THE BEADED AND ASSOCIATED ADORNMENTS OF THE MAASAI

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The lavish beaded jewelry of the Maasai developed from comparatively modest beginnings. Since glass beads were originally a costly rarity in landlocked East Africa, elaborate beaded adornments only became possible in the second half of the 20th century. There are descriptions and illustrations of early objects in the publications of German and British colonial officials such as Moritz Merker and Claude Hollis, but much has been learned since their time. This paper describes the beaded jewelry and utilitarian objects of the Maasai, including their traditional Maa proper names, as well as the glass beads and other materials used in their construction.

INTRODUCTION

The Maasai inhabit an archetypal landscape with the highest mountain in Africa and, for many, represent the African people par excellence, whose unique way of life still attracts attention today. The colonial period, beginning in the mid-1880s, brought the arbitrary division of the settlement area of the Maasai into two parts, today's Kenya and Tanzania. A significant part of Maasai culture consists of beaded jewelry, the various forms of which in the late 19th and early 20th centuries are the subject of this article. It draws on early accounts of explorers and missionaries, as well as colonial officials, who were concerned with the material culture and language of the Maasai. Some of these publications appeared only in German and were never translated. Since the main flowering of Maasai bead jewelry did not occur until the 1950s, the development during this period will also be discussed.

HISTORY OF THE MAASAI

The Maasai belong to the Nilotic peoples and speak Maa, a Nilo-Saharan language (Laube 1986:9). The ancestors of modern Maa speakers probably migrated from the area of present-day southern Sudan to East Africa more than a millennium ago (Galaty 1993:61ff.; Laube 1986:11-12; Spear 1993:1). During these migrations, they mixed with some of the resident populations and displaced others. Genetic analyses show that, contrary to some common beliefs, they are a very heterogeneous people. They have absorbed parts of the population that settled in East Africa long before the Maasai, such as the Sandawe and especially Afro-Asian groups with Cushitic languages. There are also elements of the Bantu population that also migrated to East Africa (Tishkoff et al. 2009). Cushitic cultural heritage is represented by Maasai customs such as the division into age groups and the performance of circumcision (Laube 1986:10-11).

In the early 19th century, conflicts broke out between sedentary Maasai groups – sometimes etymologically imprecisely referred to by the Swahili term Kwafi – and the nomadic Maasai; other tribes were also involved (Jennings 2005:199-200; Voßen 1980:94). Changes in domination were frequent, and individual Maasai groups were strongly decimated or also assimilated. The exact course of these so-called Iloikop wars and the ensuing migrations has not been fully elucidated to this day (Bückendorf 1995:48ff.; Höhnel 1892:480; Laube 1986:16; Spear 1993:22-23; Voßen 1980:93ff.).

Their sense of being a chosen people, as well as their very efficient military system, made the Maasai feared, but also respected and even admired opponents (Merker 1904:114). From 1850, the Maasai dominated the steppe regions from Lake Baringo in the north to Ugogo in what is now central Tanzania, without really forming a single unit. This supremacy ended only when successive outbreaks of bovine pneumonia in the 1880s and rinderpest from 1891 decimated their extensive herds. Moreover, smallpox epidemics as well as famines claimed large numbers of human victims (Stuhlmann 1894:811ff.; Thomson 1885:204; Waller 1976:530ff.). After the beginning of the colonial period in what later became Kenya, the British administration

initially cooperated with the Maasai, but restricted them geographically from 1904 and finally expelled them forcibly from the areas north of Lake Naivasha in 1911. They settled in an area to the south that stretched from the Mara River in the west to Tsavo in the east. Members of the Kisonko and Purko-Maasai, two important groups separated at that time from their branches in Kenya, lived in what is today Tanzania. Their very extensive settlement area was significantly reduced by the German colonial administration until 1918 (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The location of the tribal groups in Kenya and Tanzania mentioned in the text (image: M. Oehrl).

FIRST CONTACTS AND DESCRIPTIONS

The German missionaries of the British "Church Missionary Society" – Johann Krapf, Jakob Erhardt, and Johannes Rebmann – had already made contact with the Maasai in the middle of the 19th century on their journeys to the East African interior in the environs of Kilimanjaro. This is also true for officer Carl von der Decken, in 1861, as well as the botanist Johannes Hildebrandt in 1876 (Decken 1871, 2:31ff.). What all these ventures have in common is that no one succeeded in penetrating directly into the populated Maasai highlands. Thus, Krapf obtained his most valuable information through Lemasegnot, a Maasai who had been abducted as a youth and taken to the coast (Krapf 1858:267-273).

Only the German physician Dr. Gustav Fischer, who was supported by the Hamburg Geographical Society, was able to enter Maasai country (December 1882 to August 1883), and then only by making high tribute payments known as *hongo*. These included cloth, iron wire, and an astonishing quantity of glass beads; Fischer (1884:57, 195) writes of a total of 10,000 60-cm-long strands. Fischer was, nevertheless, forced to turn back in June of 1883 north of Lake Naivasha in the face of large numbers of Maasai warriors, primarily because trade supplies were running low and his porters refused to accompany him any further (Fischer 1884:81). The legacy of Fischer's expedition includes the detailed records he left behind, as well as the various trinkets and utensils he collected, which are held mainly in Berlin and Hamburg (Fischer 1884:357ff., Plates 4-6, 66-68).[1] Shortly after Fischer, the British geologist Joseph Thomson, commissioned by the Royal Geographical Society, crossed the country all the way up to Lake Victoria (March 1883 to May 1884). Thomson wrote a very lively report which describes quite accurately the social structure and life of the Maasai in their different age groupings. He mentions the religious leaders, the *laibon*, who were powerful in magic and influential in rituals as well as war campaigns (Thomson 1885:273), while noting that most of the decisions of the tribe were made by councils of elders. Thomson (1885:283) received much information from Kombo-Ngishu, a former Maasai slave who had succeeded on the coast as a caravan trader.

