member of *Ngiceriase*, the senior generation of the tribe at the time. The Dassanach are the eastern neighbors of the Turkana, they have borrowed a significant number of cultural practices from the Turkana.

During the three days, the young men drawn from *Ngimoru* generation (sons of *Ngiceriase*), danced, chanted war songs, performed mock military attacks and slaughtered bulls for their fathers, – *the Ngiceriase*. This kind of celebration is common among the Ateker groups; it is customarily held to pay homage to an outgoing generation and serves as an occasion for the young generation to claim blessings from their dying generation of fathers. I suppose, the tracking of the elder may have been made possible by the small size of the Kenyan Dassanach who by then numbered about twelve thousand [12,000] meaning members were individually known to one another.

Secondly, as demonstrated in figure 5 below, I suppose the seniority claim by *Ngimoru* over *Ngirisae*, and again by *Ngiputiro* over both the *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae* is based on the order in which the three groups came into existence. This can be traced to early nineteenth century during the time of *Ngiputiro*, when they decided to reset and upgrade the

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moiety system by designating two permanent names – *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae* for moieties and adjacent generations, and incorporating non overlapping birth cohorts – (age-sets) into the moiety system which had somewhat become dysfunctional. See figure 5.

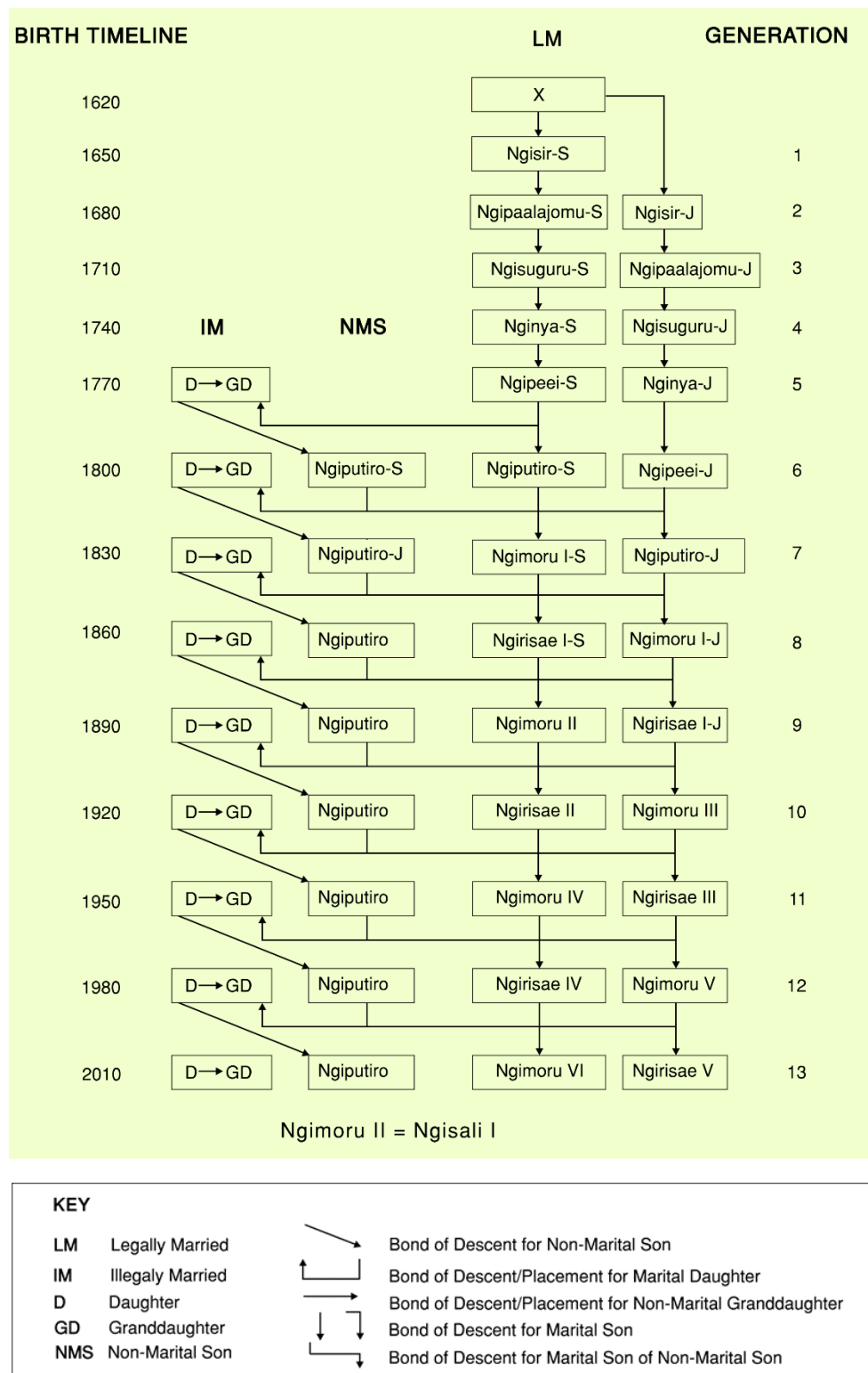


Figure 5: Turkana Generations and moieties layout

