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Introduction

Gender roles across various communities (Hofmeyr 1992, Womack & Marti 1993, Silberschmidt 1999, Kopytoff 2005, Njogu & Orchardson-Mazrui 2006) have been a major area of research, where the division of labor, particularly within patriarchal structures, and how it affects people's behaviors, lives, and attitudes in different ways have been examined. These

gendered roles, as Womack & Marti (1993) explain, reinforce inequality, particularly in the distribution of responsibilities and benefits between men and women, a pattern that manifests in several spheres, including the family, the labor market, and cultural-ideological productions. These ideologies, as discussed by Wollstonecraft (2024) and De Beauvoir (1993), have shaped members of society across historical and cultural contexts to believe that

women and men are not equal, not only biologically but also in the positions they occupy within their societies.

However, debates surrounding gender equality in Africa are often framed within a tension between cultural authenticity and Western influence. Some critics regard gender equality as a Western ideology that infiltrated African societies under the guise of feminism. This view is strongly supported by Oyěwùmí (1997), who argues that the rigid and hierarchical gender system often assumed to be traditional in Africa was, in significant ways, consolidated and institutionalized under British colonial rule. She contends that African women experienced “double colonization”: they were subordinated both as Africans under European domination and as women within colonial structures that privileged male authority. Oyěwùmí further demonstrates that the colonial state introduced a centralized, autocratic model of governance rooted in European political traditions, where access to power was explicitly gendered, and politics was largely defined as men’s work. Through the system of indirect rule, the British recognized and empowered male chiefs while ignoring the existence and authority of female political figures. Judicial powers that had previously been exercised at the community level were transferred to male-dominated councils, thereby excluding women from arenas in which they had previously participated. According to her analysis of Yoruba society, pre-British political and social organization was not fundamentally gender-determined. Thus, the marginalization of women from formal political structures was not an inherent feature of Yoruba society but rather intensified through colonial intervention. From this standpoint, unequal gender roles in many

African contexts cannot simply be attributed to timeless indigenous traditions. Rather, they must be understood in relation to the historical imposition of European state systems and patriarchal norms that redefined political authority, public participation, and social organization. Against this historical backdrop, the current paper presents findings on shifts in gender role attitudes among the Sukuma, situating contemporary perspectives within both precolonial legacies and colonial transformations.

Theoretical framework

This paper employs Social Role Theory to examine shifting gender role attitudes among the Sukuma of Tanzania. The theory provides a framework for understanding how societal expectations and institutional structures shape gender differences in behavior, making it ideal for analyzing the Sukuma’s patriarchal traditions. The Social Role Theory posits that gender roles arise from the societal assignment of distinct responsibilities to men and women and are reinforced through socialization and institutional structures such as the family, informal education, and the media (Eagly & Wood 2012, Eagly 2013). Structurally, men are often cast as providers and leaders, while women are portrayed as caregivers and supporters of the family members. These roles are deeply embedded in Sukuma culture, where men typically manage economic tasks and women oversee domestic responsibilities (Masele & Venkatachalam 2021). Cognitively, these roles foster gender stereotypes, widely held beliefs about the traits of men and women, which influence both self-perception and societal expectations (Eagly et al. 2000). The Social Role Theory is particularly relevant for this paper

because it analyzes how Sukuma songs either reinforce and maintain or challenge traditional gender roles, thereby enhancing our understanding of the factors driving attitudinal shifts within the community.

Methodology

This study was conducted in two Sukuma land regions: Mwanza and Shinyanga. The Sukuma are Tanzania's largest ethnic group, primarily living in the northwestern Regions of Mwanza, Shinyanga, Geita, and Simiyu, where patriarchal cultural practices are primarily reinforced through oral traditions such as poetic songs, shaping deeply ingrained gender roles that this study seeks to explore. The Regions of Mwanza and Shinyanga were purposefully selected due to their large Sukuma populations and renowned traditional singers, ensuring access to culturally relevant data.