Although Maasai women did not have many rights (Merker 1904:118), young girls lived in the separate kraal of the young warriors for several years before their circumcision and marriage, practicing what Henry Johnston (1886:416) called "free love" without any obligation to work. Pregnancies were, however, to be avoided and were punished. The explorer Ludwig Höhnel considered the term "free love" to be exaggerated; as a rule, couples would form, which, he observed, "intimately embraced like lovers." Beaded gifts to girls played a major role in courtship (Höhnel 1892:267, 320), and a Maasai youth's beaded jewelry was made by his favorite girl. Generally, beadwork was created only by women and the skill was passed from mother to daughter. Information on this is sparse in the early literature. What is striking is the amount of adornment that was also worn by the men, especially the warriors. In polygynous Maasai society, the marriage of initiated young women to older men who had outgrown the warrior group was more a matter of the bride price paid in cattle and was rarely associated with emotional expectations (Johnston 1886:416; Merker 1904:45-46). Young warriors from the age of 20

to about 35 essentially consumed milk and meat, under special ritual conditions, while the other age groups of men, as well as the women and children, also ate vegetal food. This was received by the women in trade from neighboring, sometimes even hostile, groups in exchange for animal products. For this to be possible, the arrangement had to be made that women were not subjected to male warfare. For example, while Maasai and Chagga or Kikuyu men fought each other "to the knife" (Thomson 1885:166, 308), women were not bothered (Baumann 1894:242; Fischer 1884:75; Höhnel 1892:315; Johnston 1886:404; Spear 1997:41).

In contrast, relations with the *El-konono*, the blacksmiths who made the bulk of the Maasai's shields and spears (Thomson 1885:425), were characterized by social disparity and dependence. There are different opinions about the exact status of this group, as well as about what distinguished the *El-konono* from the Dorobo people who lived, so to speak, in the shadow of the Maasai, mainly by hunting.[2] According to Moritz Merker (1904:110), the blacksmiths were a separate, despised caste which was only allowed to maintain social contacts among themselves, but were part of the respective Maasai tribe (Höhnel 1892:436). British colonial administrator Claude Hollis (1905:330) adds that the blacksmiths were members of the clans, especially those of the Kipuyoni, but spoke among themselves a dialect of Maa that was difficult to understand and had little contact with the outside.

MAASAI CLOTHING AND JEWELRY

When thinking of the Maasai, people commonly envision picturesque women adorned with numerous, wide necklaces composed of beads in a variety of colors. Movies like *Out of Africa*, based on Karen Blixen's novel which is set around the time of World War I, portray Maasai women with such collars in individual scenes. It is often forgotten that this splendor is a development of the 1940s and 1950s and that at the beginning of the century, beads were scarce. Truly early beadwork of the Maasai, from the time before World War I, is a rarity and mainly ended up in Germany and Great Britain, the two former colonial powers.

The following description of traditional Maasai clothing and jewelry is mainly taken from the detailed monograph of the German colonial officer Moritz Merker. He published it in 1904 after being stationed in Moshi from 1895 to 1902. Information provided by other authors such as Thomson, Fischer, and Hollis is similar, but much less detailed. Merker first puts forward an idiosyncratic theory of the origin of the Maasai from the Arabian Peninsula, which was already controversial and widely rejected in his time. In his view, this migration to the south lasted several millennia.

The ethnographic section of the book is very comprehensive and thorough even in modern terms, containing numerous illustrations and providing Maasai proper names for the various objects. Table 1 compares the terms used by Merker to those provided by colonial administrator Claude Hollis and anthropologist Donna Klumpp, where data are available. Although Moshi is located in the area of the Chagga tribe on the southern slope of Kilimanjaro, Merker took "extensive trips for work especially to the Maasai landscapes" (Merker 1910:x). Merker does not explicitly mention where among the Maasai his observations were made. His anthropological measurements and descriptions of Maasai individuals cite their origin in the region primarily south of Mount Meru and Kilimanjaro, with some also located near the border in present-day Kenya (Merker 1904:350ff.). The photographs in his book are all from northern Tanzania, while his map only provides a rather summary depiction of the area. Ninety-five objects collected by Merker are in the Linden Museum in Stuttgart.

CLOTHING AND ADORNMENT CA. 1900

Here I focus on Maasai objects that were frequently decorated with glass beads. Merker's monograph discusses many, but not all traditional items. The Austrian explorer Oscar Baumann (1894:157) mentions the great uniformity of the Maasai before the turn of the 20th century, something that is confirmed by other early authors. Later literature, especially Donna Klumpp's (1987) dissertation on her field research among the Purko-Maasai beginning in 1970, reveals the enormous proliferation and variation of body jewelry that occurred over the course of the 20th century. In the process, except for particularly traditional objects, changes in object names also took place. Klumpp (1987:83) explicitly distinguishes between objects that serve "magico-religious-medicinal purposes" and pure "fashion ornaments." Klumpp depicts the abundance of jewelry after the mid-20th century in numerous illustrations. Another detailed publication is Johannes Kalter's (1978) book on Maasai material culture from the 19th century to the 1970s. He also deals quite extensively with the sometimes contradictory data of various earlier authors.

Around 1900, men and women wore leather clothing exclusively, which was depilated except in the case of the warrior cape. While warriors wore a relatively small cloak of calfskin (*e megiti*) and often a piece of leather to sit upon, older men used a larger cloak. According to Merker (1904:132f.) and Hollis (1905: Plate II, xvi), these were occasionally decorated at the edges with one or two rows of white or red beads.

Table 1. Comparison of Maasai Names for Jewelry/Beadwork Noted by Different Authors (Singular).