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The suffixes ‘I-S’, ‘I-J’, ‘J’ and ‘S’ in figure 5 above stand for: ‘I=One’, ‘S=Senior’, ‘J=Junior’, respectfully. The chronological reconstruction of the Turkana generations and moiety layout is based on the generation-set birth timelines and the standard age of thirty [30] years, which is the age when a man is capable of marrying and producing children of his own. Prof. Lamphear from whom I have heavily borrowed based his reconstruction on the generation initiation age interval of [40] years.

Ngisir is a generation of Jie initiated in 1680 (Lamphear, 1976), probably born around 1650. According to the Turkana and Jie traditions, Turkana were part of the eastern Ateker, or Proto-Jie, or Koten-Mogos group until the time of *Ngipaalojomu* (*ibid.*, 1976) initiation, when the Turkana split off due to demographic and ecological pressures. The fact that there are some sections among the Turkana referred as *Ngisir* is a clear indication that, perhaps a section of *Ngisir group* may have established a corporate identity before, during or after Turkana split-off, and most likely may have moved as a group, and settled around Loima area from where they spread out to the surrounding areas they are currently found.

Ngisuguru (*ibid.*, 1976) are the sons of *Ngipaalojomu* possibly inaugurated in 1740 – (approximated year when *Ngisuguru* generation was initiated; based on my own estimation as per the approximate age of [30] years when the first birth cohort of *Ngipaalojomu* sons married and begun to produce their own children). *Nginya* is a generation possibly born around 1740 (based on the estimated age of *Ngisuguru*). *Ngipeei* generation is the procreator of *Ngiputiro* probably born by *Nginya* generation. The senior *Ngiputiro*, that is, *Ngiputiro I-S*, are the sons of *Ngipeei* generation, most likely born around 1800, who due to lack of bride-wealth animals, started illegal families with daughters of *Ngipeei*, - their genealogical contemporaries or age-mates, thus producing non-marital sons. This period corresponds to the time of *Aoyate* drought of the late 17th to early 18th century that affected much of rift valley region of Kenya (Lamphear, 1988). .

