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Negotiating Masculinity in the Relationships of the Maasai Men from Tanzania and Migrant Women from the Global North

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Introduction

Long-term relationships of binational couples formed as a result of tourist encounters have so far been researched less often than sex tourism and romance tourism, studied e.g., in the Caribbean region (Oppermann 1999; Herold et al. 2001), in Asia (Dahles, Bras 1999), in West Africa (Odunlami 2009) and East Africa (Chege 2017; Meiu 2017; Despres 2017). Studies on couples in which one of the partners comes from an African country most often focus on the relationships of young African women with older white[2] men (Cole 2004; Groes-Green 2013) or young African men with older white women (Meiu 2017; Odunlami 2009; Chege 2017). However, there has been little research on the relationships of young women with men their age (though such research on Tanzanian-Danish couples was conducted by Holmgaard, 2022). This article focuses on the long-term relationships of the Maasai men with women from the Global North who decided to emigrate to Tanzania. The Maasai are described as a patriarchal society, where men dominate women both economically and politically. Importantly, this patriarchal arrangement was reinforced during the colonial period (Hodgson 2001:16), as I discuss later in this article. My research has shown that the masculinity practiced by Maasai men in their traditional[3] marriages can be called hegemonic masculinity

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[2] I use the term "white" following the cited authors, but also being aware of the discussions on this term (see DiAngelo 2019).

[3] I use the terms 'traditional' and 'tradition' while being aware of the variability of tradition and the ways in which it is being construed – cf. Hobsbawm and Ranger 2008.

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(Connell 1995) and that it is negotiated in relationships of Maasai men and migrant women. To demonstrate this, I will analyze the difference between traditional Maasai marriage – which is often polygynous – and the Maasai-*wazungu*[4] marriage, and examine the masculinity performed by younger Maasai men in relation to their elders.

I present the perspective of both women and men, since the voices of men involved in relationships with female tourists have so far been more scant, as noted by Njeri Chege (2017): "Knowledge on this phenomenon has principally been conveyed through Western female tourists' autobiographies." (Chege 2017: 64) In this article, I thus investigate less explored areas, both in terms of couples formed by people of a similar age, and the inclusion of voices of men co-creating these relationships. I also wish to emphasize that my reflections relate to couples who have settled in Tanzania, for which migration flow was opposite to what was most frequently described in the context of the Global North. Moreover, my research participants decided to live in the continental part of the country, and not, for example, in Zanzibar, which favors the development of tourism. My aim was to look at gender relations within the relationships of Maasai men and migrant women from the Global North, with particular focus on: redefinition and performance of masculinity by Maasai men and of femininity by migrant women; negotiation of roles of husband and wife in the context of different ideas about marriage; perceptions of the above relationships in the Maasai families and the families of women from the Global North. In this article, I wish to explore the question whether and how hegemonic masculinity is negotiated in these relations in the context of migration.

I develop my argument over the eight following sections, starting with an overall introduction, description of my research area and the adopted methodology. I then review the existing relevant literature and discuss the theoretical framework and the concept of hegemonic masculinity I apply in my research. I then proceed with the analysis of the traditional model of marriage within the Maasai community and demonstrate how gender roles are being negotiated within marriages between Maasai men and migrant women from the Global North, through decisions about marriage, household responsibilities, childcare, sexual life and participation in childbirth.

Research area and methods

I conducted my research on the long-term relationships of Maasai men with women from the Global North in 2022 and 2023[5] over a period of 6 months, as a follow-up stage of my fieldwork spanning 2017 and 2018, which focused on the migration

[4] Swah. *mzungu* (pl. *wazungu*) – white person, European.

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of Maasai from the Morogoro area (which I have been visiting since 2011). The main research participants mostly live in the Morogoro region or the surrounding area, where the predominant economic activity is farming, employing 80–90 percent of the labor force (National Bureau of Statistics 2022: 15). The region differs markedly from the northern, more tourist-oriented part of the country (Arusha and Kilimanjaro region). As Adam Mwarabu, a Maasai working for PAICODEO[6] in Morogoro, told me, the Maasai in the Arusha region had access to education earlier than in the Morogoro region, because the school system there was supported by missionaries (including Catholic and Lutheran), while the Maasai from the Morogoro region were not in contact with missionaries until the 1970s. Dorothy Hodgson (2005) described the activities of missionaries in the northern part of Tanzania. In her book, *The Church of Women* she stated that Lutherans were the first to open schools in Maasailand, back in the 1930s (Hodgson 2005: 116), and that Spiritans began systematic evangelization of the Maasai in the 1950s (2005: 69). Father Hillman (a Spiritan) established schools for the Maasai at a time when – in his view – the colonial government was trying to keep them uneducated, to prevent them from protecting their rights to the land, which the colonial government was stealing and giving to the colonial settlers (2005: 117). The Maasai working in Zanzibar and Dar es Salaam believe that education provides an opportunity to have a profession important for both the family and the community (Wiejaczka 2020: 138–139), though unfortunately the school completion rate, even for primary school remains low within this community (see Swai 2019), and Maasai girls continue to be marginalized both in terms of educational opportunities and marriage-related decision-making (Zakayo, Lekule 2022: 123).

