MAASAI DAYS

"A unique look inside an ancient African culture faced with a choice between adaptation and extinction."

—WASHINGTON POST

CHERYL BENTSEN

MAASAI DAYS

"A unique look inside an ancient African culture faced with a choice between adaptation and extinction."

—WASHINGTON POST

CHERYL BENTSEN

HISTORY

U.S. $11.00
Canada $14.00

"Superb...Bentsen offers a consistently fascinating glimpse into the world of the Maasai. Always the scrupulous reporter, Bentsen is able to provide an up-close and nonjudgmental view of a culture. The world of an ancient people is vividly and compellingly brought to life."
—*Plain Dealer* (Cleveland)

"Bentsen's portrait of Maasai women—some of them amazingly content, considering the hardships they endure—is especially poignant."
—*New York Newsday*

"A lively, accessible account of Maasai life...[which] also conveys a considerable amount of Maasai history... For all who would like to get beyond a postcard or tourist-eye view from zebra-striped mini-vans, *Maasai Days* provides a frank and warm portrait of the Maasai in transition."
—*Boston Herald*

"If you know nothing at all about the Maasai, this book is an informative and up-to-date primer. If you have read everything published on the Maasai, this book will add unusual perspectives to your knowledge."
—*San Diego Union*

"I know of no other writer who has entered as a welcome friend into the lives of African families surviving at the crossroads between two cultures, and her absorbing firsthand account is penetrating, sometimes sad, and always extraordinary."
—Elspeth Huxley

Cover photograph courtesy of Cheryl Bentsen
Cover design by Black Angus Design Group
0591

ANCHOR BOOKS
DOUBLEDAY
NEW YORK LONDON TORONTO SYDNEY AUCKLAND

AN ANCHOR BOOK
PUBLISHED BY DOUBLEDAY
a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.
666 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10103

ANCHOR BOOKS, DOUBLEDAY, and the portrayal of an anchor are trademarks of Doubleday, a division of Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc.

Maasai Days was originally published in hardcover by Summit Books in 1989. The Anchor Books edition is published by arrangement with Summit Books.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Bentsen, Cheryl.
Maasai days / Cheryl Bentsen.
p. cm.
1. Masai (African people) I. Title.
DT433.545.M33B45 1991 90-26186
967.62'004965—dc20 CIP
ISBN 0-385-41630-X

Copyright © 1989 by Cheryl Bentsen
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
FIRST ANCHOR BOOKS EDITION: MAY 1991
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.co

For Chuck

Contents

1	The Valley	11
2	Real Maasai	16
3	Splendid Fellows	22
4	A Hitchhiker	29
5	First Visits	34
6	Schoolboys	45
7	Sekento	52
8	Saikeri	60
9	The Chief	69
10	Noah	77
11	Girlfriends	85
12	Shokore	90
13	Wilson	96
14	Two Worlds	105
15	Professor Maloiy	110
16	Empaash	119

17	Kipeno	127
18	Warriors	135
19	A Broken Star	143
20	Reunion	150
21	Politics	155
22	Ntulele	161
23	Petition	168
24	Nasore	173
25	Nanta's Shop	181
26	The Coup	186
27	*Baraza*	191
28	Exams	195
29	Semoi's Ceremony	200
30	Circumcision	209
31	Isinya	218
32	Medical Training Center	228
33	Drought	233
34	Oloitipitip	241
35	Last Moran Days	244
36	Fire	248
37	Eunoto	258
38	Graduation	275

NOTE: *The spelling of "Maasai" varies as used by individual authors.*

They are dreaded as warriors, laying all waste with fire and sword, so that the weaker tribes do not venture to resist them.

—DR. LUDWIG KRAPF,
Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours (1860)
(The first known written description of the Maasai)

The word was passed round that the Masai had come. . . . Passing through the forest, we soon set our eyes upon the dreaded warriors that had been so long the subject of my waking dreams, and I could not but involuntarily exclaim, "What splendid fellows!"

—JOSEPH THOMSON,
Through Masai Land (1885)

[The Maasai] had that attitude that makes brothers, that unexpressed but instant and complete acceptance that you must be Masai wherever it is you come from.

—ERNEST HEMINGWAY,
Green Hills of Africa (1935)

A Masai warrior is a fine sight. These young men have, to the utmost extent, that particular form of intelligence which we call chic; daring, and wildly fantastical as they seem, they are still unswervingly true to their own nature, and to an immanent ideal.

—Isak Dinesen,
Out of Africa (1937)

What upstart race, sprung from some recent, callow century to arm itself with steel and boastfulness, can match in purity the blood of a single Masai Murani whose heritage may have stemmed not far from Eden?