Object	Merker	Hollis	Klumpp
Cape ♂	*e megiti*	*o en-gila*	*enkila*
Skirt ♀	*ol ogessana*	*ol-okesena*	*olekesena*
Face frame ♂	*os sidai*	*oe-sidai*	*sidai*
Brass spirals ♀♂	*surudia* (pl.)	*surutya* (pl.)	*isurutia* (pl.)
Ear jewelry top ♀♂	*ol oimeri*		*olaimeri*
Bead string ♀	*er naitule*		
Metal jewelry ♂♀	*es segengei*	*seengani*	
Neck spiral, large ♀	*es segengei e murt*	*seghenge oo-murto*	*esekenke emurt*
Necklace ♀	*e mairenai*		
Bracelet top ♂	*ol gilescho*		
Upper arm clasp ♂	*e rab*	*e-rap*	*errap*
Bracelet ♂	*n gamnini*		
Metal rattle ♂	*en dualla*		*oltuala enkeju*
Leather belt, narrow ♂	*eng ene om bolos*		
Leather belt, narrow ♀	*en dore*		*entore*
Leather belt, wide ♀	*en ailiena*		*enkimeita*
Snuff container ♂♀	*en dulet*		*enkidong olkumpau*

Women's clothing was more substantial and consisted of two parts, each made of sewn goat skins. The upper part (*ol egischobo*) bore a few beads, while the women's skirt-like leather backskirt (*ol ogessana*) usually contained more: "A row of colorful, small beads leading around the lower edge is most common; often the inset patches are also sewn around with beads" (Merker 1904:134). In later years this became somewhat more heavily decorated (Musée du quai Branly 71.1938.45.1.1-3), but very lavish patterns are an innovation of the second half of the 20th century.

The most striking ornament of the warrior was the leather face frame (*os sidai*) encircled with ostrich feathers. This was occasionally decorated with beads and cowries (Berlin III E 421, collected in 1876 by the botanist Johannes Hildebrandt) (Moko 2021:109, Figure 6). This is an object for war with ceremonial functions and a protective effect. A variation for warriors who had killed a lion was the replacement of the ostrich feathers with the fur of the lion's mane (Merker 1904:135).

Men sometimes covered the head with a cap in "the shape of a baby's hood" (Merker 1904:136) made from the second stomach of a cow or from a different leather embroidered on the edge with beads (Musée de quai Branly, 71.1905.7.339). Caps were sewn by the warriors themselves.

Many pieces of Maasai jewelry were made of various metals, such as iron, copper, brass, and tin, materials whose use has survived well into the 20th century. Married women adorned their necks with a very typical, substantial spiral of thick iron wire (*es segengei e murt*), the first and last turns of which were sometimes wrapped with thin copper or brass wire (Merker 1904:139). Young girls and women also "wrapped" their arms and legs in cuffs of iron wire (*es segengei*), which sometimes left only the joints exposed and significantly limited their mobility (Figure 2).

Other important pieces of jewelry for married women with children were two heavy spirals of brass wire on leather straps (plural *surudia*; singular, *e surudiai*) in their stretched earlobes. Usually, because of their weight, they were additionally supported with a sometimes-beaded carrying strap worn over the head. They were occasionally decorated with a beaded leather strap across the spiral and iron chains (Merker 1904:137-138) (Figure 3). Women's fertility was

Figure 2. Maasai women with jewelry made of iron wire, 1902-1905 (photo: Max Weiß).

connected with *surudia*, and many ritual practices in Maasai life associated with childbirth, the naming of children, and initiation could not take place without them. From the leather carriers for the brass spirals in the lower ear hole, the well-known earflaps developed over the years through various intermediate stages (Figure 4). Older men with circumcised children and male initiates also wore *surudia* on ritual occasions. The various authors differ in their statements on this topic.

Figure 3. Maasai *surudia*, Kenya, 16.5 cm long, collected by Sidney Hinde (courtesy of The Trustees of the British Museum, London, acc. no. Af1900, 0620.22a-b).

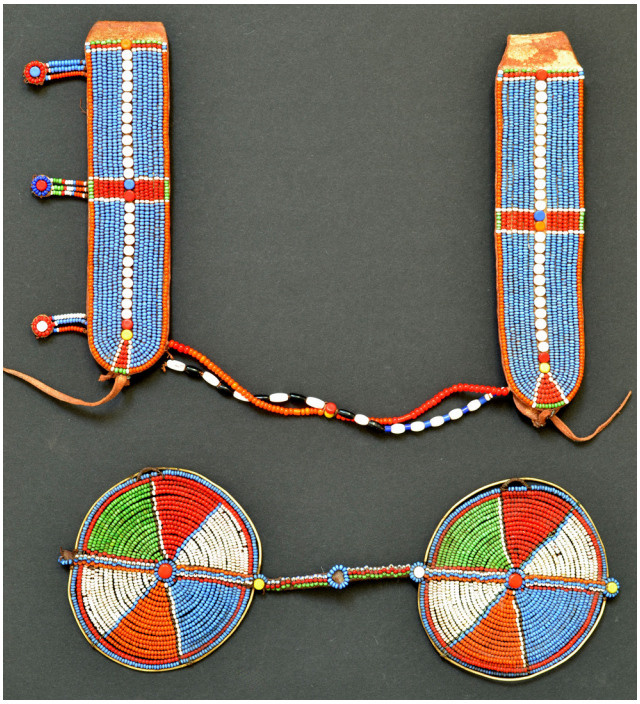

Figure 4. Maasai earflaps and decoration, Kenya or Tanzania, 17 cm by 26 cm, 1960s, private collection (photo: M. Oehrl).

In the upper ear hole, women wore jewelry made of tin sheets and thin handmade iron chains, indicating their status as initiated. This ear jewelry (plural: *el oimer*; singular: *ol oimeri*), which according to Merker (1904:137) was also used by men, as well as the larger metal jewelry of the women, were made by the wives of the blacksmiths (Merker 1904:114). Wire and especially thin chains made by the Chagga were also caravan trade goods (Fischer 1884:48-49). This jewelry, which was placed in the widened holes in the upper and separately in the lower part of the ear, saw many changes in design over a period of more than a 100 years. These changes were recorded in sketches of the Purko-Maasai by Donna Klumpp (1987:252-258) (Figure 5).

At dances, young girls adorned the head with combinations of single or double strings of beads and iron chains (*er naitule*) (Merker 1904:138). During initiation ceremonies, they wore headbands adorned with cowries and chains, already mentioned by Fischer (1884:64). An illustration of this can be found in Kalter (1978:232, Figure 2). Merker (1904:65) describes only grass rings, which were decorated with an ostrich feather.