We examined shifts in gender role attitudes within Sukuma society by integrating textual analysis of oral poetic forms with ethnographic methods. Four focus group discussions, each comprising four mixed-sex participants, complemented the interviews by capturing community-level perspectives. Two focus group discussions were conducted in Mwanza and the remaining two in Shinyanga. Eight of the participants had primary education, seven had secondary education, and five held a bachelor's degree. Among them, four were famous singers of traditional Sukuma dances, who agreed to give their expertise in Sukuma poetic forms and to provide both songs and interview responses. The singers provided songs needed to answer research question one: "How do Sukuma songs and societal views reflect perceptions of gender roles?" Interlocutors with

secondary and bachelor's education were purposefully selected to address the second research question: "What changes are occurring in gender role attitudes within the Sukuma community?"

Songs were selected based on their relevance to gender roles context, as recommended by both singers and community members. The study adhered to ethical research considerations where approval was obtained from the study region, and informed consent was secured from all participants. Confidentiality was ensured through anonymized data, sensitive topics were approached with respect, and participants were given the option to withdraw at any time.

Sukuma songs and societal perceptions on traditional gender roles

The findings in this study reveal a growing awareness of the unequal gender roles embedded in Sukuma cultural traditions. When asked whether men and women are pleased with the roles assigned to them, participants expressed varied perspectives. Women, in particular, highlighted dissatisfaction with entrenched patriarchal expectations. One female interlocutor explained that many Sukuma women now recognize that traditional customs disproportionately favors men by granting them greater authority and power, a realization that has encouraged behavioral change and strengthened their resolve to advocate for a better life. This perception is echoed in the song *Naliluha na milimo* (Text 1), in which the female voice laments the burden of domestic labor from girlhood through marriage, expressing frustration with the unequal responsibilities placed upon her.

<i>Naliluha na milimo</i>	I am exhausted with the household chores
<i>Nene naluha no bhichane kubyalwa nkima bhung'wene a hakaya.</i>	I have suffered a lot as the only girl in the family.
<i>Milimo pye yali yane u mkaya Kulwinzi, kwilima, kung'nhwi.</i>	I am responsible for all the household chores, fetching water and firewood for domestic use, and working on the farm.
<i>Kwisuya yaya buligwa izuga Diyu, limi na mhindi.</i>	I had no time to rest, as I was responsible for preparing meals in the morning, afternoon, and evening.
<i>Hangi nilemba ahabhutolwa nagwisuya bhone hamo.</i>	I thought I would get some rest after the marriage.
<i>Ka yaya bhadugu I milimo yiliniyanja, naje hali nakisuye?</i>	I am fed up with these everyday activities, where can I go to find rest?
Text 1 <i>Naliluha na milimo</i>	

The lyrics vividly catalogue gendered tasks: fetching water, collecting firewood, farming, and preparing meals throughout the day, presenting them not as occasional duties but as an uninterrupted life pattern. From the perspective of Social Role Theory (Eagly 2013), such responsibilities reflect the culturally structured division of labor in which women are assigned communal and domestic roles, while men occupy agentic and authority-oriented positions. This means that, women are traditionally assigned household chores while men perform outdoors activities. The singer's exhaustion exposes how these roles, though socially constructed, are internalized and normalized as natural obligations for women.

Importantly, the line "I thought I would get some rest after the marriage" reveals how marriage does not transform women's roles

but rather intensifies them. Social Role Theory posits that gender roles are sustained through socialization and reinforced by societal expectations. In this case, the transition from daughter to wife does not alter the structural expectations attached to femininity; instead, it reproduces them across life stages. The song therefore, does more than narrate personal suffering; it implicitly critiques the social system that distributes labor along rigid gender lines. The women's dissatisfaction, as articulated in both interviews and song, may therefore indicate an emerging renegotiation of gender expectations within Sukuma society, and it is similar to what one of the male interlocutors suggested: "Most people who had observed a change in women's behavior believed that it had shifted toward emancipation and independence". Others remarked that women "want

more of their own way.” These changes occur naturally after many of them realize that traditional gender roles are not in their favor. “Now, you can see that they no longer accept everything silently and they try to stand up for themselves.”