—Beryl Markham,
West with the Night (1942)

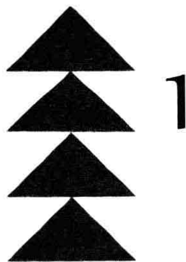
The Masai are not primitive in the way that pygmies and bushmen are. They are an intelligent people who have deliberately chosen to retain their own way of life.

—Evelyn Waugh,
A Tourist in Africa (1960)

The Maasai, having no choice, altered his habits, but in a spiritual sense, he has ceased to exist as well.

—Peter Matthiessen,
The Tree Where Man Was Born (1972)

此为试读,需要完整PDF请访问: www.ertongbook.com



1

THE VALLEY

I FIRST BEGAN to explore the land around Nairobi on a motorcycle. Looking back, it is hard to imagine seeing the country any other way. On a bike, with the air and landscape rushing around you, the views are immense, unobstructed by car roof or window frame. Up in the highlands, on a cool, misty morning, the curved terraces of the big tea plantations were rolling emerald seas. The motorcycles were my husband's idea, and most weekends Chuck and I took long trips, sometimes setting off across the grass-covered plains below the Ngong Hills, sometimes following a winding trail through a shaded forest, watching monkeys sail through the trees. The forest trail joined a road that encircled the hills, and around its last bend, the Great Rift Valley came into view—so sudden and startling it seemed to be the very edge of the world. The valley floor lay below, some two thousand feet deep and nearly forty miles wide, part of a tear in the earth that runs from the Jordan Valley to Mozambique. It was eerie and tremendous, studded with craters, like a landscape on the moon. The only trees were the scattered, flat-crowned acacia.

You could ride for hours—all the way to Kilimanjaro—without encountering a fence. The best days were overcast ones in early June, when the sky was flinty,

and the air was scented by rain and moistened dust. The land took on a brooding look. As hawks circled above, we rode the rutted dirt trails with thunderclouds chasing behind us. Across the plains, a wall of rain descended like gray curtains slowly lowered to earth. After the shower, the valley was spanned by rainbows.

When the rain started, wildlife returned to the plains—ostrich, herds of zebra and wildebeest, eland, impala, and Thomson's gazelle, the latter's trim, twitching flanks marked by a dark racing stripe. In a single day, I once counted forty giraffes. Lions and leopards patrolled the valley, but I never saw them. There were birds—some with trailing iridescent plumage, others, including the hornbills, so strange or whimsical they might have been dreamed up by Walt Disney. Occasionally I would be startled when a gazelle—sometimes several—bounded across my path, hanging for a split second in midair, immune to gravity.

The long dry season transformed the valley into a hushed and barren place. The tall plumes of dust devils twirled across the plains. The animals vanished, and a gritty wind scoured the land. The sun bore down day after day until, by early March, the grass had turned the color of a lion's haunch, and the dust lay thick on the trails.

On a day like this, I rode alone along a deserted road to the soda lake at Magadi. The temperature was more than a hundred; the plains looked liquid in the shimmering air. I saw no signs of settlement. I stopped to get my bearings and check the map. Suddenly—out of the air, it seemed—a group of Maasai women appeared on the road, rushing toward me in red-and-white capes and beaded collars that bounced as they ran. Giggling and chattering away in Maasai, they surrounded me, holding out beaded ornaments they wanted me to buy. They had smooth copper skin, high cheekbones and small shaved heads that shone like polished mahogany. On them, baldness seemed a brilliant stroke of fashion. The holes cut in their earlobes were the size of half-dollars, the loops suspended with long wire earrings like mobiles, decorated with colorful beads and tin cutouts. The women fastened a large bib-style necklace around

my neck and stood back to admire the effect, nodding in approval when I indicated that I would buy it. It was frustrating not to be able to speak their language, but when we had settled the business, I offered them a drink from my jug of water. Their faces became solemn as they each took a small sip, barely a swallow. I urged them to have more, but they declined. A drought was approaching; I suppose water must have seemed to them a great indulgence. This brief encounter—just thirty miles outside the city—heightened my curiosity. I found myself wondering about these women, where they lived, what their lives were like. Several times I went down that road again, hoping to see them, but I never did. Somehow I was convinced I would get to know more about them.

I had been living in Kenya for only a few months then. I arrived in 1980 when my husband was assigned there as a newspaper correspondent. Before that, I knew very little about Africa or its people, but I had heard of the Maasai whose legendary pride and physical courage seem to have impressed every foreigner who has ever seen them. I had read Karen Blixen's (Isak Dinesen's) tribute to Maasai warriors in *Out of Africa*, and I once watched an old Stewart Granger movie, *The Last Safari*, in which everyone but the white hunter was afraid of them. I pictured the Maasai as a carefree, independent people, roaming the plains with their cattle, unburdened by the problems of modern life.