Here, I wish to present a case study based on five couples (the main participants of my research), four of them married for 9 years and one for 12 years, who decided to live in Tanzania (in the Morogoro region and its surrounding area)[7]. I extend my analysis by taking into account contributions from other interlocutors (spouses from similar relationships, but with less experience as a married couple; Maasai men who work in Zanzibar and form relationships with tourists; a Maasai woman who is in a relationship with a European man; Maasai men and women living in mainland Tanzania). All the above-mentioned couples met in Tanzania: two women came to Zanzibar for holiday, where one of the future husbands worked as a hotel security guard, and the other one was selling souvenirs. One woman came for a missionary project and met her future husband at a language school, where he was a Swahili teacher. Another woman met her future husband during a volunteer project for the benefit of the local community (they worked on the same project), and yet another

[6] Parakuiyo Pastoralists Indigenous Community Development Organization.

[7] I have known one of the five couples described in the article for 10 years from my fieldwork. I found contact to another woman online, thanks to her activity on social media. I contacted the remaining three couples thanks to the Facebook group "Team Tanzania".

while volunteering for nature conservation, while her future husband worked as a security guard at a diving center. The two above-mentioned Maasai never went to school (one of them speaks fluent English which he learned while working in Zanzibar; the other communicates with his wife in Swahili and Maa); the remaining three men attended post-primary schools.

There is an age difference of three to six years between the spouses, who are in their thirties or forties. All couples have children (from one to three). They live in a Maasai *boma*[8] with their husband's family (two couples), in a village away from the husband's family (two), or in a city (one), which probably influences the extent of social control to which they are subjected. It should be emphasized that the husbands in the last three couples are internal migrants.

Significantly more Maasai-*wazungu* couples decide to emigrate and live in the female spouse's country of origin, but statistics in this area are difficult to obtain (the ethnic group is recorded neither on the marriage certificate nor in the official records). Few couples decide to reside in Tanzania, probably due to difficult access to the labor market and good quality education. Tanzania does not allow dual citizenship for adults, so the wife of a Tanzanian citizen resides in his country based on the so-called Dependent Pass, which entitles her to a two-year stay (and must be renewed later), without the right to work. People who intend to find gainful employment in Tanzania must apply for a work permit, which is time-consuming and expensive. Only two out of five women from the couples that participated in this study have obtained the work permit, but all of the women have found a way to become financially independent. Maasai-migrant couples, for instance, run guest house, local shop, organize safari trips or sell Tanzanian fabrics online.

I conducted research in the constructivist paradigm, within the framework of postcolonial theory. I collected data by conducting semi-structured ethnographic interviews and participant observation, which allowed me to compare declarative views and practices of individual people. I also used the *deep hanging-out* technique, which involves accompanying research participants in various circumstances. I stayed with them both in their households and, whenever possible, joined them when they went outside (e.g. during church celebrations or going out to restaurants). I focused on building a close rapport with research participants by maintaining long-term relationships and through repeated visits. I conducted my research mainly in English, soetimes using Swahili. As a female researcher from the Global North working in Tanzania, I embodied a significant configuration of race, class and gender, which I included in my overall reflection.

[8] Swah. homestead. It is a type of household, most often consisting of several or a dozen houses.

Relevant literature

Below, I provide a brief review of research on relationships in which one of the partners comes from an African country, which is relevant for analyzing my research findings. Henrike Hoogenraad (2021) conducted research on marriages between Australian women and African men who decided to live in the female partner's country. The process of settling in a new place, as well as finding residence there turned out to be difficult. The procedure for arranging the partner visa for the man placed their partners in the position of sponsors and providers. Men lacked social, cultural and economic capital, and even after obtaining permanent residence, they were often unable to find a decent job or make new friends (sometimes because their wife forbade them to spend time outside the family home unless they were at work). This situation had a negative impact on the men's self-esteem, and affected their sense of masculinity, since 'traditional' gender roles had been reversed.

Maja Holmgaard (2022) has shown how Tanzanian-Danish couples where partners are nearly the same age and who decide to settle in Denmark, may have divergent views on the emerging family: while Danish women tend to focus their attention and feelings on the closest (nuclear) family, their Tanzanian partner tends to have a much broader concept of family (2022: 53). Such differences affect the way spouses invest in their family. Some of the research participants stated that in Tanzania their relationship used to be balanced, but that this changed after the couple moved to Denmark. According to Holmgaard "Tanzanian men are being socially, culturally, and financially provided for by their female partner while also being subjected to racial discrimination, not to mention their struggle with the Danish language" (2022: 71), which may affect their performance of masculinity. To cope with this, men maintain strong ties with Tanzania and join the communities of Swahili-speaking men living in Denmark (2022: 71). In Tanzania, the same men had not struggled with their masculine identity because it was "continuously acknowledged through their social and cultural capital" (2022: 71).

In her work, Chege (2017) focused on men working on the southern coast of Kenya who, through long-term relationships with tourists, try to fulfill their communities' expectations of them as breadwinners (2017: 67). According to her, the men working on the beach never explicitly said that being financially dependent on white women was unmanly, but explained that their relationships were "generally accepted by wives, girlfriends, family and community members because they were 'only for the money'" (2017: 74). They added that some of their wives or girlfriends even facilitated or encouraged them to have this type of relationship. However, the acceptance of these relationships was ambivalent: some men admitted that by engaging in a relationship with a much older woman, they become subject to ridicule (2017: 74).