In figure 5 above, generation seven [7] comprises a set of *Ngiputiro-J*: the non-marital sons of *Ngiputiro-S* and the legitimate sons of *Ngipeei-J*, and *Ngimoru I-S* (the legitimate sons of *Ngiputiro-S*). Take note that, *Ngimoru I-S* are descendants of two overlapping generations, that is, *Ngiputiro* the sons of *Ngipeei* and *Ngiputiro* the sons of *Ngiputiro*. As such, *Ngimoru I-S* is composed of old and young *Ngimoru*. The older *Ngimoru I-S*, are the legitimate sons of the older *Ngiputiro-S* (the sons of *Ngipeei-S*) and the younger *Ngimoru I-S* are legitimate sons of the young *Ngiputiro-S* (the non-marital sons of the *Ngiputiro-S*). After people had recovered from *Aoyate* drought stress, and bride-wealth animals were again available and legal marriages were possible, the younger *Ngiputiro-S* (non-marital sons of the older *Ngiputiro-S*) married officially and continued to populate *Ngimoru I-S* generation.

In 1860 when the older *Ngimoru I-S* at the age of about thirty [30] started to produce *Ngirisae-S* into generation [8], the younger *Ngiputiro-J* were at the same time producing *Ngimoru I-J* into generation [8]. Therefore, at the beginning of 1860, there was a group of *Ngimoru I-S* aged [0-30] coexisting with a group of *Ngirisae I-S* aged about [0-1] years old. At the beginning of 1890, the old *Ngimoru I-S* were aged about [30-60] years old, and the young *Ngimoru I-S* and *Ngirisae I-S* were aged about [1-30] years. Thus, generation [9] comprised two categories of people: *Ngimoru I-S* who had become fathers (fathered *Ngirisae I-S*) and *Ngimoru I-S* who were still young, and *Ngirisae I-S* who were also still young. In the next period – [1920], the young *Ngimoru I-S* and the *Ngirisae I-S* both aged about [30] simultaneously produced *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae* into generation [10].

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Going by figure 5 above, seniority claim can be traced to 1860 when generations of *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae* begun coexistence and simultaneous procreation of succeeding generations. We can begin by noting that, in 1860, when the first generation of *Ngirisae* was born, their fathers, the first group of *Ngimoru* was about [30] years old. In this case, as fathers, *Ngimoru* were older and senior to *Ngirisae*. In 1890 when the older *Ngirisae* were about [30] the older *Ngimoru* were about [60] meaning they (*Ngimoru*) were still older and senior to the older *Ngirisae*. In 1920, when the senior *Ngirisae* were about [60], the older *Ngimoru* who were about [90] begun to die off; however, the younger *Ngimoru* were about [60] years, that is, the same age with the older *Ngirisae*. In 1950, when Gulliver was doing his research, the older *Ngimoru*, that is, *Ngimoru I-S* had all died, but their generation was still being kept alive by the younger *Ngimoru*, that is, the *Ngimoru I-J* who were at the same genealogical level with the older *Ngirisae*, the *Ngirisae I-J*, all aged about [90]. From the foregoing explanation, at the time of Gulliver's research *Ngimoru* were still the senior ones (*Ngikapolok*), hence the seniority claim.

There are, in every generation, men who set up illegal families out of lack of bride-wealth animals thus proliferating procreation of non-marital sons. The non-marital sons of *Ngimoru I-S* although one generation below that of their biological fathers, are nonetheless placed in the same generation with their fathers as they are considered sons of their mother's fathers therefore siblings to their uncles and mothers.