The remark that women “want more of their own way” signals tension created when individuals begin to resist traditionally prescribed roles. This transformation of social attitudes, as revealed in the songs and interviews, indicates growing awareness among the Sukuma and aligns with social role theory, which posits that changes in societal attitudes occur through shifts in individuals’ social positions (Walter 2018).

Unlike women’s voices, men’s perspectives are also shaped and reinforced through cultural expression. A recurring theme in men’s songs highlights the expectation that women conform to established domestic roles. The song *Bhukagi* (Text 2), performed by Magodi Ze Doni, exemplifies this dynamic. The repeated call for women and girls to wake at dawn to begin “mothers’ work” reflects what Social Role Theory describes as prescriptive gender norms, socially enforced expectations about appropriate female behavior. By metaphorically referring to himself as the rooster crowing at home, the singer symbolically positions the male figure as authoritative and central. The metaphor naturalizes male dominance and fe-

<i>Bhukagi</i>	Wake up
<i>Jikuhilaga I ngoko mmakingo ka bhukagi bha yayu.</i>	The roosters are crowing in their coops, wake up, women.
<i>Jikuhilaga I ngoko ka wela wa milimo bhukagi bha yayu.</i>	The roosters are crowing, it is dawn, time for mothers' work
<i>Pelegi sana a bashike wela, tubhadebhe a bhakamu na bholo.</i>	Hurry, girls, it is dawn, let us distinguish the lazy from the hardworking.
<i>Bhukagi a bashike u Ngwana-lemi napelanile.</i>	Wake up, girls, Ngwana-lemi is angry.
<i>Degelekagi sana a bhashike Wela tubhadebhe a bhakamu na bholo.</i>	Listen well, girls, it is dawn, let us distinguish the lazy from the hardworking.
<i>Nani uyo akumokaga dilu, Ngwana-lemi udakaga.</i>	Who else is crowing at home than Ngwana-lemi?
<i>Izugilijagi a bha shike u Ngwana-lemi u shigaga.</i>	Prepare breakfast, a man has arrived.
Text 2 <i>Bhukagi</i>	

male domesticity, presenting them as part of the ordinary rhythm of daily life.

Similarly, in *Ilange* (Text 3), Masunga Ikome instructs his wife to cook when told and to respect her mother-in-law, reinforcing hierarchical gender relations within marriage. The threat of sending a wife back to her parents if she fails to comply illustrates the regulatory function of social norms. Social Role Theory explains that gender stereotypes are maintained through approval and sanction: women who perform communal, submissive roles are validated, while those who deviate risk social punishment. Ikome's song functions as a cultural mechanism that reproduces these expectations by defining the "good wife" as one who unquestioningly fulfills domestic duties.

During the interview, the singer explained that men marry in order to build a family, but that a wife must be capable of managing all domestic responsibilities. He argued that a woman who cannot handle these duties cannot satisfy her husband or her in-laws. From his perspective, it is evident that Ikome's song rein-

forces traditional gender roles, in which women are expected to adhere strictly to their assigned responsibilities.

The division of labor between the sexes, as articulated in Social Role, is historically linked to biological distinctions but sustained primarily through socialization and cultural reinforcement. In Sukuma society, girls are prepared to become housewives, caregivers, and child bearers, while boys are groomed to assume productive and leadership roles. Such differentiated training embeds gender expectations from early childhood, fostering the belief that these divisions are natural and inevitable. The songs analysed here both reflect and reproduce these structures: women's songs reveal the strain of internalized communal expectations, while men's songs reinforce agentic dominance and domestic prescription.

