

THE RENDILLE



The **Rendille** are an African ethnic group of the [Kaisut Desert](#) of [Kenya](#). They are often referred to as "the holders of the stick of God". They are closely related to the Samburu.

They are [nomadic](#) pastoralists who roam with their camels across about 16,000 square kilometers of Northern Kenya. Women, children, and older men live in semi-permanent villages that are moved only a few times a year and rarely more than a few kilometers. The Rendille believe that they belong in the desert not by mistake but because it's their "promised land". In their popular morning prayers they pray "your people Ngai (God) cannot climb mountains, cross seas but remain in this Promised Land in which you have looked after our fore fathers, us and our children's children...."

Rendille staple foods include meat, and a mixture of milk and blood, commonly known as "Banjo". Men traditionally dress by tying a loin cloth around their loins while women dress in sheep and goat skins tied around their waists going down while the trunk remains naked. Circumcised boys and young men who have not yet undergone *Ennui*, the rite into adulthood at age 30 whereby men become Elders and are granted ownership of land, wear purple cloth and a white feather in their headgear. This switches to a Tartan pattern among acceptance as an Elder. Warriors are very aware of their headgear and will become upset if it is touched by another tribal member, especially a woman. Many Rendille have appropriated western clothing and are commonly seen wearing kikoyis and t-shirts.

Rendille have age sets fourteen years apart. An age set is a group of men circumcised together and remain in the warrior hood for 14 years before they are allowed to marry and give way to another age set. Since 1962, there have been six age set namely; ILMAURI, ILKIMANIGI, ILKICHILI, ILKIRORO, ILMAULI and the current age set, who are scheduled to be circumcised in August 2007, ILMETILI. Rendille culture is built on strict separation of the sexes during important cultural and spiritual practices. Women are not allowed to talk or fraternize with men, and traditionally are shunned from major religious events outside of courtship rituals.

Rendille are believed to be alienated and experts believe the pure Rendille are almost extinct with their language confined to a few in Kargi and Korr. Rendille language especially is under threat from Samburu, a sub sect of the Masai language *Ma*, which is considered by many Samburu-speaking Rendille as a sexy and modern language. Attempts have been made to build schools, though few schools and the meaning of

education has been well seen through the leadership of the late Hon. Titus L Ngoyoni's effort to add more school projects through well wishers and new donations will definitely make changes and will help the Rendille of Northern Kenya.

Adapted from Wikipedia