Hoogenraad conducted research in Zanzibar on the local men forming relationships with women from the so-called West[9]. She argued that forming such

[9] Hoogenraad characterized them as inhabitants of Europe and South Africa.

relationships is associated with both "emasculation as well as an increase of masculinity" of the local men (2012: 22). She also noted that "[G]etting involved with a Western woman is a strategy to open up many possibilities, financially, socially and businesswise" (2012: 79). The social mobility of these men was therefore to some extent dependent on their partners (their "financial capital and their knowledge of business"), who also earned money for the family – all this resulted in a 'castration' of the man (2012: 84). On the other hand, the husbands tended to emphasize their masculinity by taking decisions without consulting their partner (2012: 84) – and by continuing to have a prolific sexual life. According to Hoogenraad "men cover up dependencies and limitations of masculinity and sexuality, and in this way regain specific power and control" (2012: 116). In turn, women from the so-called West often become dependent on their Zanzibari partners: a plot of land or a house they buy on the island is registered in their husband's name; they often do not speak Swahili and are dependent on their partners both when it comes to formal procedures in government offices and everyday purchases related to the business they run together (2012: 105). Men also often keep their wives away from other emigrants, to make it easier for themselves to conceal their extramarital sexual adventures, which in turn causes even greater isolation of women.

Hegemonic masculinity

The category of hegemonic masculinity relates mainly to the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (Connell 1995: 74), R. W. Connell draws attention to its links with authority and rationality (1995: 90), and further – with competitiveness, career orientation, suppression of emotions and homophobia (1995: 123). We find similar features in descriptions of the traditional division of gender roles, which "designate separate spaces for women and men, assigning the former a reproductive, symbolic and supportive role, while leaving the public sphere to the tutelage of men" (Dąbrowska 2010: 34). Research in many African contexts shows that the two most important components of hegemonic masculinity are sexual potency and economic power (Despres 2021; see also Groes-Green 2009, Mwaipopo 2021; Mutebi 2020).

According to Christian Groes-Green (2009), the concept of hegemonic masculinity was used inconsistently and assigned different meanings, which lead Raewyn Connell and James Messerschmidt (2005) to once again make an effort to clearly define it. Groes-Green described their concept of hegemonic masculinity as

> normative male ideal in a society which supports the gender hierarchy and subordinates marginal masculinities and men who do not comply with it. Hence, hegemonic masculinity is to be seen as a cultural prototype or ideal masculinity which is largely acknowledged and accepted by both women and men in a society, even if they have no chance of conforming to the ideal (Groes-Green 2009: 292).

Hegemony is based mainly on 'complicity' and 'stability', and gains support through the use of 'intellectual devices' (Gramsci 1957, cited in Groes-Green 2009: 288; Kurtz, 1996: 106 cited in Groes-Green 2009: 295), where the use of violence is a signal that the hegemony is no longer stable. Hegemony may be supported by violence, but most often achieves domination due to "culture, institutions, and persuasion" (Connell, Messerschmidt 2005: 832). Notably, "not many men actually meet the normative standards" (Connell 1995: 79), i.e., only a small number of men are 'rigorously practicing the hegemonic pattern in its entirety" (Connell 1995: 79), yet most men benefit from the patriarchy – the advantage, which is usually given to men by the subordination of women. However, according to Łukasz Skoczylas "hegemonic masculinity can be understood in two ways: as external hegemony (over women) and internal hegemony (over other masculinities)" (Skoczylas 2011:14), with the latter represented, for instance, by homosexuals or national or ethnic minorities – "Domination over these groups of people is achieved through advantage in terms of status, prestige, material resources, but also through various types of discrimination – primarily cultural and political – legally legalized or operating outside the legal system" (Skoczylas 2011: 14–15).

Hodgson (2001) pointed out that patriarchal relations in the Maasai community, i.e., the political and economic domination of men over women, "are not inherent to pastoralism" (Hodsgson 2001: 16). She emphasized that during the colonial period, when Tanzania was under British influence, the power of Maasai men expanded. According to her, patriarchy is

> related to colonial development interventions and state formation; specifically, the division of the complementary, interconnected responsibilities of men and women into the spatially separated, hierarchically gendered domains of 'domestic' and 'public/political,' and the consolidation of male control over cattle through the commodification of livestock, the monetization of the Maasai economy, and the targeting of men for development interventions (Hodsgson 2001: 16).

Colonial arrangements reinforced the domination of Maasai men over women, and thus – hegemonic masculinity (cf. Groes-Green 2009: 292). Let us look at the structure of this community: over time, Maasai men transition from the category of uncircumcised boys to 'warriors', and then elders: "junior elder, elder, senior elder, and venerable elder" (Hodgson 2011: 111). All men, and therefore all Maasai who have undergone the initiation ritual, hold a status higher than that of women, and embody hegemonic masculinity in relation to them. However, within the broad group of Maasai men, a hierarchy of different masculinities can also be observed: for example, warriors are subjected to the authority of elders, and it is the latter who most strongly embody hegemonic masculinity. Such masculinity, according to Connell, is always relational and contextual, i.e., it is performed differently in relation to different people, at different times and in different situations. I wish to argue that the practice

of masculinity by warriors (and elders) towards Maasai women is different from how masculinity is practiced vis-a-vis *wazungu*-wives or elders. In relationships with Maasai women, Maasai men most often embody hegemonic masculinity, the performance of which changes in the situation of marriage with women from the Global North. In relation to elders, warriors and junior elders typically perform subordinate masculinity, as Maasai elders (men) have an advantage over younger Maasai in terms of status and often material resources.