This pattern is evident among the Sukuma, where girls are prepared to become housewives, child bearers, and caregivers, while boys are groomed to be producers and future leaders. Such training, conducted separately

<i>Ilange</i>	Obedience
<i>Shitawelwa mayu zugaga, kulwaki mayu ulilihya u nmomo.</i>	If you are told to cook, you should do it, why do you misbehave
<i>U bhebhe uli nki wane widebhe nu mayu wane</i>	You are my wife, so you should respect my mother.
<i>Shokagi kung'wing'we mayu hamo huko mtatumagwa hiiiyee!</i>	Go back to your home, perhaps no one there will ask you to cook.
<i>Shibhi mayu iiii i shinisho bhigwagi mayu abhagoshi bingwe.</i>	Lady, it is not good to behave in such a way.
Text 3 <i>Ilange</i>	

for each sex, instills these roles deeply in their minds from an early age. As a result, they grow up with the ingrained belief that gendered divisions of labor in a family level are natural and inevitable, as taught by their parents. This practice strengthens society's adherence to gender roles, with each person believing they were born to fulfill a specific set of tasks.

Shift of gender role attitudes among the Sukuma

Societal perspectives indicate that the division of labor among the Sukuma has undergone gradual but noticeable transformation. The once rigid compartmentalization of men's and women's tasks is increasingly being renegotiated, particularly regarding women's participation in economic and public life. While men occasionally assume roles traditionally assigned to women, such shifts remain less common, reflecting the persistence of patriarchal norms that continue to privilege male authority. For women, however, engagement beyond domestic spaces is often perceived as an opportunity rather than a transgression. These evolving attitudes are not only expressed in interviews but also reflected in Sukuma musical discourse. Text 4, *Tumishagi* 'Let us wake up', composed and performed by Grace Mazoya, captures this transformation. The song urges women to work hard, earn income alongside their husbands, and avoid total economic dependence. Lines such as: "Today's life does not allow women to stay at home waiting for their husbands to work" underscore the perception that contemporary economic realities require women's active contribution. The song further challenges widow inheritance and encourages women to prepare

for self-reliance, linking dignity and security to economic participation. Rather than presenting empowerment as automatic, the song frames it as a deliberate effort rooted in labor, determination, and awareness. This cultural expression encapsulates the broader shift in gender role attitudes identified in this study. The transformation of these attitudes emerges from interconnected structural, cultural, economic, and ideological forces, discussed below.

Agro-pastoral migration as drivers of changing gender role attitudes among the Sukuma

Our analysis indicates that agro-pastoral migration has been a significant driver in the transformation of gender-role attitudes among the Sukuma. Brockington (2001) notes that Sukuma migration facilitates cultural exchange and interaction with other ethnic groups, which influences social norms and practices. Of the key participants interviewed, six men and four women explicitly framed migration as a decisive factor in these shifts. The Sukuma's pastoral lifestyle drives them to migrate across Tanzania, from Sukumaland to regions such as Mbeya, Zanzibar, Lindi, Mtwara, Mpanda, Ifakara, Kilosa, and others (Brandström 1985, Brockington 2001, Mwambene et al. 2014), thereby exposing them to diverse cultural norms. This mobility is essential for finding adequate grazing land and water resources, especially during dry seasons when local pastures become scarce (Mwambene et al. 2014). This agro-pastoral migration influences cultural adaptation in the regions where they reside. For example, Sukuma women in Kilosa, Morogoro, have adopted semi-matrilineal practices from the

Sagara and Kagulu, where women freely engage in income-generating activities. A 35-year-old female respondent who migrated to Kilosa and later returned to Sukumaland explained:

Living with the Sagala has greatly broadened my understanding. For them, a woman is not someone who depends on a man for everything. In the morning, they get up early and go to their businesses. This has freed them from the burden of being goalkeepers and has increased their value in their marriages.

This woman takes pride in being an entrepreneur and also feels that business has made her independent. She believes that her contribution to the family has increased her value to her husband. That is, the exposure Sukuma women attain enables them to challenge

gender norms. When Sukuma people return to their original residence, they often introduce egalitarian gender norms, which community members gradually adopt. Today, many Sukuma women engage in small businesses to supplement the family income as suggested by Grace Mazoya in Text 4.

