

Causes of Transnational Marriage with a Home-based Spouse: Case Study from Gondare/ Ethiopians in the Diaspora

Aschalew Abeje (PhD)¹

Abstract

This study analyzes the reasons why Gondare (natives of Gondar district, northwest Ethiopia) migrants choose to marry a home-based spouse. Data are collected from migrants coming home for this aim and from families through interview and questionnaire. Document analysis is used to supplement them. Although women involve considerably, findings show that men are the principal actors in such deals. This study approaches multiple experiences as intersecting mechanisms and found decisions for a marriage at home as multi-causal. It reveals that differential gender orders at the two ends set the precedence for this preference. It also shows time constraint, family pressure, desire for acknowledged marriage, and political contexts at home as important factors shaping migrants' decisions for a home-based spouse.

Keywords: cause, Gondare, home-based, migrants, marriage

¹ Bahir Dar University, Department of Social Anthropology, email: aschua2015@gmail.com

Introduction

Ethiopians saw a sweeping transnational migration in the 1970s when the nation suffered political crises following the ascendancy of the *Dergue*, a junta that ruled from 1974 to 1991. However, by comparison such transnational migration was more pronounced in Gondare than in other regions. The nationwide Red Terror campaign, by definition an indiscriminate torture and massacre of people by the regime *was extreme in Gondar* (De Waal 1991). When the struggle in the center crumbled, rival political parties shifted their bases to Gondar where they continued guerrilla warfare. To end the resistance, the *Dergue* turned ever brutal. This, in turn, provoked protests that gave the incumbent the ground for atrocious actions, the massacre of the 1977 Mayday demonstrators that turned Gondar into blood bath being the infamous example. The tyranny reached the extent wherein people were forbidden even not to mourn over victimized kin. The shadow of political anarchism discouraged agriculture, trade, and other off-farm activities resulting in acute famine. This had caused panic and had compelled members of rival parties and significant others into exile. This is assisted by the fact that Western states, including the US, were informed about the difficulty of life in Gondar; thus prompting them to grant unconditional asylum to people originating there. Migration persisted in the decades after through migrant networks that exposed people behind to the prospects in the West and supported them to follow their example. Thus, the Gondare form the bulk of the Ethiopian Diaspora (Adejumobi 2007; Solomon 2007).

The pre-flight history does not seem to sever the Gondare's post-migration linkages with their home. One such connection is the remittances afforded to families (Getnet and Muluneh 2013). Migrants also involve in political activism to contribute to the democratization of their birthplace (Kassahun 2012). Research has produced a substantial literature on issues of economic and political transnationalism. Yet, Gondare migrants are widely involved in social issues, including marriage. Scholarly examination of this practice as an important aspect of transnational engagement can contribute to the academic debate and theory formulation. But, research on the topic is highly scant. Hence, the primary purpose of this study to begin to address this.

Theoretical underpinnings and a review of empirical studies

The concept of transnational social spaces

Theoretical explanation of migrants' links with their birthplaces dates back to 1990s, when Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992), rejecting the assumptions of the assimilation theory, proposed the idea of transnational social spaces. Assimilation theories long hold that migrants gradually lose their values, assimilate to host communities, and disconnect relations with their birthplaces. However, for the proponents of the transnational social spaces, this is not necessarily so. For them, assimilation to host and loyalty to home are not binary opposites and migrants show simultaneous commitments to both. In other words, the former does not preclude the other so that migrants maintain linkages with their home through remittances and several other ways without being regulated by assimilation (Glick-Schiller 2009). Transnational social space also maintains that such links have socio-cultural and economic effects at both ends. Migrants, as the theory claims, bring home and host communities into webs of relations through which resources and values exchange between and bring about effects at both ends (Heisler 2001).

Although the theory pays no particular focus to the causes of transnational marriage and hence remains insufficient to analyze the subject in its full complexity, some of its constructs are relevant to the context of this study. For instance, the exchange-effect correlation can be employed to examine into the positive information received about, the induced desire for, and the informed decision of the Gondare to marry a spouse from home. Thus, this study examines the causes of marriage with a home-based spouse in light of this theory.

Some empirical studies

Transnational marriage with a home-based spouse is an old practice dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries. However, such a marriage turned a common practice during the 1960s, when more and more people mostly from the periphery migrated and started to live in the West. Many studies (e.g. Cameron 2006; Schinkel 2011) reveal that migrants engage in such a marriage because of a wide array of interrelated and overlapping socio-cultural factors.