„I was bought"

Among the Maasai, marriages are most often arranged by relatives, which means that women are married to a man they cannot choose themselves[10] (cf. Talle 2007: 363), often twice their age (Saitoti 1986: 69). Maasai women are usually 14–16 (sometimes as young as 12) years old when they get married. As I mentioned earlier, the Maasai school completion rate is low, and it is there, especially in secondary schools, that students learn about their rights, such as the right not to be forced to marry. It is in school that they also get in touch with young people from other ethnic groups, which allows them to learn about different cultural codes and gender relations. However, parents often interpret it as 'cultural alienation' (Swai 2019: 218), thus most students usually finish their education after they graduate from primary or secondary school to get married (Zakayo, Lekule 2022: 123)[11]. In some families, the father chooses his son's first wife and informs him about it when the girl is already there. This is how a Maasai living near Kiberashi 'received' his first wife: as a high school student, he came home and found out that a woman had been brought for him. He had to give up further education. A few years later, he chose his second wife. His situation indicates that at some point in their lives some Maasai men are in a subordinate position, just like Maasai women. This is one of the ways in which the power of elders over warriors is manifested.

Following marriage, women's responsibilities include building a house, bringing water and wood, milking cows, washing clothes, cleaning, cooking and taking care of children. Some women explicitly say that they were "bought for cows"[12] and that is why they have to work (cf. Hodgson 2001: 15). I heard this view expressed by a Maasai woman (27/06/2022), whose family includes the Austrian woman, Mia.[13] The Maasai woman in question observed Kashu's relationship with a European woman

[10] In many Maasai marriages, however, the feeling between the spouses develops over time.

[11] However, it should be emphasized that the position of Maasai women is changing and more and more of them have the opportunity to study at post-primary and even university level.

[12] Paul Spencer (2004a: 25) wrote: "Women are exchanged for cattle in a system where the accumulation of wives is an essential investment and daughters are a commodity for exchange". In her autobiography, Ntailan Lolkoki also wrote about selling girls into marriage (e.g. Lolkoki 2018: 36).

[13] All names of my research participants have been changed in order to protect their privacy.

and compared it to other relationships within her community. She said that the Maasai men do not work because they have bought their wives to do the work. If Kashu paid for Mia with cows, she would have to work for him too. However, since they married for love, they share household chores between them (Kashu, for example, sometimes sweeps and cooks)[14].

Many Maasai working in Zanzibar say that Maasai wives are not married for love, but that they are 'bought'. Marikwa, one of my most important collaborators in Zanzibar, illustrated this by pointing to the bottle and saying: "Like this soda" (24/08/2022). He also said that one takes a Maasai wife for sex and to have children. A woman may be beaten for doing something wrong, for talking to another man (see Hodgson 2001: 43), or for sleeping with another man (Spencer 2004b: 25)[15]. By cheating, a woman questions her subordinate status while simultaneously challenging her husband's authority. According to Groes-Green, "any kind of infidelity was an insult to their (husbands') manhood" (Groes-Green 2009: 294).

Maasai women most often address their husbands in a quiet, submissive voice. As Maasai men who are husbands of migrants from the Global North say, there is no friendship in a Maasai-Maasai marriage. Leepa (married to a French woman for 9 years) emphasized that relationships within a Maasai marriage are governed by rules, that the husband controls his wife and constantly scolds her for failing to do something or doing something wrong. He believed that this affected their sexual relationship: if she hears reproaches constantly, how can she feel comfortable in bedroom? (17/04/2023). Issa (married to an American woman for 9 years) explained: "you with your husband, you don't have a friendly relationship [...] it's always just work, work, taking care of kids, or if you go to bed [...] there's no love gesture and things like that" (26/01/2023). Furthermore, Maasai women should not show they take pleasure in sex; if they expressed it, their husband might consider them prostitutes.[16] The woman is supposed to just lie there, waiting for the man to finish and go (Leepa 17/04/2023). She lies "like a log", "like a toy" or like "someone dead" (these are the terms used by the Maasai working in Zanzibar). The above descriptions correspond to Dugan Romano's observation that "[I]n a marriage in which traditionally the woman belongs to or is the server of her husband and the man the master, the woman's pleasure will be of little importance – certainly second to the man's" (2008: 48).

[14] I have also heard opinions that emphasize other aspects. A Maasai woman studying medicine believes that Maasai men stay in relationships with white women for financial reasons. A Maasai woman in a relationship with a European man believes that white women want to have control over Africans who are poorer than them. The same woman, however, when talking about her relationship with an European man, emphasizes equality and communication, which – according to her – are missing in the relationships between Maasai men and Maasai women. She also adds that *wazungu* men do not lie like Tanzanians, so relationships with them are more based on the truth than relationships with Tanzanians.

[15] However, women's position in marriage may be strengthened e.g. if they own land (Grabe 2015).

[16] Zbyszko Melosik wrote that in the Victorian era only a woman of loose morals would derive pleasure from sex – Melosik 2002: 47–48.

