

The Gibb's Farm Wedding Ceremony

Over 150 native languages are spoken in Tanzania. At Gibb's Farm wa Iraqw, Maa, English, Swahili and sometimes wa Chagga and wa Barbeg are heard. Marriage between peoples is becoming common as a vibrant population becomes more cosmopolitan and mobile.

The Gibb's Farm Wedding Ceremony is a multi-lingual and multi-cultural event in keeping with the rich and varied makeup of the travelers and farm community.

Time on the farmlands and savanna of north Tanzania is measured in seasons and moons not days or minutes. Up to four years typically separate the Iraqw engagement and wedding ceremonies. The Maasai wedding itself can take up to a week.

The Gibb's Farm Wedding Ceremony begins with a symbolic Iraqw engagement celebration and concludes with a Maasai wedding. Ritual elements represent the importance of the events: union, commitment, community recognition, ownership and life.

The engagement ceremony takes place at mid-day. Iraqw traditions symbolize the women's family daughter's departure in exchange for dowry and commitments. The wedding ceremony occurs next, the Maasai warrior's family gathers at the Morani House, events unfold to include song, dance and the exchange of gifts. Dinner follows. Unlike the Morani tradition of the women and men continuing separate celebrations into the night, the Gibb's Farm ceremony concludes with a newlywed dinner.



This presentation starts with example ceremony schedules and concludes with some cultural information.

A choice of venue for the Maasai wedding ceremony is available, the fire place in the vegetable garden near the farm house (lower right), or small Namnyak village (top right) in the western forest estate.



The Iraqw Engagement Ceremony

Noon:

Half the money the suitor gives a girl's family is returned when the engagement is accepted. Messengers called lihtusamo relay between the families until general agreement occurs. The lihtusamo arrives at the women's 'home' and states:

The boy and his family wish to engage the girl;

The parents ask their daughter if she knows of the boy, yes.

12:30pm: Farm animals are given to the women's family.

A bull - to release father's cold;

A sheep - to compensate the girl's mother's loss of her daughter;

A goat - to compensate the girl's uncle.

1:00pm: A meal takes place to celebrate the coming union.

Pricing

\$880: Commitment Ceremony

Surcharges:

\$600: Legal wedding certificate

\$25: Dinner in Namnyak pp*

\$400: Photography

\$300: Hair & Beauty

\$150: Nuptial Spa

Inclusive: service, VAT, flowers, wedding turndown

Services inclusive for Bridal Party:

• A farm dinner in your cottage, or;

• Picnic for two in a garden, followed by a cocktail and an introduction talk to Maasai and Iraqw culture in the vegetable farm

Tembo Fireplace.

• Laundry services

• Cocktail hour beverages

• Farm Life activities



Maasai Traditional Blessing Ceremony

4.30 pm: The 'groom' prepares for the blessing event in the appointed cottage (the husband's boma) with the help of the 'best man'. The 'bride' prepares in a temporarily assigned cottage (the wife's family boma). A special wedding garment is placed on her shoulders with the assistance of a Maasai women (as the husband's mother).

When ready the 'groom and best man' walk to the 'bride's' cottage with a small gift. The 'bride and groom' are escorted to the appointed venue for the blessing ceremony.

5.00 pm: All concerned gather at the chosen venue. Representing a round boma, the Tembo Fireplace shall act as the 'groom's family boma'. On arrival, the bride walks slowly with her escort. The 'grooms' family is waiting. A discussion of the number of cows and gifts occurs, the 'bride' holds back until the acceptable dowery is offered.

Gifts are presented. A dance is performed.

5.20pm: Blessing begins

A cow will be presented to represent the agreed upon belongs to be exchanged (enonkishu). Calabash of milk is opened and offered. Traditional beer is shared among the men and 'bride'.

Different olpororr (age set) members of the clan shall be represented by the small Maasai community of Gibb's Farm.

Singing and words of blessing are offered.

The name of Namelok (sweet lady) is bestowed upon to the bride.

Endubul ino-oldonyo

Be great as mountains
Meaning live as long as the mountains

Enkai nanyorr iyook tonyora inkiasin
nank oo inkera

Enkai who loves us love our work and
children
Meaning everything of ours will result
in a good way

Namelok tumunyana

Namelok be blessed
Meaning lead a good life style

Enkai inchoo yook kule namelok

Enkai give us sweet milk
Meaning Enkai blesses everything of
ours to be sweet.

Namelok tamelono toiki ilonito lemeudo

Namelok be sweet birth on skin which
has no potholes
Meaning to receive and cherish
everything of Namelok

6.00 pm: the 'best man' announces "please have the milk and receive this female calf". He will open the calabash and share the milk with the bride. With the presentation of the young calf the groom drinks the milk from the calabash.

6.30 pm: Depart

The 'bride and groom' returning to the 'groom's cottage' to prepare for dinner.