Grace Mazoya, who is also known by her nickname as Grace Ng'wana Nzoka, is a Sukuma singer or musical artist, particularly known in Tanzanian traditional music. Some of her music videos are available on YouTube, including songs like *Ng'wana wa Nzoka* and *Ngoshi Wane*. In Text 4, she inspires women to work hard and achieve full emancipation. She urges women to rise, earn their own income, and stop depending entirely on their husbands. She also calls on women to recognize their potential, commit seriously to productive work, and avoid unproductive pursuits such as gossiping.

<i>Tumishagi</i>	Let us wake up
<i>Bhakima bhichane bhukagi dugachole na bhagoshi bhise.</i>	My fellow women, let us work hard and earn money together with our husbands.
<i>Bhabehi iwelelo ya lelo ilemile u nkima ugulindana hakaya</i>	Today's life does not allow women to stay at home waiting for their husbands to work.
<i>Bhakima dudugije nulu kuzenga kanumba bhing'wene.</i>	We are even capable of building houses.
<i>Ibhujage ulushigu ogayaga u ngoshoko igubhiza ginehe?</i>	What will happen if your husband dies?
<i>Nulu wingilwe? Welelo ya kwingelwa yashilile.</i>	Will you be ready to be inherited by your husband's relatives? Nowadays the practice of inheriting widows no longer exists.
Text 4 <i>Tumishagi</i>	

Her message conveys that gender equality and empowerment will not occur by chance, but through sustained effort and hard work. The song incorporates the popular Tanzanian slogan *wanawake tunaweza* 'women, we are capable', rendered in Sukuma as *bhakima dudugije*. It reflects the singer's knowledge of gender equality and her intent to raise awareness of women's empowerment among her audience. The song's discourse underscores the belief that women can gain authority in their families and communities only by engaging in income-generating activities and acquiring property. This aligns with Remy's (1975) findings in Nigeria, who argues that women's independence depends on their participation in economic enterprises that provide regular and controllable income, thereby enabling them to overcome structural barriers to opportunity. The message conveyed in the song, together with broader societal views on the need for women to participate in the public sphere, is reflected in the increasing proportion of women in education, employment, politics, and other public institutions. This shift has made it increasingly difficult to sustain traditional attitudes regarding women's roles in society.

Conversely, men express mixed views. As a 38-year-old male respondent remarked, "It's good for women to earn, but they must still respect their duties at home", reflecting the persistence of patriarchal attitudes as suggested in *Ilange* (text 3) when the singer says: "Why do you misbehave when you are told to prepare food? Go back to your home, perhaps no one there will ask you to cook." In addition to the Sukuma who have migrated to other areas in search of pasture, the study reveals that many migrants have also moved into Sukuma communities, fostering cultural interaction. Over

time, the Sukuma have gradually embraced these changes and begun to adopt aspects of the lifestyles and cultures of these outsiders. For instance, one cultural practice they have adopted from the Chaga of Kilimanjaro region is the acceptance that both young men and women consider it appropriate for husbands and wives to work outside the home and contribute to the family's income.

Influence of education and interethnic marriages on gender role attitudes

The findings of this study indicate that highly educated Sukuma people, especially those residing in urban areas, are more likely to engage in interethnic marriages. Six respondents (three men and three women in interethnic unions) identified such marriages as a significant factor influencing shifts from traditional Sukuma gender roles. Marriages between the Sukuma and other ethnic groups, such as the Chaga, Gogo, or Luguru, expose spouses to differing cultural norms and practices, particularly regarding the division of household responsibilities. Over time, this exposure contributes to the transformation of gender role perceptions within marriage. During the discussions, a 40 years old Sukuma woman married to a Chaga man explained, "my husband encourages me to work on non-traditional tasks which are outside the home, unlike Sukuma traditions. I now run a small shop, which has changed how I see my role". Such experiences demonstrate how interethnic marriages foster more egalitarian attitudes, especially among women, challenging the traditional notion that they should be confined to domestic roles. Also, the exposure to alternative cultural models of gender relations