From figure 5 above, it should be clear by now why *Ngimoru* as an alternation claim seniority over *Ngirisae*, and why *Ngiputiro* are generally regarded as senior to both their *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae* coevals. In 1830, due to effects of *Aoyate* drought of (1800 – 1830), people had no livestock; as such, majority of senior *Ngiputiro* (*Ngiputiro-S*, *Ngiputiro luapolok*) established illegal families and produced a generation of non-marital sons into their own generation, thus, they produced another group of senior *Ngiputiro* into generation [6]. Those of them who married legally produced the first group of *Ngimoru*, that is, the senior *Ngimoru I*, (*Ngimoru I-S*, *Ngimoru luapolok*) into generation [7]. The junior *Ngipeei*, (*Ngipeei-J*), the coevals of the older *Ngiputiro-S*, were at the same time producing *Ngiputiro* Junior (*Ngiputiro-J*) into this very generation. Therefore, generation [6] was composed of two groups: the *Ngiputiro-S* (old & young), and *Ngipeei-J*, while generation [7] was composed of *Ngimoru I-S* and *Ngiputiro-J* only. In 1860, when people reestablished their herds and legal marriages were possible, *Ngimoru I-S* produced the first group of *Ngirisae*, that is, the senior *Ngirisae I* (*Ngirisae I-S*, *Ngirisae luapolok*) while *Ngiputiro-J* produced the junior *Ngimoru I*, (*Ngimoru I-J*, *Ngimoru luucik*) into generation [8]. In 1890, generation [8] composed of *Ngirisae I-S* and *Ngimoru I-J* (all sons) of equal age, had attained the age of becoming fathers; as such, they were both 'sons and fathers' concurrently. From this phenomenon it was reasoned that, since *Ngirisae I-S* are the sons of *Ngimoru* (the *Ngimoru I-S*) in the same generation level with their junior fathers, (the *Ngimoru I-J*), it means, as generation of fathers, they will produce the next generation of *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae* sons, bringing about the duality aspect of *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae* Moieties. From this time to date, hierarchical system of generational ranking came to an end and succeeding generations started to take names from a permanent set of two absolute terms, viz *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae*. Since then, the Turkana male society is partitioned into two equal groups (moieties), viz *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae*.

From the foregoing, again, it can be reasoned that, seniority claim stems from the order in which the three groups came into being, and the genealogical placement of non-marital sons in their parents' generation. *Ngiputiro* as a group came first and begot the first generation of *Ngimoru*, i.e. *Ngimoru I-S*, who again begot the first generation of *Ngirisae*, i.e.

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Ngirisae I-S. In this sense, *Ngiputiro* can be said to be the seniors, followed by *Ngimoru* then *Ngirisae*.

The second reason why *Ngiputiro* are regarded as seniors and therefore feared, originates from their placement in the generation of mothers and uncles as siblings. Their generational placement in the generation of parents not only puts them one generation above their age-mates making them seniors in their midst, but also prolongs their parents' generation by atleast [30] years - (age difference between fathers and sons).

When the senior members of a generation of brothers begin to die-off, more often than not, their unmarried sisters, and non-marital granddaughters, may still be producing more *Ngiputiro* to the dying generation. In principle, a generation of men begins with legitimate group of brothers and terminates with *Ngiputiro* (non-marital male descendants of unmarried sisters, nieces, grandnieces etc). This is to say, as a generation approaches its tail end; the number of *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae* diminishes as the number of *Ngiputiro* relatively increases. Today, non-marital males are distinguished as *Ngiputiro Lurisae* and *Ngiputiro Lumoru*, or *Ngirisae Luputiro* and *Ngimoru Luputiro*. They are also known as *Ngide a ngapesuru a ngabwes* – (descendants of girls who wear nuptial garments). Among the Turkana, unmarried women are regarded as girls, but as mature girls (unwedded women), they are allowed to put on hind aprons, *abwo*, *pl. ngabwes* traditionally reserved for married women, hence the phrase, *ngapesuru a ngabwes*, (the nuptial garments' girls)

Ngiputiro are assigned important ritual functions in transitory rites of passage, which give them more privileges over their legitimate coevals. When a girl is married in the family, they [*Ngiputiro*] roast *Ngisiepion* – (the ritual ribs) of the nuptial ox at a fee usually not less than 10 goats and a big animal. When an *Ealakany* is given to the bride's father's age-set to eat, *Ngiputiro* in the age-set are given an extra *Ealakany*. *Ealakany*, *pl. Ngialakanya* refers to an animal given as food to the family of the bride, or men of the bride's father's age-set by the groom's family.