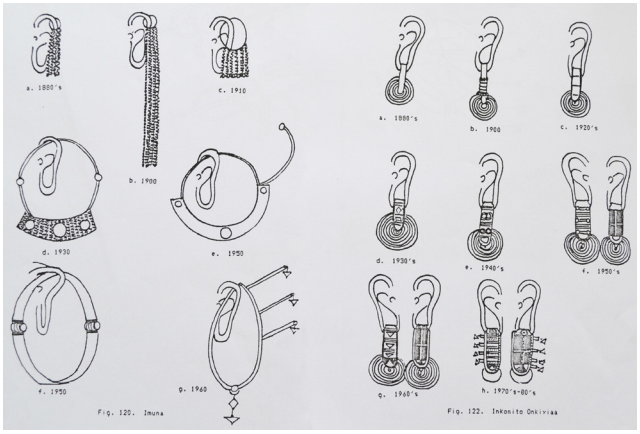

Figure 5. Ear jewelry (Klumpp 1987:252, 254).

Warriors used simple metal necklaces with attached long chains (*es segengei*). For women, individual strings of beads made of small, pea-sized white and blue beads or ring beads, mostly threaded on wire, were worn as additional neck jewelry (Hollis 1904:282), which usually indicated greater wealth (Merker 1904:139). Ring beads (*en gonongoi*) specifically blue ones, were threaded on a leather strip and worn primarily by fathers and older women. They were used in ceremonies such as the circumcision of sons and were associated with symbolic meanings (Moko 2021:112-114). At peace ceremonies, the sheep that was presented wore a necklace of ring beads (Merker 1904:100).

Beaded bands (*'e mairenai*) are described by Merker (1904:139) thus: "The beads are either strung onto wire or onto threads twisted from cattle sinew, or are also sewn onto narrower or wider flat leather rings. In the latter case, the beads are arranged by color in rectilinear, usually square, patterns." Still quite rare in the 19th century, these were the forerunners of the more substantial collars of the mid-20th century (Fischer 1884: Plate 5, no. 23; Widenmann 1899:53). (Figure 6). The centerpiece of these collars was sometimes adorned with *Conus* discs and metal chains. The discs were a status symbol throughout East Africa and were imitated in ceramics early on in Europe (Figure 7).

Warriors adorned themselves on the left upper arm with a leather bracelet with beads (*ol gilescho*) or with a horn clasp (*e rab*) (Merker 1904:140), and on the right forearm with a cuff (*n gamnini*) made of iron beads (Hollis 1905:295; Merker 1904:140) or, later on, also of small, mostly blue glass beads (Merker 1904:141; Thomson 1885:248) (Figure 8). On the legs, warriors wore metal rattles (*en dualla*) whose leather straps were often decorated with glass beads at dances, but also in everyday life and during warlike undertakings (Merker 1904:142) (Figure 9).

A dance ornament of the warriors was a very narrow leather belt (*eng ene om bolos*) embroidered with small

Figure 6. Woman's necklace (*e mairenai*), Kenya, 26 cm long, collected by Henry Johnston (courtesy of The Trustees of the British Museum, London, acc. no. Af1901,1113.21).

beads. It was also used by very young girls, for whom the belt was supplemented in front with metal chains as a "fig leaf" (*en dore*).

Older girls and young women used an elaborate belt, about 3 cm wide, with a striking triangular pattern (*en ailiena*) to hold their long leather skirt (Figure 10). According to Hollis (1905:301, Plate XX), this belt was restricted to young, unmarried and uninitiated girls, but Merker (1904:142) also observed them on older women. Moko (2021) describes how the belts were passed on to other girls after initiation. They could also be used by the newly initiated boys during their seclusion: "The new initiates wear objects from other groups of the society, such as ear pendants and black clothes from women, a replica of a bow and wooden arrows, and a blue-black beads necklace from the elders" (Moko 2021:122). The belts were made by the girls' mothers. With the same basic pattern, there are rather rustic specimens made of larger Venetian glass beads in classic colors such as red, blue, and white. There are, however, also old pieces with very small beads in a variety of colors, often transparent, whose expressive colors seem to fit less into a traditional context. By the time of Klumpp's fieldwork in the 1970s, the traditional triangular pattern of the belts had mostly been replaced by stripes and blocks of color, and the belts had become wider, which was also accompanied by a change of name (*enkimeita*).

Figure 7. Woman's necklace (*e mairenei*) with *Conus* disc (*ol galash*), Tanzania, 45 cm long, collected by Moritz Merker before 1902 (photo: Dominik Drasdow, courtesy of the Linden-Museum Stuttgart, acc. no. 021358).

The ritual consumption of tobacco was reserved for older men and women, meaning that snuff and chewing-tobacco containers (*en dulet*) and the like were not part of the warriors' equipment (Merker 1904:35, Figure 6; Moko

Figure 8. Upper arm clasp (*e rab*), Kenya, 18.5 cm long, collected by H.R. Tate (courtesy of The Trustees of the British Museum, London, acc. no. Af1901,1114.30).

Figure 9. Leg rattle (*en dualla*), Kenya, 32 cm long, collected by Sidney Hinde (courtesy of The Trustees of the British Museum, London, acc. no. Af1900,0620.33).

2021:113, Figure 8b). Bamboo, cattle or rhinoceros horn, and rarely ivory or wood in various forms were the main materials. The containers were worn on copper or iron chains (Figure 11). Krapf (1857:463) identifies containers made from the pitted fruit of the mkoma tree. From the middle of the 20th century, the forms changed and with them the names, such as *enkidong* or *olkumpau*, depending on use and region (Klumpp 1987:247).

Calabashes of both bulbous and narrow shapes were decorated with leather strips adorned with cowries, more rarely with a few beads (Merker 1904:37, Figure 9). Kalter (1987:49) lists four different old forms, which he classifies and names according to their function. From the beginning of the 20th century, a special type of calabash, presumably for special occasions, is completely covered with beads. In collections, these are usually attributed to the Maasai or to the Kamba who lived to the east (British Museum, Maasai Af1944,05.3, Kamba Af1914,0516.7.a, Af1936,0104.5, Af1947,16.345). The Kamba, however, had their own style of decorating variously shaped calabashes, which additionally involved the use of copper chains. Kalter (1978:50) attributes these calabashes to the Chagga, mainly because of the primary use of white, blue, red, and pink beads. This could be possible, but the beads used in old Chagga pieces are always significantly smaller, so that the attribution remains uncertain (Figure 12).