The circumcision[17] that Maasai women undergo may partially explain their behavior during intercourse. However, women are also socialized in an environment that ennobles such behavior. According to Groes-Green (2009), who referred to Bourdieu (2001), "sexual intercourse in many cultures is represented as an act of domination and as a symbol of male possession of a woman" (Groes-Green 2009: 298). In a Maasai marriage, this manifests in two ways: women are not only educated about the appropriate behavior in the bedroom, which prevents them from demanding pleasure for themselves, but are also circumcised. The Maasai men with whom I talked about this topic most often believed that FGM is performed to reduce the woman's libido. The beginning of subordination of Maasai women thus precedes the period when they become women (FGM is illegal in Tanzania, so it is carried out in secret, before the girls reach puberty). This tradition is maintained by women, which can be interpreted as an internalization of their subordination.[18]

Leepa explained that even if a Maasai man loves his Maasai wife, he does not show it to her so that she does not abuse it (22/03/2023). If her husband showed his feelings, she might not show him the respect he deserves. The word 'respect' used by Leepa (we speak in English), makes me think of another word 'fear'.[19] The man explained: "men and women […] there is a difference. And also to keep respect, you need to be different. Because if, if you are strong and I am strong, we can't have, uh, respect" (20/03/2023). From the above statements, there emerges an image of a marriage in which the husband is a decision-maker and the one in control, not showing much emotion, while the woman is subordinate, obedient and respectful (or, perhaps, simply fearful). Their roles are strictly defined. Men are responsible for selling animals, managing herds during drought or making decisions, and therefore dominate the public sphere, while women occupy the private (home) sphere (cf. Hodgson 2001: 33). A family construed in this way does not spend time together

[17] FGM, female genital mutilation. Kenyan Maasai woman Ntailan Lolkoki described circumcision as mutilation (Lolkoki 2018).

[18] Initiation rituals related to female circumcision are increasingly analyzed not as an expression of subordination, but as strengthening bonds among women and their agency (Esho et al. 2013, Gruenbaum et al. 2022), and are sometimes described as counter-patriarchal (Gruenbaum et al. 2022: 4). However, these descriptions do not seem to fit the Maasai community among which I conduct research. The above studies emphasize the consent expressed by girls who are to be circumcised, their age (usually after reaching puberty) (Esho et al.: 225, 224) and the fact that female and male circumcisions are equivalent (Gruenbaum et al. 2022: 3). In the community I describe in this article, girls undergo circumcision before they reach puberty and, as far as I know, are not asked for consent, and to assess male and female circumcision as equivalent would be an abuse in the context of Kaj Århem's description of these ceremonies: "The circumcision tangibly separates people from creatures of the wild. In relation to wild beasts, then, circumcised men and women are equally human in Maasai ideology. But in relation to men, women never really become fully human" (Århem 1987: 17).

[19] In an interview dated 20.03.2023, Leepa stated that a wife does this or that at home out of fear of her husband: "They are afraid. Because men, they [are] beating real, they are beating wife, Maasai woman, they are beating a lot".

during the day, even during celebrations, and the husband and wife meet mainly at night. There is not much discussion between the spouses nor joint decision-making: most often the husband makes the decision himself and then announces it to his wife. Hoogenraad noticed a similar behavior among Zanzibari men – making decisions without consulting them with their partner – and interpreted it as emphasizing masculinity (Hoogenraad 2012: 84).

Marikwa, whom I mentioned above, believed that relationship and lovemaking are the same. He asked rhetorically: "Love (physical), money, car – what else do you need?" (24/08/2022). His statement conveys the same message explicitly expressed by Leepa and Issa: that there is no friendship in marriage between a Maasai woman and a Maasai man; no conversation, no spending time together nor equality, but it is equality thar most often forms the basis of friendly relationships (Wouters 2011). A Maasai English teacher shed some more light on the marital relationship, speaking from yet another perspective: "we normally treat our wives as our first kid [...] the first kid of the family. My wife is my first kid […] Therefore, I have to decide everything for the wife and kids" (8/03/2022). A Maasai wife has therefore not only been 'bought' (marriage as a transfer of possession from father to husband – Hodgson 2001: 15), but is also treated as a child unable to make decisions: neither for herself nor for the family. Such an account resembles the Orientalist description of the 'Other' as irrational and childish (Said 2018: 69, cf. Gandhi 2008: 36). What undoubtedly emerges from the above is the lack of equality between men and women, which is considered by some researchers to be characteristic of both "traditional and contemporary African culture"[20] (Odunlami 2009: 78). According to Samuel Odunlami, women are considered inferior to men, and married women are even considered their husbands' property (Odunlami 2009: 81).

Marriage with an expiry date

Marriages among the Maasai are concluded in a traditional way, i.e., they are not officially confirmed, and the Maasai usually have no documents that register the union (unless the marriage takes place in a church – then they receive a marriage certificate). These are most often arranged and permanent marriages; divorce among the Maasai is very rare, and a marriage is a covenant between families, whereby a divorce would affect not only individuals but also families (von Mitzlaff 1994: 109, 149). In the event of a divorce due to the wife's fault, her parents would have to return the

[20] The term "traditional African cultures" is currently not used and has been replaced with "Indigenous Knowledge Systems." We cannot talk about one "African culture", and therefore about one "model of an African woman," as there are also matriarchal societies in Africa, e.g. Ashanti in Ghana, Bubi in Equatorial Guinea or Bijagós in Guinea-Bissau. I am grateful to the anonymous reviewer for drawing my attention to this aspect and indicating these examples.

cows to her husband, and the children would remain with their father (Coast 2006: 402, see also Bystydzienski 2011: 26). Not only the Maasai, but also other Tanzanians are convinced that *wazungu* enter into contract marriages, that is, marriages for several years: five, seven, twenty. After the allocated time, the couple separate, and the children are taken by the woman. This idea also affects the binational couples with whom I did my research. As Sarah, Issa's wife, said, even today some people wish they had never gotten married. She explained

> they have all this idea that, you know, white people only… like make a contract to marry for a short time, and then the woman keeps the children […] so their fear for him is our contract will expire, I will take the kids and he'll be left with nothing and no one to carry on his name. […] And if you die without children, you know, that's like a terrible thing (28.06.2022).