Ngiputiro are also charged with the responsibility of butchering death-rite (*Ngapunya*s) animals. This is done at a fee of not less than 10 goats and a big animal, besides other gifts like, sugar, tobacco etc usually demanded for the service. Every Turkana man must, if he can, marry officially and establish his own family. If he engages in extra-marital sexual relations, he will be producing children for other families. As such, non-marital children are sometimes very rare to find, and therefore always on high demand whenever ritual functions under them call for their services.

For reasons which are no longer known, in 1890, the Turkana introduced the term *Ngisaali* for *Ngimoru II*, (the legitimate sons of *Ngirisae I-S*) to distinguish them from *Ngimoru I-S*, that is, the legitimate sons of (*Ngipeei I-S* and non-marital sons of *Ngiputiro I-S*). From then to date the legitimate sons of *Ngirisae* begun to take the name *Ngisaali*, to distinguish them from *Ngimoru proper*, that is, the marital sons of *Ngirisae luputiro* or *Ngiputiro lurisae*. At *Akiriket*, *Ngirisae* and *Ngirisae luputiro* sit on the right side, *Ngimoru Proper* and *Ngisaali* sit on the left side.

Moiety membership is distinguished by the ornaments and body outfits worn by men and their wives.

- 1) *Ngimoru* only wear white and black ostrich plumes, dark colored metal ornaments (rings, bracelets, anklets, etc)
- 2) *Ngamoru* (wives of *Ngimoru*) wear black colored marital neck ring – *Alagama nakirion*, white or black feather, dark colored metal ornaments (lip pug – *Atepes*, ear plates – *Ngamaritoi*, wrist rings - *Ngaipaca* etc)

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- 3) Ngirisae should only wear brown ostrich plumes and light colored metal ornaments and they alone are allowed to wear leopard skins
- 4) *Ngarisae* (wives of Ngirisae) wear light colored marital neck-ring - alagama *Nanyang* and light colored metal ornaments (lip pug – Atepes, ear plates – *Ngamaritoi*, wrist rings - *Ngaipaca* etc).

Age-Set Organization

The Turkana word for age-set/age-group is *Akireunet* which means ‘to come of age’. Age mates are *Ngikeas/Ngikesan*, those initiated together at *Asapan* ceremony are *Ngisapanet*. The word ‘*Anaket*’ is a verbal noun derived from the verb *Akinak*, which means to suckle or to breast-feed. *Anaket* etymologically means a group or generation of brothers who suckled within a suckling period of about 30 years. A man as an adult is initiated into an age-set and remains in it all his life. As age-sets below his are formed, and as age-sets above are terminated because of death of members, his own set advances in seniority and authority until, in time, he may become an elder, one of the most senior men.

Origin of the Turkana Age-sets

Turkana age-sets developed in response to: (1) the gap left by the dispersed members of corporate kin groups, (2) internal frictions caused by overlapping generations of initiated and uninitiated groups of grandfathers, fathers, sons and grandsons, which the generation-set system had somewhat created. In regards the origin of Turkana age-sets, I bring in the argument made by Ritter (1980) on the function of age-set systems in highly decentralized societies. Ritter argued that, these societies are habitually engaged in violent conflict with the neighboring tribes, and that their seasonal kin groups considerably vary in size and composition, making it hard for descent groups (lineages and clans) to rely on their dispersed male members.

Under such circumstances, these societies resort to Age-set system as a means to quickly congregate their fighters whenever defense, retaliatory, preemptive, and predatory military activities are required. In agreement with Ritter’s assertion, Pierre Lienard (2016), on the analysis of age grouping and social complexity among the *Ngilukumong* territorial section observed that, “one of the principal functional features of age-set systems is their ability to mobilize contingents of unrelated men when socioeconomic conditions do not permit relying on the cohesive action of corporate kin groups”. (Gulliver 1958) corroborated Ritter and Lienard’s observations by noting that, “In earlier, war-like days, Turkana military attacks were normally mounted by a two-pronged assault, each prong composed of men of one alternation”.