Figure 10. Detail of two belts (*en ailiena*), Kenya or Tanzania, 74-78 cm long, early 20th century, private collection (photo: M. Oehrl).

Finally, Merker (1904:40) describes large leather bags with sparsely beaded appliqués. Other authors mention large, triangular leather breastplates (pectorals), which were also decorated with beads and metal chains (Fischer 1884: Plate 5, no. 3; Klumpp 1987:241) (BM Af1904-102 and 103). Hollis (1905:301, Plate XX) shows a poncho-like and similarly decorated leather ornament, which was used during war campaigns (*ndorosi*) (Figure 13). Joy Adamson (1975:324, Plate XXX) depicts a similar cloak on a "Seguju witch doctor" and mentions that Shirazi medicine men also wore such items. Both are coastal peoples living in Kenya.

Women never showed themselves in the presence of their husbands without their jewelry. Only during circumcision, sometimes during pregnancies, and in periods of mourning, were all ornaments removed (Kalter 1978:149; Merker 1904:50, 65, 194; Weiß 1910:384), as well as after death. The personal ornaments of deceased men were distributed among their children after two months – according to Kalter (1978:27), only to sons. Women's beaded jewelry became the property of their daughters, but metal elements were discarded (Leakey 1930:205-206).

Figure 11. Snuff container (*en dulet*), Kenya or Tanzania, 18.5 cm long, early 20th century, private collection (photo: M. Oehrl).

Figure 12. Beaded gourd, Kenya, 31 cm long, early 20th century, private collection (photo: M. Oehrl).

THE CONCEPT OF "INALIENABILITY"

The publication by ethnologist Laibor Kalanga Moko (2021), who has Maasai ancestors in Tanzania, uses the holdings of the Ethnological Museum in Berlin as a reference. He argues that virtually all objects of material culture, including clothing and jewelry in particular, are inextricably linked spiritually to the person and can

Figure 13. Ceremonial cape, Kenya, 96.5 cm long, purchased from Gerrard and Sons (courtesy of The Trustees of the British Museum, London, acc. no. Af1905,1022.2).

therefore only be passed on within the group. Therefore, all objects, no matter how seemingly insignificant, are not legally acquired because they are "inalienable."

> My interlocutors perceive that inalienable objects were inappropriately acquired and taken to the museum through various routes, including acquisition in war contexts, such as community involvement in inter-ethnic wars during cattle raids, World War II and unknown wars with Europeans, [as well as] deceitful acquisition by postcolonial European investors who had befriended the local people, and illicit selling under the influence of neo-liberalization (Moko 2021:132).

Such evaluation of oral history is controversial, since memories are always subject to subsequent changes and superimpositions. This method is even less useful if the memories of the Maasai interlocutors do not even reach back to the events of World War II, as Moko (2021:132) himself acknowledges. Here, it may be that his interlocutors have an idealized idea of the Maasai's past in the 19th century. Especially during Fischer's and Thomson's early (pre-colonial) expeditions, it would have been highly dangerous to acquire objects illegally. These ventures, despite being accompanied by many armed men, were constantly threatened by theft and hostility from the Maasai (Fischer 1884:54-55; Thomson 1885:171, 285-286, 296, 304). Fischer (1884:64) mentions a single "ethnological object that it was impossible for me to obtain"– a forehead ornament of iron chains and cowries worn by newly circumcised girls. He states that the Wakuafi (Kwafi) of Klein-Arusha were afraid of certain barter items such as glass earrings and small mirrors:

> The fear of sorcery was just as great here as among the Maasai, and the greatest caution was necessary when purchasing ethnological items, especially certain kinds such as handicraft tools and domestic utensils .... Mirrors were also impossible to place, and the Maasai were especially afraid of them (Fischer 1884:93-94) (translation by author).[3]

During his expedition to Lake Turkana in 1887-1888, Ludwig Höhnel (1892:320) describes how a Maasai warrior wanted to exchange his "beautiful, long sword" for 40 strands of glass beads. When asked why he wanted to sell his sword so cheaply, he replied, "Oh well, his *doje* is angry because he does not bring her any beads. However, he does not know how to get them, so he brings his *sime*. He has nothing else."

THE INFLUENCE ON THE NEIGHBORS

Jewelry that was very similar to that of the Maasai was also worn by neighboring peoples of very different ethnic origins, especially the Dorobo (Okiek), Meru, and Arusha (Ilarus), as well as the Nandi, Chagga, and Kikuyu. Such similarities have been documented and illustrated in several publications (Arkell-Hartwick 1903:316 [Kikuyu]; Widenmann 1899:50ff. [Chagga]). Several collections contain such objects (Grassi-Museum, Leipzig, Chagga MAf1388, 1389, Kamba MAf6149; Ethnologisches Museum, Berlin, Chagga III E 17990). Often the similarity is so great that one might suspect intertribal trade. Kalter (1978:1) considers such trade to have been active, but

specific evidence is largely lacking. Some pieces use slightly different colors and materials. Over time, particular color schemes and stylistic details developed, facilitating more accurate identification. The more extensive use of pink glass beads became typical for the Kikuyu, as did turquoise glass beads for the Nandi and Kipsigi (Klumpp and Kratz 1993:205). At the same time, neighboring peoples possessed their own indigenous jewelry traditions that differed significantly in appearance. In any case, the Maasai exerted great influence on the material culture of neighboring peoples wherever they settled or went on war and cattle raids. Even the Gogo in central Tanzania coiffed and adorned themselves similarly to the Maasai, and carried weapons that corresponded to those of the Maasai and were supposed to spiritually transfer the power of the Maasai to their own people. Military and cultural dominance are closely linked here (Lawren 1968:578, 580).