I saw them for the first time the weekend Chuck and I arrived in Nairobi. We were taking a game drive through a national park, hoping to see lions; meanwhile, the Kikuyu driver was dutifully pointing out giraffes, kongoni, zebras and hippos, proposing that Chuck and I take pictures of them. I stood up through the open roof of the Land-Rover to get a better look when I noticed several tall figures dressed in red crossing the high grass of the plain. They were clearly Maasai. They carried spears and walked as if they owned the land.

"Isn't that dangerous, walking like that?" I asked, remembering the signs warning visitors not to get out of their cars. "What about lions?"

The guide laughed. "Madam, the poor lions are fear-

ing the Maasai." He told us they lived on the plains and slept in dung huts. The young men hunted lions to prove their bravery. From the tone of his voice, I sensed that he did not approve of such primitive arrangements.

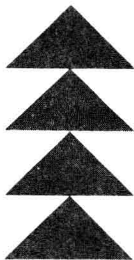
After that, I saw some Maasai in Nairobi. On city streets, in the midst of high-rise office buildings, boutiques and Western-dressed Africans, they seemed peculiarly anachronistic. The elders, wrapped in thick orange blankets, gave the impression of eccentric old aristocrats as they went about their brief business—buying snuff, tobacco, medicines for their cattle, blankets, glass beads and tea strainers—unfazed by traffic or crowds, oblivious to stares, seemingly incurious about the modern world around them.

The Maasai women were always more outgoing, selling their beaded ornaments outside the City Market and smiling at passersby with the insouciant air of professional partygoers. They wore their traditional *shukas* (togas), capes and beaded necklaces, but many of them had begun to wear vinyl-trimmed green canvas sneakers that I had seen displayed in store windows.

The warriors—tall, slim, angular young men with chiseled features—did not carry their spears to Nairobi; a city law prohibited it. On rare jaunts to town, they were still a sensation, appearing both daring and whimsical. I was downtown one day, shortly after I arrived, when a Maasai man entered a crowded elevator in an office building. Everyone automatically drew back to give him room. We all stared. The Africans seemed wary. The Maasai paid no attention and looked straight ahead. He wore a *shuka* checked like a tablecloth and sandals made from old rubber tires. His hairdo was an elaborate arrangement of plaits, a mop stained with what looked like greasy rust-colored clay. The loops of his ears were wrapped in beads; a sword was tied to his belt; and he carried a nasty-looking knobbed club. At the fourth floor, he stepped off the elevator and turned right. We all looked to see where he was going, but the doors slid shut. Nobody said anything, but a faint odor lingered, like the smoke of a cooking fire deep in a forest.

I was intrigued, but it was the Maasai I saw on my motorcycling in the valley who caught my imagination.

They always waved, as though delighted by any passing entertainment. I saw the edges of their strange, secluded world. Once, I stopped at Kisemes, a small trading center on the edge of the valley. Outside a rickety metal-roofed shack, a hand-lettered sign read: HILTON HOTEL. I went inside to buy a soda, and the owner, a Western-dressed Kikuyu, asked if I had brought a newspaper. "We don't hear much news out here," he sighed. Outside, a group of Maasai warriors in *shukas* and red-stained pigtails stood around the motorcycle and took turns studiously admiring their faces in the handlebar mirrors. I finished my soda and said goodbye to the shopkeeper, who seemed disappointed to see me go. The bike was balky when it was hot, and I had some trouble kick-starting it. This amused the Maasai men; but they jumped back respectfully when the engine caught and let out a roar. Some Maasai women, who had been watching, drew closer as I pulled on my helmet. One of them asked in Swahili, "Are you a man or a woman?" The younger children knew the Swahili word for motorcycle—*piki-piki*—and sang that funny word as I drove off.



2 REAL MAASAI

In Nairobi, everyone seemed to have strong opinions about the Maasai. Foreigners, beguiled by their glamour, often perceived them as the model for the Hollywood noble savage. The stereotype was understandably offensive to progressive Africans, who derided the fame of the Maasai. The colonials were predictably disenchanted, but told some good stories.

I met a white game rancher, born in Kenya, who knew the Maasai well. "They were always circumspect and a bit superior," he said. "Their minds worked differently than the Kikuyu—they were more complicated, like the Somali." His grandfather had employed a few Maasai herders at his Lake Naivasha ranch. When gramophones were invented, he ordered one of the first and invited some elders up to the house to see the new things that were coming out of Europe. Wearing leather capes and earrings, the old Maasai stood around the contraption, listening to a scratchy recording, none of them saying a word. Finally, one elder turned to the others and observed, "It takes a small thing to amuse the mind of a white man."

Africans gave me amused or condescending glances when I mentioned my interest in the Maasai. Most of

此为试读，需要完整PDF请访问：www.ertongbook.com