This is further echoed by S.N Eisenstaedt, who in his comparative study of African age-set systems (1954) and his more comprehensive study of age-homogeneous groups (1956), expressed that age-set systems develop in societies where integrative functions such as military and political leadership are not fulfilled by family and descent groups. He maintained that, in these societies, the basic allocation of roles is not overwhelmingly determined by membership in the kinship groups and some important integrative functions remain to be fulfilled beyond these groups. According to him, age-set systems fulfil these integrative functions because the criterion of the age applies to all (male) members of the society and serve to regulate behavior via mechanisms of mutual identification within the age-set, and identification of the age-set within the society as a whole. Bernard (1992) summed up by noting that, since kinship systems consist only of dispersed patrilineal sibs without localized lineages acting as corporate political groups, there is no integration of the

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segmentary territorial organization by kinship. One can derive from this analysis the more general hypothesis that age-set systems are found in societies, which lack some centralized political authority, which only have dispersed unilateral descent groups (Clans), and which have a history of warfare, since the age-set system provides an ideology for the unity of all male members of the society. This hypothesis in all respects characterizes the Turkana society.

From the Turkana oral traditions and documented literature, inauguration - *Asapan* of new generation used to happen after every 25 – 30 years, which is the age difference between two consecutive generations, or the age difference between fathers and sons, or the generational age interval between fathers and sons. *Ceteris paribus*, this is the age a man begins to have children of his own, marking the beginning of a new generation.

As the generation of sons is initiated and marries at about [25-30], which on average, is the age a man begins to have children of his own, their fathers who would be about [50-60] years will still be having children, meaning both the fathers and sons simultaneously produce children consequently populating the sons' and grandsons' generations at the same time. Take note, in the olden days, a generation's initiation was done once, meaning, when its members miss initiation either because of their young age or were not yet born, they grew old and eventually died uninitiated.

This situation, arising out of generations overlap, caused by age difference between grandfathers and fathers, then between fathers and sons, and again between sons and grandsons, brought about piling up of overlapping groups of an uninitiated 'grandfathers, fathers, sons and grandsons' making the situation awfully outrageous. With this state of affairs, it appears, the generation-set system reached beyond limits which it could function effectively and begun to malfunction. It created two categories of people: overlapping groups of 'initiated fathers and sons', and overlapping groups of 'uninitiated fathers and sons' of disparate ages. Remember, initiation as a rite of passage marks a man's entrance or acceptance into a group or society or formalizes admission to adulthood in a community. In an extended sense, it signifies a transformation in which the initiate is 'reborn' into a new role that comes with honor and respect associated with new status. This means, uninitiated members of the tribe although of proper age suffered ridicule by their initiated counterparts.

This situation coincided with territorial expansion of the tribe, which meant that descent groups as 'cooperative units' were dispersed amidst violent contacts with the neighbouring tribes, and therefore could not be relied upon for labor, defense and protection of the tribe. The state of affairs was further worsened by disruptions caused by sociological and socioeconomic events that followed '*Aoyate*' the long dry spell that affected much of rift-valley region of Kenya. Lamphear (1976) notes that chronological reckonings based on the Turkana age-set system suggests that this drought took place in the late 18th or early 19th century. He also argues that, concurrent drought traditions in the chronological reconstruction of neighbouring communities indicates that the drought affected much of the rift-valley region. This period correspond with the period when *Ngiputiro* generation was born.