GLASS BEADS IN OLD PIECES

It is difficult to determine exactly where the glass beads in African jewelry came from before the height of colonialism in the late 19th century. They were available in smaller quantities in the coastal areas of East Africa at the latest in Islamic times, through Arab trade contacts, and were passed on through intra-African intermediary trade. In areas influenced by the Portuguese from 1500 onward, such as present-day Mozambique, mainly Yao traders were active. Further north, Swahili and Arab traders dominated, mostly financed by Indian merchants. The coast named after the Swahili and the island of Zanzibar had been under the control of Arab rulers from Oman since about 1700 (Kimambo 1989:238ff.).

The ethnologist Ulf Vierke (2004:264-265) writes that mainly Venetian beads were traded as far as Mogadishu (Somalia), via Ethiopia. The region south to Kilwa was exclusively the realm of Indian trader, while in Mozambique European beads predominated once again. On the Swahili Coast, the share of European vs Indian beads increased towards the end of the 18th century. From 1860 onwards, the importation of beads from the Fichtelgebirge (Franconia) increased.

> When New England traders gained a foothold in Zanzibar at the beginning of the 19th century, they also brought Bohemian beads to East Africa. In addition, large quantities of glass beads were imported via Hamburg. They were of Bohemian but also Frankish provenance. Glass beads were one of the three most important European trade goods in the caravan trade of the 19th century (Vierke 2004:265) (translation by author).[4]

According to Vierke, 80% of all the beads exported to the Swahili Coast in 1880 passed through Hamburg, while only 20% came from British India (Vierke 2004:315).

It is certain that the Maasai were also end users of this trade in metal wire and glass beads in exchange primarily for ivory from at least the mid-19th century (Krapf 1858:271). The necessary ivory was supplied to the Maasai by the dependent Dorobo hunters (Fischer 1884:47; Johnston 1886:424; Krapf 1857:462). Contact with the Swahili caravans was made under special precautions through Maasai women or individual men. Gifts to elders then facilitated negotiations (Krapf 1857:461-462). In any case, the development of Maasai body jewelry clearly preceded European expeditions and conquests, although one must rely on conjecture and extrapolation in the absence of Arabic or Swahili descriptions. South African social anthropologist Vanessa Wijngaarden (2018:8) posits that Maasai beadwork emerged on a more extensive scale only in response to colonial prohibitions on warriors displaying their weapons and battle shields in public. At best, this seems to be a partial view, when one considers the older literature and the dynamics of development in other African countries, which was essentially a matter of economic opportunity.

Gustav Fischer was the first author to describe Maasai preferences in more detail in 1884, while Krapf (1857:463) had remained very general, mentioning only blue and white beads. The most desired beads were the small "enamel" white (as opposed to "milk" white) and dark blue ones (*madschi bahari*); in contrast, the "most precious beads, which are said to have been very popular in the past, were often spurned," namely the red ones (Swahili: *same same* = red white heart). Especially prized among the Maasai were larger white oval beads (*sambái*), colorful ones in the shape of a small acorn, blue ring-shaped ones (*mtunarók*), and larger pink or light blue ones. The simpler varieties were threaded on 30-cm-long double strings of raffia for bartering.

> Generally, in the districts nearer the coast, stronger varieties are popular, and in the more distant ones the finer (Fischer 1884:48).
>
> In the bead jewelry, white, red and dark blue are the most common combination of colors; green, light blue and pink-colored beads are found more rarely. Their sense of color does not lag behind the Swahili, as is also evident from the fact that they have very numerous names for the various colorings of their cattle. The dark blue beads were always designated by the women as erók (black) (Fischer 1884:68) (translation by author).[5]

Merker (1904:139) makes similar statements for the period after 1895, although some of the Maasai designations

he records differ. He mentions small colored glass beads (*e msitáni*), pea-sized white and blue glass beads (*ol duréschi*), elongated bean-shaped white beads (*es sambain*), date-seed shaped, multicolored patterned beads (*em boro*), and ring-shaped blue and green beads (*en gonongoi*).

Thomson mentions glass beads in many places, including the large quantities of beads taken on his expedition (1885:227), tributes to Maasai warriors (Thomson1885:169), and small bead gifts to Maasai girls (Thomson 1885:282, 338). His descriptions of Maasai costumes and their beads, however, are much more sparing than those of other authors (Thomson 1885:428ff.).

Among the merchandise Ludwig Höhnel (1892:13-14) took on his expedition through Maasai country to Lake Turkana with Count Teleki are the following items:

> Maasai beads, which are round glass beads from 2 to 2 ½ millimeters in diameter in red (*same same*), blue (*madschi bahari*) or white (*uschanga meupe*) color, in total 2800 kilograms; furthermore, so-called *ukuta*, which are pea-sized, blue glazed Parisian beads; bad, white porcelain beads called *sambaj*; *murtinarok*, which are green, blue or light brown colored glass rings of 1 centimeter diameter; very fine, tiny glass beads for the Chagga states (Kilimanjaro) in crimson and turquoise blue color; finally also a whole stock of different, large beads, which go under the collective name '*Mboro*.' On a trial basis, we also took a larger batch of beautiful, up to pea-sized pearls in white, chamois and blue, which the Filonardi trading house began to introduce under the generic name "perles orientales" (translation by author).[6]

In general, documented 19th-century Maasai jewelry usually contains slightly larger seed beads (2-3 mm). The red white heart beads often present are almost certainly Venetian during this period, as are probably seed beads of other colors. Oval monochrome "barley-corn" beads (size 8-10 mm) produced by the winding method since the 18th century were also used. In East Africa they can be found up to the 20th century. Their origin is not yet clear, although early versions probably came from Venice. The Maasai used mainly the white variety (*sambaj*) (Figure 7). In addition, there are Bohemian beads and beads from the Fichtelgebirge, such as ring beads.