Her husband confirmed that his family did not think that the *mzungu* marriage would last so long, but added that some still expected him to take a Maasai wife (Issa, 26/01/2023). My long-time Maasai friend from the Handeni area, Leboy, explained that a Maasai must have a Maasai wife because such a marriage counts, while a relationship with a *mzungu* is, according to him, a contractual marriage with an 'expiry date'. When I asked him to elaborate, Leboy explained that such a contract can last, for example, twenty years, and then there is a divorce. Therefore, for him, traditional marriage was more important than an official one (08/08/2022). Issa also said that for the Maasai, documents are not important, because they are not believed to be able to prevent the breakdown of a marriage (21/07/2022).

In Sarah's statement, the salient feature was the conviction of the Maasai family that in the event of a marriage breakdown, the woman will take the children away. In the Maasai community, children belong to their father's family (Coast 2006: 402). If, for some reason, the parents separate and the mother returns to her parents, she cannot take the children with her. Therefore, the marriage with the *mzungu* seems risky to the family – if it does not survive, the Maasai will lose his children (who will be taken by their mother) and will be left in his own community without a family. Due to this risk, some families pressured Maasai men who took migrant wives from the Global North to also take (additional) Maasai wives.[21] Three men who live with their *wazungu* wives in Tanzania told me about such a situation. Kashu recalled that his father did not believe that a *mzungu* could live in the bush. Issa and Leepa's family doubted the migrant wives would stay for long:

> my family they don't know, of course, Emma. They know someone white coming and they'd never see this one and they don't know the family, they don't know how they are.

[21] One of the migrants married a Maasai man who already had a Maasai wife, which she found out some time after her wedding.

> So they say: *Are you sure with one who you marry? Are you sure she's going to stay? Maybe you need to have another wife*. *Because we don't know her and maybe she's going to go away* (Leepa, 21.03.2023)

From Leepa's statement, it can be concluded that the fact that his family did not know the family of his future wife played an additional role. Among the Maasai, knowing the family of a future daughter-in-law is of great importance. The respect given to a family proves their daughter's – the potential daughter-in-law's – good upbringing. Moreover, as I mentioned above, marriages tend to be concluded between families – it is not the young people who communicate, but their relatives. In two of the five families of my research participants, the men were told that they could not marry a *mzungu* and that they had to marry a Maasai woman. Leepa told me how his family had pressured him to take a Maasai wife (even before he met Emma), but he resisted, saying he wasn't ready; he also did not want a wife from his community, because he would have to 'share' her with his same-age peers (every time one of his 'age-mates' visited Leepa, he would have to allow him to spend the night with his wife, though she would have to consent to it every time – see Talle 1988: 99). He was pressured again when his younger brother wanted to get married, and according to tradition he shouldn't have done so until his older brother was married. However, Leepa stuck to his decision and, eventually, the younger brother got married before him. When Leepa finally introduced Emma to his family as his future wife, he faced fierce opposition. The situation became so tense that the man left his *boma* for a period of two or three months, during which another family negotiated with his father on his behalf. Issa's family opposed his marriage to Sarah at the time when they learned that the man had decided to take only one wife. Previously, when they talked about her, they had nothing against their relationship. Perhaps they did not believe that the relationship would last, and besides, they were convinced that Issa would also have a Maasai wife (21/07/2022). The neighbors of Kashu, who decided to marry Mia, also talked about an additional Maasai wife as they believed that a marriage with an Austrian woman would not last.

In many communities, there are prohibitions that prevent people from marrying people from outside a given group (Bystydzienski 2011: 165 after Goodwin, Cramer 2002; cf. Ząbek 2016: 150). Moreover, marriage is not just a personal matter, but concerns the whole family and the wider community (Ząbek 2016: 151). Therefore, the three Maasai men should have bowed to the authority of their fathers and agreed to take Maasai wives, and thus should have confirmed their subordinate position (to their father). By choosing a *mzungu* wife, men went against tradition, undermining the authority of their fathers and refusing to perform subordinate masculinity.

Interestingly, some European women dating Maasai men have nothing against a Maasai wife, precisely because "they are like property, bought for cows", as one of the women who was in a relationship with a Maasai told me (09/08/2022). Her

relationship broke up when the European woman discovered that her partner was also dating other *wazungu*. Two European women with Maasai husbands said they might have been able to accept an additional Maasai wife, but not a *mzungu*. Mia would consider this option, if Kashu's family announced that he absolutely had to have a Maasai wife (for example, so that their Maasai children would take care of the cows). If she knew about this condition before the wedding, and it was the only way to stay with her beloved man, she would try to live in such a polygamous relationship (15/03/2023). Another woman, who lives permanently in Europe with her Maasai husband and two children, told me that it would be easier for her to accept her husband's additional partner, who would be a Maasai woman, rather than a *mzungu*. She explained that perhaps she – as a woman from a different culture – was unable to meet some needs that a Maasai woman could; however, if her husband also became involved with another *mzungu*, she would feel that she did not meet some of his expectations (21/06/2022).