encourages greater acceptance of women's participation in the public sphere. As a result, more women are becoming active in business, employment, politics, and other public institutions. Men's perspectives also evolve as they adopt their spouses' cultural views. This was also observed by Takyi et al. (2003) and Kyei (2022), who suggested that education is one of the key factors enhancing change in gender role attitudes resulting from interethnic marriages. As Takyi et al. (2003) note, higher educational attainment increases individuals' autonomy in choosing a spouse. Tertiary institutions, in particular, provide diverse social environments and networks that expose young people to potential partners from various ethnic backgrounds. Overall, higher levels of education are positively associated with a greater likelihood of interethnic unions. This is consistent with Mumporeze (2020), who conducted a quantitative analysis of factors influencing attitudes toward women's employment and gender roles in Rwanda. The study suggests that education level plays a significant role in shaping Rwandans' views on gender roles. Specifically, individuals with higher levels of education tend to hold more non-traditional views, whereas those with lower levels of education tend to maintain more traditional gender role attitudes.

Mass media and technology as catalysts of changing gender role attitudes

Our study revealed that socialization processes mediated through mass media and technology have profoundly influenced the Sukuma in adopting cultural practices from other societies. Eight respondents (five men and three women aged 20-30) identified smartphones

and televisions as key drivers of this transformation. A 28-year-old male respondent with a bachelor's degree said, "Watching TV shows about modern families made me think husbands and wives can share responsibilities." This argument suggests that access to films and television dramas through mass media has exposed the Sukuma traditional societies to alternative gender relations, promoting the imitation of practices such as shared household responsibilities. Such exposure has particularly affected younger individuals across diverse educational backgrounds, fostering greater acceptance of men's participation in domestic work and women's engagement in economic activities. The influence appears most pronounced in urban areas and among the youth, whereas individuals aged 35 and above remain more strongly anchored to traditional norms, as indicated in Text 2. Moreover, the cultural exchange facilitated by technological devices has inspired some Sukuma singers to openly critique traditional gender roles in their compositions, reflecting an emerging shift in attitudes. Text 4, titled *tumishagi* exemplifies this trend. The role of mass media and technological devices in enhancing cultural sharing was also noted by Mumporeze (2020), who argued that these technologies, such as radio, television, smartphones, and the internet, play a significant role in the modern world by facilitating the rapid dissemination of information.

Economic demands and shifting gender roles

Economic demands were also reported to encourage women's entry into income-generating activities, a message reinforced in *tumishagi* (text 4) sung by Grace Mazoya, which

calls on women to work for economic independence. However, acceptance was often partial. Some male respondents maintained that certain occupations, such as mining, *boda boda* (motorcycle taxi driving), or construction, remain male domains. Despite receiving formal education, both men and women participants expressed divergent understandings of gender equality in the division of labor: (1) Women and men should perform the same work regardless of gender. (2) Each person should adhere to traditional roles. (3) Everyone should have the right to engage in any job regardless of gender. These responses were drawn from interviews conducted during four focus group discussions. Even within the first and third groups, where participants appeared to agree that women can perform the same roles as men, contradictions emerged. Some men still excluded women from male-dominated occupations. Men who supported equality in the distribution of responsibilities often restricted it to office work or small-scale trade, while rejecting women's involvement in heavy labor or transport services. In mining, women were deemed suitable only for ancillary roles, such as *mama ntilie* (food vending), as other tasks were perceived as undermining a husband's social standing and implying his inability to provide for the family. Educated women in the study attributed such restrictions to entrenched patriarchal norms, noting that even financially constrained men often preferred their wives to remain in domestic roles. These women linked economic dependence to subordination, a theme reflected in Sukuma songs that critique traditional divisions of labor. *Tumishagi* (text 4), in particular, frames economic indepen-

dence as essential to resisting humiliation and achieving gender equality.