At the end of the 19th century, the classic (opaque) colors of white, black, dark blue, medium blue, turquoise, and red were still traditional, but after 1904 a strong, opaque yellow and a transparent red came into use. Pink, which was not very popular in any case, disappeared completely after 1910. After 1918, colors such as light blue and lime green appeared, displacing turquoise and dark green. The red beads with white cores were hardly used anymore (Vierke 2004:453-454). After 1945, a rich orange and two strong opaque reds appeared (Klumpp 1987:40-41). Characteristically, the color code became: green, red, white, orange, and blue (Klumpp 1993:205). More frequently, individual color fields are also set off by lines in contrasting colors. In individual pieces, however, this division of colors can already be found at the beginning of the 20th century. These are generalizations, because the study of various Maasai works in museums shows that, for example, light blue and lime green already occurred around 1900 (Berlin III E 10864, collected by Domke in 1903). According to Klumpp (1987:64), most of the beads used in the mid-20th century came from what is now Czechia.

Statements made in the literature (Carey 1986:27) that oval, disc-shaped, or "snake" beads (a representation of snake vertebrae using the Prosser technique in Bohemia) were a more recent development are misleading. These shapes were all in use by 1900, although these beads can be distinguished from more modern versions, and their use increased over time.

OTHER MATERIALS USED

Until the mid-20th century, Maasai beadwork almost always used sinew. The women perforated the leather with an awl and pushed the hard, twisted sinew through the hole (Klumpp 1987:72; Merker 1904:136; Weiß 1910:341), using a single-thread backstitch to attach the beads. Donna Klumpp (1987:72-75,193-194) mentions other stitches, such as chain-, satin-, blanket-, and running-stitch, as well as techniques such as smocking, wrapping, and couching. Sinew was also standard among the Nandi and some of the Chagga work, while other Chagga pieces and most of the Kikuyu beadwork used brown hemp-like fiber typical among many peoples in Tanzania. According to Widenmann (1899:51), the Chagga sinew was obtained from the neck and back of cattle, an assertion that Donna Klumpp (1987:70) affirms for the Maasai.

Much of the Maasai beadwork was sewn onto leather and, in the case of simple chokers, also threaded onto wire; fiber wasn't used until more recent times. Wire was also the material of choice from the middle of the 20th century on, especially for the elaborate collars. According to Merker (1904:113), the thin wires were drawn out from stouter material by Maasai's blacksmiths using simple means, or obtained through trade. Initially, leather divider strips were used to separate the different color fields; plastic and rubber separators were also used later on. Vanessa Wijngaarden (2018:9) notes that in more recent years plastic has been preferred over leather for personal beadwork because

it is easier to work and more durable. For a time, the use of plastic parts was considered typical of pieces made for tourists (Kalter 1978:160).

For the production of men's clothing, non-dehaired calf skins went through a very simple "chamois tannery" where the skin was processed using fat. The depilated goat skins for women's clothing were rubbed with an extract from the bark of the tree *Terminalia brownii*, and the tanning extract was removed afterwards by boiling (Merker 1904:131-132). Donna Klumpp (1987:70) writes of "oil-tanned leather," which she subsequently refers to as "skin" without further differentiation.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BEADED JEWELRY AFTER 1940

Extensive iron or brass spirals (without beads) were used by married women as neck ornaments well into the 1940s. Photographs by Casimir Zagourski from the late 1930s show that some women began to wear a variety of initially narrow beaded neck rings (Figure 14) at that time (Bassani and Loos 2001, I:151, II:159).

After having dropped to almost zero during World War II, bead imports exploded thereafter, and a heyday of beaded jewelry design began in the 1950s, lasting until the end of the 1960s (Vierke 2004:105, 136).

The evolution of single strands of beads to hoop-shaped necklaces continued until the comparatively wide hoops in disc form (strung on wire in concentric circles) were created (Figure 15 and cover). Joy Adamson (1975:221, Figures 149, 154, 226) documents this in her photographs and watercolors from the early 1950s. The collection of British military policeman P. McLaren in Nakuru, assembled in the early 1960s and now in the British Museum, shows typical examples. The Lerner and Queeny collections at the American Museum of Natural History, from the 1940s and 1950s, are similar. A more precise classification by form or region seems very difficult and is rarely possible for reasons of space. The sometimes lavish bead applications on utilitarian objects, such as the formerly simple belt for the Maasai sword (Figure 16) and the calabashes decorated only with cowries around 1900, are also a development of the second half of the 20th century.

With the ban on bead imports as luxury goods in socialist Tanzania at the beginning of the 1970s and a strong reduction in Kenya for some years in the 1980s, a stagnation in the design of beaded jewelry set in, ending only in the 1990s. Because of the exodus of many Indians from Tanzania, the bead trade there had to be restructured (Vierke 2004:122).

Figure 14. Masai woman, 1930s (photo: Casimir Zagourski).

THE PRODUCTION OF JEWELRY IN RECENT TIMES AND AS SOUVENIRS

After the massive interruptions in the Tanzanian bead trade, a renewed boom began after 1995. In the city of Arusha, the Maasai groups of Ilarus and Kisonko and the Cushitic Barabaig were the main buyers of glass beads, accounting for 75% of total sales, with the remainder used for souvenir production (Vierke 2004:71).

"Glass bead objects are not commodities in the traditional context; at most, they were given away or lent out," opines Vierke (2004:91). Nevertheless, the production of items intended for sale also began, especially in Kenya. Women of the Kikuyu from Nairobi and occasionally of the Maasai were intermediaries (Vierke 2004:94). Some of Kalter's (1978:204ff.) Maasai informants were suppliers to the souvenir stores in Nairobi. Vierke (2004:213) recounts the attempts of some women jewelry producers to make use