Some of these statements suggest that European women classify Maasai wives in a different way than they classify themselves. Maasai women are not considered rivals, they do not have the status of competitors vis-a-vis women from the Global North, they are not treated as equals or partners[22]. European women did not seem to value relationships that were not motivated by love, and did not treat women who were 'bought for cows' as 'real' wives (in love-marriage). In this way, their attitude was somewhat similar to that of Maasai men. We should remember that men entering relationships with tourists on the Kenyan coast explained their community's acceptance of these relationships in a very similar way: such relationships were – in the eyes of their wives, girlfriends and family – "only for the money" (Chege 2017: 74). Therefore, Kenyan women also did not consider tourist women as rivals or as their partners' 'true' loved ones.

"The problem is the French woman"

In the Maasai community, marriage is not based on romantic love (cf. Romano 2008: 15), which can be understood as a "strong attachment, fascination and sexual attraction" (Romanowicz 2021: 50). My research participants decided to form a relationship out of love, and the decision to marry was their personal decision, without pressure from other family members (cf. Romanowicz 2021: 56). It was also based on a personal choice made by women, which highlights the difference between decisions

[22] Interestingly, a Maasai woman in a relationship with an European man had a similarly different assessment towards the second Maasai woman. She said that she was once supposed to become the second wife of a Maasai man for whom she had some feelings, and this situation was acceptable to her because his first wife was uneducated. Currently, this Maasai woman cannot imagine becoming a second wife under any circumstances (15.01.2023).

about marriage made in the Maasai community, and emphasizes the importance of equality in the relationship (see Romano 2008: 15). Such partnership is also highlighted by the approach to gainful employment: despite the fact that only two out of five wives of the Maasai men hold a work permit, almost all of them found a way to support themselves in their husband's country, ensuring their own independence[23].

As I wrote above, in a Maasai family it is the man who most often decides about the household, and the wife is subordinated to his decisions. Such an arrangement most often undergoes transformation in the relationships between Maasai men and migrant women from the Global North, in which the husband and wife begin to function more like partners. However, the change in the behavior of Maasai men – *wazungu's* husbands – is not always associated with a change in their attitudes and beliefs. This is perfectly illustrated by my conversation with Leepa and his French wife:

> Leepa: in Maasai is a man […] the boss of the house […] in Maasai, when you cough […] like you say 'He!' […] Everything silence.
> Emma: And the problem is the French woman. (laugh)
> L: The woman, she's not going to reply anything and she is going to do what you say. But I try here, it's difference. (Emma laughs)
> EW: What's the difference?
> L: She's not silenced. (Emma laughs)
> EW: How do you feel with this?
> L: I'm not happy because, uh… (Emma laughs, Leepa smiles)
> E: He hates this. (Emma laughs)
> L: […] I really hate very much. Because it is normal, it's real man […] The head of the house is man (20.03.2023)

Another difficulty consists in expressing emotions, especially negative ones. Sarah said that she sometimes shouts in anger, to which her husband is not used (28/06/22) (as I wrote above, Maasai women usually address their husbands in a hushed voice). Some of the migrants hoped that their husbands would change a bit "in the Western way". Ursula, for instance, wanted to spend some time with Nasoro every day, just like they did before the wedding. However, as she acclimatized to his village, he began to spend more and more time away from home. These "different models of gender relations" (Rodriguez-Garcia 2006: 421) became a source of conflict, but over the years, Ursula got used to her husband leaving the house after breakfast and returning in the evening, so in this regard their marriage resembles a Maasai marriage. Anna admits that she tried to change her husband but realized that she needed to work on herself instead.

Most Maasai husbands married to migrant women have changed their approach to housework. Mia, Anna and Sarah's husbands help with cooking, washing clothes

[23] Perhaps the fact that *wazungu* have economic capital (as well as cultural and social ones that can be transformed into an economic capital) also consolidates these relationships.

and childcare, although within the Maasai community this work is assigned to women. Leepa believes that cooking is a woman's job, but he takes care of the children (he is responsible, among other things, for putting them to bed every evening), and sometimes he also cleans and puts in the laundry. Maasai men sometimes cook for other men, for example at meat feast *ol-pul*, but not for women. Therefore, the change that has taken place in Issa is particularly notable. He stated that among the Maasai, activities are divided into those performed by men and those performed by women. Sarah believed that since she was having their baby, Issa would also take care of it (before she gave birth, she mainly meant changing diapers). Six years after the birth of her son, she talked about it in the following way:

> his comment had been: […] *I'll, I can learn how to do these things [look after the child] and I can help you as long as my family isn't there to watch it* […] But then I had a C-section and his mom was around and I couldn't get out of the bed and his mom didn't know how to use the throwaway diapers, didn't know how to use this kind of stove, a wash machine she didn't know how to use. She came to our house and she was helping, but really she could help hold the baby up. […] So then he didn't really have a choice. I mean, it was in front of his mom or if any relatives were visiting [Issa had to do everything at home] (Sarah, 21.07.2022)