P.H. Gulliver, one of the earliest writers of Turkana history and culture thinks Turkana age-set system emerged sometimes around 1825 after the initiation of the *Ngiputiro* generation-set. Lamphear (1976) makes similar observations about alteration of the Turkana generation-set organization. He remarks: "Following the *Ngiputiro* territorial expansions, however, this organization had become somewhat irregular with a peculiar alternation system developing, probably because of difficulties in communication between widely separated parts of Turkana land....the widely dispersed congregation of senior elders appears to have

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had rather less control over the highly mobile and strongly autonomous individual stock-owners”. Out of this situation territorial sections developed, sectional leaders based on their military prowess, charisma and pragmatism emerged. This period concurred with emergence of semi-mythological leaders namely; Ang’irokol and Apatepes said to have provided leadership to all the Turkana in the eighteenth century. Military leaders and diviners teamed up to provide leadership. The diviners directed raids while military leaders led the attacks with fighting forces being drawn from individual generation-sets in their respective geographical locations.

About 1825, when the *Ngiputiro* came of age, the tribe was expanding and members were dispersing to distant places in search of human and livestock resources, every now and then exposing them to violent encounters with the neighboring tribes they were coming into contact with. Under these circumstances, it was extremely becoming difficult to rely on a social organization system, which had somehow proved dysfunctional, and required alteration to fix the problem of piling up of uninitiated males, and to organize labor of unrelated men to fill the gap left by disconnected male members of descent groups. Influenced by the Samburu’s age-set system which initiated age-groups at thirteen years interval, the Turkana abolished hierarchical initiation of generations and begun to initiate boys aged about twenty years after every four to five years to fill the gap caused by dispersed descent groups ‘cooperative units’ and to rectify the piling up of uninitiated members of society. The *Ngiputiro* decided to cluster groups of coevals – non-overlapping birth cohorts (age-sets – *Ngikeas/Ngikesan*), formalized through *Asapan*, into the two alternations (*Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae*). Domiciling initiation of age-sets on five [5] years age interval, rectified internal frictions brought about by piling up of uninitiated members of the male society. Hierarchy in the Turkana social organization since then is not any more attached to generation-set affiliation, it has become only a matter of age (cf. Gulliver 1958, Müller 1989).

Table 1: Turkana moieties and age-sets

Timeline	Moieties/Alternations	
	Ngimoru	Ngirisae
1871	<i>Age-sets</i>	<i>Age-sets</i>
	Ngimerikwara	Ngigerewoi
	Ngikoricom	Ngiterea
1896	Ngiwoyareng	Ngicodomeseokin
	Ngicumangorok	Nginyangakipwor

Source: Korobe, 2021

The years given in table 1 are suggestive of birth timelines, are based on the reconstructions given by Gulliver, (1951) and Jaxton Button (1921), they do not represent the exact time when the age –sets were initiated. Age-sets are ranked according to their positions in the total series within the two moieties’ generation-sets, and members are ranked according to their individual positions in the age-sets such that groups of coevals in an age-set are placed in a chronological order so that the older are more senior. Within each age-set, there is a ranking of members, which is defined by the order of seniority of members’ legal fathers (Gulliver, 1951). If for example in 1896, all the four age sets of *Ngimoru* and *Ngirisae* were initiating their sons, they will be lined up to spear their animals in such a way that, initiate-

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sons of members of the senior-most (or first) age-sets (*Ngimeririkwara and Ngigerewoi*) are automatically senior to sons of members of the second age-set (*Ngikoricom and Ngiterea*), who are again senior to the sons of the third age-set (*Ngiwoyareng and Ngicodomeseokin*) who are again senior to the sons of members of the fourth age-set (*Ngicmangorok and Nginyangakipwor*) in that order.

During initiation, among the initiates who are sons of members of a single age-set, seniority depends directly on the relative seniority of their fathers in the age-set. This is to say, initiate-son's position in his section of the new age-set is determined by his father's position relative to the fathers of his (initiate-son) age-mates.

In the prehistoric days, when the society was relatively small and inhabited a smaller geographical territory, an age-group was formally initiated by a society-wide ceremonies, and individuals from throughout the territory were considered to belong to a single age-group. However, as the tribe expanded and dispersed to distant geographical locations, separate age-groups began to be formed in each locality and given distinct names. Today, different age-groups are more or less simultaneously formed in different territorial sections, each with variable feelings of identity and solidarity among the contemporaneous groupings.