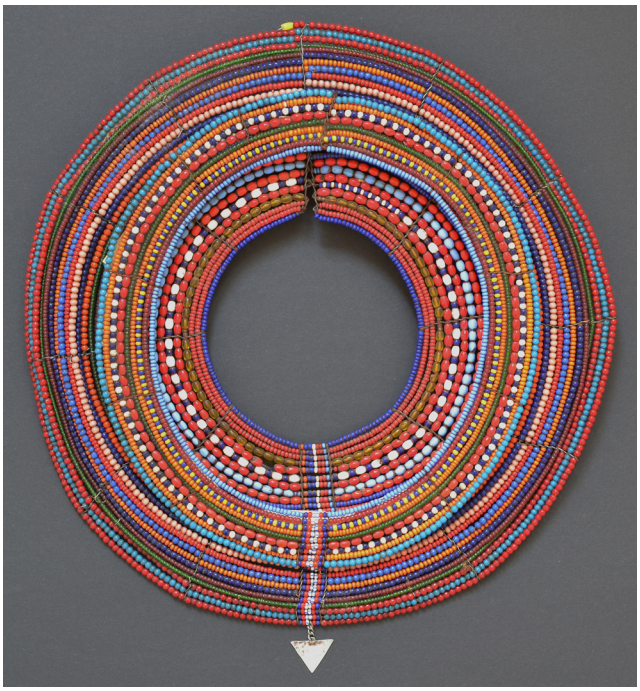

Figure 15. Two women's collars (*oltirbe*), Tanzania or Kenya, 27 cm and 35.5 cm wide, 1950s-1960s, private collection (photo: M. Oehrl).

of parts from old, poorly selling sword belts, refashioning them with the help of rubber gaskets from auto repair shops, into the more popular chokers. The efforts of a U.S. dealer in Native American jewelry to buy up leather skirts made by Maasai women in large quantities are described anecdotally. He succeeded in acquiring a hundred different specimens, some of which, however, had been "improved" by additional beaded decorations by the sellers.

Figure 16. Waist belt for a sword, Kenya, 35 cm (coiled), collected by Peter McLaren between 1961 and 1966 (courtesy of The Trustees of the British Museum, London, acc. no. Af1983, 06.12).

CONCLUSION

Individual Maasai make a living from selling souvenir at tourist centers in Kenya and Tanzania, even Zanzibar, where it is their main source of income. "Nowadays, an extensive manufacturing system is set up to produce tourist art. Even used machetes and leaking calabashes used to transport milk are sold to eagerly paying visitors" (Salazar 2009:62). This mostly low-quality production is distinguished by the Maasai from production for their own use, although the two occasionally influence each other. Even today, beaded jewelry is a necessity among traditional Maasai and is worn in an almost bewildering variety by many groups, including the Samburu, who live in northern Kenya and are related to the Maasai, forming what is essentially a living tradition. The division into traditional and "fashion ornaments," as described by Klumpp, can be presumed here. Younger generations compete with previous age groups to produce expressive and eye-catching patterns.

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ENDNOTES

1. The collection in Hamburg suffered considerable losses during World War II, so that only an insignificant residual stock remains. The Ethnological Museum in Berlin did not want the author to publish images of Maasai jewelry collected by Gustav Fischer because it is "culturally sensitive" material (Gina Knapp 2023: pers. comm.). Photographs of such objects of Tanzanian societies are presently approved by the museum for publication in books and essays or online only in cooperation with the communities of origin (Paola Ivanov 2023: pers. comm.).

2. Dorobo; Maa: *Il-torobo* = pejoratively, "those without cattle." Various, non-homogeneous groups; some call themselves Okiek and speak the language of the Nilotic Kalenjin neighbors; others, who belong to the early settlers of Kenya, speak Cushitic languages (Blackburn 1974:149-150). In part, they lived in Maasai territory by hunting and other means. Okiek women make beadwork very similar to that of the Maasai. Donna Klumpp and Corinne Kratz studied Maasai and Okiek beadwork in the 1980s. Okiek work is almost impossible for the layperson to separate from

that of the Maasai. The differences are often only in the sequence of colors and differently chosen contrasts. Because of the differences, Maasai call these works "false, ugly, clumsily made" or simply "non-Maasai" (Klumpp and Kratz 1993:214).

3. Die Furcht vor Zauberei war hier ebenso gross wie bei den Massai, und beim Einkauf ethnologischer Gegenstände, besonders gewisser Art wie z.B. Handwerksgeräthe und häuslicher Geräthe, war die grösste Vorsicht nothwendig… Spiegel waren ebenfalls nicht anzubringen, besonders fürchteten sich die Massai vor ihnen....

4. Als neuenglische Händler zu Beginn des 19. Jh. auf Sansibar Fuß fassen, bringen sie auch *Böhmische Perlen* nach Ostafrika. Daneben werden große Mengen Glasperlen über Hamburg importiert. Sie sind böhmischer aber auch fränkischer Provenienz. Glasperlen gehören zu den wichtigsten drei europäischen Handelsgütern im Karawanenhandel des 19. Jh.

5. Bei dem Perlschmuck ist weiss, roth und dunkelblau die häufigste Farbenzusammenstellung, seltener findet man grüne, hellblaue und fleischfarbene Perlen. Ihr Farbensinn steht nicht hinter dem der Suaheli zurück, wie auch daraus hervorgeht, dass sie für die verschiedenen Färbungen ihrer Rinder sehr zahlreiche Bezeichnungen haben. Die dunkelblauen Perlen wurden von den Weibern immer mit erók (schwarz) bezeichnet.

6. ...Masaiperlen, das sind runde Glasperlen von 2 bis 2 ½ Millimeter Durchmesser in rother (*samesame*), blauer (*madschi bahari*) oder weißer (*uschanga meupe*) Farbe, im Ganzen 2800 Kilogramm; ferner sogenannte *ukuta*, das sind erbsengroße, blau glasirte Pariserperlen, *sambaj* genannte, schlechte, weiße Porzellanperlen, *murtinarok*, d.s. grün, blau oder hellbraun gefärbte Glasringe von 1 Centimeter Durchmesser, ganz feine, winzige Glasperlen für die Dschagga-Staaten (Kilimandscharo) in karminrother und türkisblauer Farbe, endlich auch einen ganzen Vorrath verschiedener, großer Perlen, welche unter dem Collectivnamen "*mboro*" gehen. Versuchsweise nahmen wir außerdem noch eine größere Partie schöner, bis erbsengroßer Perlen in Weiß, Chamois und Blau mit, welche das Handlungshaus Filonardi unter dem Gattungsnamen "*perles orientales*" einzuführen begann.

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