Because Issa's mother, who lived in a Maasai *boma*, was unable to run a modern household, her son was forced to take on responsibilities that were considered a woman's job, thus leading to a modification of gender relations within his home. When I asked if Issa had heard any comments from his family about him doing such 'feminine' activities, the man said he hadn't, but that he could "imagine their minds thinking she [Sarah] is making me like, I wouldn't say slave, but she's making me work for her [...] or do things I shouldn't be doing" (21/07/2022). Later in the conversation, Issa expressed it even more emphatically, saying:

> I'm sure that's what everybody think for every man that's married to *mzungu*. Especially when we go to Europe, they just think we're going to babysit, we're going to work, we're going to be the women. What is the women's job? (Sarah laughs) To take care of the baby while you, women, go to work like a men. (Issa laughs) (21.07.2022)

From the above, it is clear how precisely the division of duties into those of men and of women operates. George, a Tanzanian interviewed by Jill M. Bystydzienski, expressed it clearly: "to do any of the women's work is considered shameful" (Bystydzienski 2011: 97). He included all housework and childcare within the remit of women's work, leaving the breadwinning to men (Bystydzienski 2011: 97). Other Maasai husbands of *wazungu* (Kashu, Saitoti) help around the house, but – as they say – they do not hear negative comments about engaging in 'feminine' activities. In addition to a change in the approach to household chores, there are also noticeable changes in their views on gender relations. Leepa said that his marriage to Emma changed

his attitude towards Maasai women. He explained this using an example: if he were to enter a relationship with a Maasai woman, he would give her more freedom and the opportunity to share her thoughts (20/03/2023). Bystydzienski quoted a similar statement: "I think being in an intercultural relationship gave me more awareness, a different perspective on gender issues" (2011: 107). It is also worth noting that in the Maasai community, women usually eat among themselves, and men eat alone (cf. Romano 2008: 41); in the binational couples discussed in this article, this type of division is not practiced.

As I wrote in the earlier part of the article, the sexual life of the Maasai is not very refined: there is no kissing nor cuddling, although these behaviors are slowly emerging, also via the Maasai working in Zanzibar. Some Maasai men who had close relationships with *wazungu* say that going to bed with a Maasai woman "is boring" (cf. Meiu 2017: 15, who wrote that Samburu rarely engage in kissing or foreplay). One of the Maasai men working in Zanzibar said that he liked sex and that he was aroused by the sounds made by his wife, the *mzungu* (Maasai women usually lie quietly). His statement perhaps echoes the statement made by one of the research participants in Susan Frohlick's study on intimate relationships between female tourists and men from the Caribbean. One of them said: "We all say that girls from Europe are hot, really wild, they like sex." (Frohlick 2007: 145). According to Romano, in a romantic relationship, including in the sexual life of a couple, what counts is the pleasure of both partners (2008: 48–49).

In the Maasai community, it is forbidden for men to watch childbirth. Bringing children into the world has been the domain of women and only they can be present during childbirth. On this issue too, the couples formed by Maasai men and women from the Global North who live in Tanzania prove to be transformative. Among my research participants, all men were either with their wives when their children were born, or they wished they could be present. Leepa, for example, accompanied his wife during two deliveries, as Emma gave birth in France.[24] Men whose wives gave birth in Tanzania stayed with them until the actual delivery or until the decision to have a C-section – then, they were most often asked to leave the room (only one of them participated in the delivery). This aspect also shows that *wazungu* husbands are in fact redefining the concept of masculinity.

Conclusion

Both migrants from the Global North and Maasai men have made an effort to adapt to their partner's cultural codes. In each marriage, the achieved consensus looks

[24] At the time of writing, Emma and Leepa have become parents of three children. The youngest was born in September 2023, in France, slightly earlier than planned, which is why Leepa did not have time to arrive for the birth.

slightly different, but the everyday life of these couples differs (sometimes significantly) from the everyday life of Maasai couples. Hegemonic masculinity, enacted in traditional Maasai marriages, is being negotiated and mitigated here. The Maasai men's relationship with their fathers is similarly negotiated, which leads to reduced subordination. It should be added, however, that their stay in post-primary school, as well as men's economic migration or volunteer work, probably also influenced the change in their perception of gender relations, even before they entered binational relationships.

My case study shows clear differences in construing this type of relationship when compared to the relationships that arise as a result of women's tourism to Zanzibar (Hoogenraad 2012). Migrant women described by Hoogenraad (2012) became dependent on their husbands because they did not communicate in Swahili and could not run a business on their own. Most of my research participants speak Swahili very well and are financially independent. Financial independence transforms gender relations because "[E]arning money and supporting the family was traditionally an exclusively male role" (Romano 2008: 85). Men, remaining in their country of origin, benefit from their social, cultural and economic capital, which differs from the situation of men emigrating to Denmark (Holmgaard 2022) or Australia (Hoogenraad 2021). The relationships I have described seemed balanced, similar to the Tanzanian-Danish relationships at the time when these couples were in Tanzania (Holmgaard 2022). The results of my research are consistent with observations made by Bystydzienski, who noted that "in most cases, the couples over time develop a relatively egalitarian division of labor" (Bystydzienski 2011: 107).

Marital relationships, which result from encounters that happen mainly in the context of tourism, seem to have the potential to alleviate the patriarchal discourse that dominates within the Maasai community. As we have seen, the transformation affects not only gender roles within marriage, but also, to some extent, the very performance of masculinity within the extended family.

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