Conclusion

Turkana moiety and age-set organization isn't just a system of ranking individuals in terms of generation and age only as held by (Gulliver, 1951, 1958; Müller-Dempff 1989, 1991). Neither, is it a mere transitory rite of passing boys into adulthood as construed by many. There's more to it than meets the eye; it forms a network, which encloses each individual in a web of multiple ties and operates along genealogical lines being established by consanguinity and affinity, and other extrafamilial kinship ties created through *Akitasapan* ritual to provide an individual with an endless list of people he/she can rely for support.

Suffice it to say, if mutual-aid within the family which is the basic unit of production and reciprocal exchange is desirable, why not extend it beyond family boundaries. One has parents, and they too have parents, and so on indefinitely; one's parents have siblings, and these siblings have descendants; and the children of one's own siblings provide other branches of genealogical tree. *Mutual-aid group* being a decided asset in the business of daily life in the struggle for survival, and reciprocity as the fundamental socioeconomic mechanism of cooperation, the Turkana have a habit of creating endless extrafamilial kinship ties for mutual-aid in subsistence, shelter and in defense and offense. Individuals go outside the family group and incorporate extrafamilial consanguine relatives into their 'cooperative group or mutual- aid group' and equate them with genealogical relationships when it is well known that this is not the case.

Turkana create extrafamilial relationships in many ways: at the moiety level all the men in my father's generation are my fathers and those in my own generation are my siblings; at the age-set level, I have a corporate identity and responsibility with all the men within my birth cohort; through *akitasapan* ritual, I establish a new mutual-aid community with the family of my godfather and family associates. On *Asapan*, an initiate-son receives a new set of relatives, the godparents. Prior to *Asapan*, fathers and godfathers mutually look for appropriate families to incorporate into their mutual-aid groups, through this rite of passage. Initiate-sons' Fathers and godfathers may, and often do look for well-off individuals with good reputation, high social standing etc., to bond with. Gifts flow both sides; the family of initiate-son gives their son beads, new shoes, headdress, wrist bangles, body wear, etc which the godfather collects during the 'stripping-off' ritual.

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The godfather on his part gives his son (initiate-son now a full man) livestock through *Akirop* ritual, as ‘seed herds’ to start him off. *Akirop* is a Turkana word that means to lengthen, enhance or extend, in *asapan* context, it implies lengthening relationship between the initiate-son and the godfathers through gifting ritual animals ‘seed animal’ to the initiate-son. *Asapan* of age-sets is a gateway to raids, marriage and ritual functions. From the point of view of ritualized economy, exchange of gifts by the two families deepens their indebtedness to one another; it enjoins the members of the two families to a mutual-aid organization in which families are the units. The *Akitasapan* – (sponsoring/godparenting an initiate-son) ritual does not just give the initiate-son a mother and a father; it gives him brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts etc., as well. A whole new set of reciprocal or correlative rights and obligations is thus established by the ritual of *akitasapan* and social solidarity and mutual-aid are much deepened.

When for instance, a member of the initiate-son’s newly found relatives gets animals, say from raids, or bride-wealth entitlements, he has the right to ‘*Akidier*’ (getting an animal/s without the consent of the owner), and on reciprocal basis, they too are eligible for livestock through the same ritual. The reason for multiplying kinship ties by artificially creating them through *asapan* should be fairly plain by now: it is done to increase the number of people to whom one is bound by powerful ties of mutual-aid; the more the relatives to help the better.

Integration of age-sets into the Turkana moiety system was a solution to ‘collective action problems’ in regards to the effectiveness of impaired solidarity of an ever-growing but highly dispersed population. Incorporation of age-sets into the moiety system as an ideology organized unity of unrelated male members of society in disconnected territories; at the same time, this provided a permanent solution to the problem of piling up of uninitiated members of society across generations.

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