7.30 pm: Dinner arrives and is served in the cottage.



Details of this blessings and ceremonies are subject to change.

These events comprise symbols of the cultural events and should not be considered a legal wedding. Legal weddings are performed at Gibb's Farm with participation of the appropriate local civic and liturgical persons.

The Traditional Maasai Wedding

The marriage ceremony is one of the longest ceremonies in the Maasai community. It begins by a man showing interest in a woman and giving her a chain, which is called an *olpisiai*. Word of this goes around and the family, as well as the community, waits for him to make his intention known. He does this by finding women his own age who will bring a gift of alcohol to the mother of the girl. This first stage is called *Esirit Enkoshoke* and it indicates that the girl is now engaged. After some time, the man plans to make his intentions clear by presenting a gift of alcohol to the girl's father. This alcohol is called *Enkiroret*. The father of the intended bride drinks the alcohol with his brothers and friends and then summons the young man and asks him to declare his interest and point out the woman he wishes to marry. (This can often be a very interesting process because elders will pretend they do not know the girl who is being sought after.) Once the family agrees to the man's request, both parties officially establish a relationship, which will eventually lead to the wedding.



The man is now allowed to bring gifts to the woman's family. He starts by giving them presents as he sees fit, to a point where it will become clear that he has taken an interest in the well being of the girl's family. These gifts will create the bride's dowry, the purpose of which is not to create wealth for the bride's family, but rather to legalize the marriage. In this way, the man puts his mark on that family and if anyone else tries to approach the family and offer a bride price, it is made clear that the girl has already been given away to another family.

It is at this point that the Gibb's Farm blessing will symbolize the following proceedings.

The wedding day begins with the groom showing the bride's family a dowry, which includes cows, of which at least two are female and one is male and all are black along with two sheep, one female and one male. The male sheep is slaughtered during the wedding day to remove its fat and oil, which will be applied to the wedding dress. The remaining oil is put in a container for the bride to carry to her new home, in her husband's kraal. These acts will be symbolized during the Gibb's Farm blessing.

The female sheep or goat is given to the mother-in-law-to-be by the intended husband. From that day forth they will refer to each other as "Paker", meaning the one who gave me sheep. There is also a calf, which is given by the man to the father-in-law-to-be. And from then on they will call each other Pakiteng or Entawuo. All the gifts will be kept in the calf house, which is known as the Olale.

The morning of the wedding, the bride's head is shaved and anointed with lamb fat. In the case of the Gibb's Farm blessing, we shall symbolize this by the 'bride' simply brushing her hair. She is decorated by lmasaa, beautiful beaded decorations. Her relatives make the dress, not just her mother. In this way the wedding dress is an expression of community, not just individuality. The bride is blessed by the elders using alcohol and milk, and is led from her family's kraal to her new home in the corral of her husband.

Wedding Dress

The formal Ikilani (olkila) skirts (example right) is used for weddings or special occasions. It is not a textile but a cow skin. These can be very thin and colored with okaria clay.

Typically stored under the bedding to keep flat, dry, free of bugs and safe, we have placed it under the bed frame so it can be seen and beauty enjoyed. Some skirts are adorned with stitching while others are adorn with beads. Solunum Incunum is used to clean and preserve the garments.



Clothing varies by age, sex, and place. Red is a favored color. Blue, black, striped, and checkered cloth are also worn, as are multicolored African designs. The Maasai began to replace animal-skin, calf hides and sheep skin, with commercial cotton cloth in the 1960s.

Shúkà is the Maa word for sheets traditionally worn wrapped around the body, one over each shoulder, then a third over the top of them. These are typically red, though with some other colors (e.g. blue) and patterns (e.g. plaid.) Pink, even with flowers, is not shunned by warriors. One piece garments known as kanga, a Swahili term, are common.

Many Maasai in Tanzania wear simple sandals, which were until recently made from cowhides. They are now soled with new or used tire strips. Both men and women wear wooden bracelets. The Maasai women regularly weave and bead jewelry. This bead work plays an essential part in the ornamentation of their body. Although there are variations in the meaning of the color of the beads, some general meanings for a few colors are: white, peace; blue, water; red, warrior/blood/bravery.

Beadworking, done by women, has a long history among the Maasai, who articulate their identity and position in society through body ornaments and body painting. Before contact with Europeans beads were produced mostly from local raw materials. White beads were made from clay, shells, ivory, or bone. Black and blue beads were made from iron, charcoal, seeds, clay, or horn. Red beads came from seeds, woods, gourds, bone, ivory, copper, or brass. When late in the nineteenth century, great quantities of brightly colored European glass beads arrived in East Africa, beadworkers replaced the older beads with the new materials and began to use more elaborate color schemes. Currently, dense, opaque glass beads with no surface decoration and a naturally smooth finish are preferred.