Egalitarianism principles as drivers of the shifting of gender roles

In our study, we also identified knowledge of egalitarian principles as a primary driver of the shift in gender-role attitudes among the Sukuma. Gender egalitarianism, according to Kaufman et al. (2017), extends beyond its basic definition as beliefs and attitudes about equality between men and women, encompassing multiple dimensions and meanings. Respondents with secondary and higher education tended to express more egalitarian views. As one 32-year-old female teacher noted: "Learning about gender equality in school made me realize I can do any job, not just housework." Consistent with previous research, including Cassidy & Warren (1996), Loo & Thorpe (1998) and Islam (2010), the current study found that people with high egalitarian knowledge are negatively associated with traditional gender roles.

Interconnected drivers of changing gender role attitudes among the Sukuma

Although agro-pastoral migration, education, interethnic marriages, mass media, economic pressures, and egalitarian knowledge are presented separately for analytical clarity, the findings indicate that these factors operate in an interconnected and mutually reinforcing manner rather than as isolated drivers. However, these processes do not unfold in a historical vacuum. As argued in *The Invention of Women*, Oyěwùmí (1997) demonstrates that the imposition of the European colonial state

system institutionalized a gendered public/private divide across many African societies. Through legal codes, bureaucratic structures, and formal education, colonial governance consolidated male dominance within the public sphere while circumscribing women's authority. The contemporary transformations observed among the Sukuma therefore occur within a postcolonial state framework already shaped by this colonial legacy.

In this context, agro-pastoral migration functions as a structural entry point for exposure to alternative gender arrangements. As Sukuma households relocate to regions such as Kilosa, Mbeya, or Zanzibar (Brockington 2001), they encounter communities in which women's participation in income-generating activities is normalized. Yet migration alone does not automatically transform attitudes. Its transformative potential depends on the interpretive capacity provided by formal education, an institution itself introduced through colonial state machinery but now serving new purposes. Education equips individuals with cognitive tools to critically interrogate inherited norms, enabling them to reinterpret egalitarian practices not as foreign impositions but as pragmatic responses to contemporary social realities. In this way, an institution historically implicated in gender stratification becomes a mechanism for its reassessment.

Education also increases the likelihood of interethnic marriages (Takyi et al. 2003), which internalize exposure to plural gender norms within the domestic sphere. Such unions destabilize rigid, ethnicised constructions of gender roles that were historically reinforced through both customary authority and colonial administrative codification. Within these households, negotiation replaces prescription, and shared

domestic and economic responsibilities become lived experiences rather than abstract ideals.

Mass media and oral poetry further amplify this renegotiation. Modern compositions by artists such as Grace Mazoya alongside televised representations of shared domestic responsibilities, provide symbolic validation for shifting practices. Scholars of Tanzanian media note that when digital socialization and cultural representation mirror classroom discourses of equality, abstract principles acquire visible, imitable form. This cultural validation is critical because it offers what respondents implicitly described as 'permission', the social legitimacy necessary to enact change without appearing to betray tradition. In this sense, media does not merely transmit Western norms; it participates in a localized reinterpretation of gender within a postcolonial public sphere.

Economic pressures complete this interconnected chain. As traditional livestock returns decline and household survival increasingly depends on diversified income sources, the colonial breadwinner-homemaker model becomes materially untenable. Women's economic participation thus shifts from optional supplement to structural necessity. Importantly, when economic urgency intersects with migration exposure, educational reinterpretation, interethnic negotiation, and media validation, what might otherwise remain a temporary survival strategy crystallizes into a durable transformation of gender role attitudes.

Viewed through Oyěwùmí's lens, these findings suggest that contemporary changes among the Sukuma do not represent a simple importation of Western egalitarianism. Rather, they reflect a layered reconfiguration

of gender relations within a state system historically shaped by European political traditions. If colonial modernity institutionalized gender hierarchy through bureaucratic and educational mechanisms, the present interconnected drivers demonstrate how those same arenas, mobility, schooling, media, and economic restructuring, now facilitate the gradual renegotiation of that legacy. Gender role transformation thus emerges not from a single catalyst but from the cumulative interaction of structural exposure, cognitive reinterpretation, domestic negotiation, cultural validation, and material necessity.

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