One major factor emphasized in the literature is the desire to shift gender power relations in marital life and attain a marriage considered necessary, patriarchal for men and egalitarian for women to which people in the host are suitable only barely. Since gender equality is the norm in the host (i.e. the West) and women in these countries are relatively empowered, they are hardly fit for the expectations of patriarchal marriage. Thus, migrant men suffer from frustration of risks of conjugal misfortune of losing patriarchal privileges should they marry such women. Indeed, migrant husbands often find themselves in an inferior position in domestic relations vis-à-vis their wives from host. Thus, they choose to marry a spouse from their home where patriarchy is the norm and women raised in accordance with it hold uncorrupted tradition to bear a chaste wife (Charsley 2012). Decisions for home-based spouses in relation to patriarchal marriage are evident among British Pakistani (Shaw 2001) and Tanzanian men in London (Shaw and Charsley 2006).

The same notion is true when it comes to the choice of migrant women for a home-based husband. Migrant women's experience at the host shapes their preference for such a husband. Exposed to the ideology of gender equality, women no longer go well with the expenses of patriarchy. They, thus, decide to get married from home in view of that the rewards of their citizenship or knowledge about the rules of the host make an imported husband dependent—thus more democratic to his foreign-based wife (Beck-Gernsheim 2007). Having an egalitarian home-based husband is a vital factor inducing migrant women to this sort of marriage, as observed in the case of Belgian Turks marrying from their home (Lievens 1999).

Decisions for such marriage as well rely on the characteristics of migrants' status shift their marketability in the social structures at home. The necessities of life are scarcely available in migrants' home countries so that most people dream for migration to the West to flee frantic local situations. As marriage with settled migrants gives that opportunity, home-based people welcome candidates of whomever caliber. Because they have the identity that enables entry to an affluent society, migrants that might be at the very bottom of the social hierarchy of host communities attain status and, "their marriage options bloom" at home (Ballard 2001,30). This inspires them to travel home in search of a spouse (Nauck 2004).

Desire for reproduction of customary marriage is another vital factor recognized as a seminal cause for transnational marriage (Charsley 2012). Communities have their own marriage preferences. Some view marriage outside kin as inconvenient that adulterates distinctiveness and prefer a kin to hang on to it. In Pakistan, for instance, cousin marriage is the rule meant for maintaining their distinctiveness or the Islamic marriage rule. In some culture, such an

arrangement is a necessity to retain bond of relatedness. As the study conducted on Punjabi marriage by Werbner (1990 in Charsley 2012) reveals, marrying a kin is “putting new wood in a fence”. Migrants originating from such communities choose to marry back from home in favor of those traditions, which according to Charsley (2012), is one of the causes bringing British Pakistanis to a marriage with home-based spouses.

Decisions for desirable marriage dominate the debate. Yet, the degree to which transnational marriage is understood as a strategy or as an instrumental practice has been an essential theme given little space in the scholarly writings. While marriage with a home-based spouse often holds advantages in terms of status and safety on the part of migrants, such a marriage is also a response to adverse experiences in the host. Some, for instance, decide to marry a spouse from home as an exit from downward social mobility. Others seek this kind of marriage to counter the melancholy of divorce and loneliness in the host (Constable 2005b in Charsley 2012).

Besides, commitment to social obligation is regarded in the literature as another fundamental factor in transnational marriage. In several communities, mutual support is a shared obligation. In such communities, where collective accountability to kin is the rule, meeting a commitment offers emotional fulfillment, as failure to do so does the reverse. As mentioned earlier, migration to an affluent society is a dream for people in migrants’ home countries. Yet, the growing policy restriction of states means that entry to the West but through family unification is hardly possible. Informed of the contrasting images, there are circumstances in which migrants choose to marry from home for a simple reason of securing a kin’s migration (Charsley 2012). Of course, marrying a kin is not just about loyalty. It is also part of migrants’ strategy to consolidate their status there. Migrants need to have esteemed position in their birthplaces. Accepting a kin as a partner is a valued offer that serves this purpose. Marriage of convenience is evident among the British Mirpuris marrying a home-based spouse for family honor, besides the motive for strengthening social status (Ballard 1990; Shaw 2001).

Ranging from rational choice to macro-level instrumental value, the literature offers such analyses of why migrants marry a spouse from their birthplaces. The emphasis is on what can be labeled as migrants’ independent choice according to rationality of relative advantage. Otherwise, decisions are understood as an instrumental move for the poor, based on status in transnational contexts in which migrants are placed, and the probability of success of such an arrangement. It is also conceptualized as a strategy, a means for a different end other than the conventional intent of marriage. Many of these ideas, which involve constructs of rational-instrumental analysis, are relevant to the context of this study. However, this article contends that the roots of transnational marriage are multiple and context-specific in which decisions stem from the interplay of many more factors and collective actions of migrants and families. Thus, a better grasp of the causes of such a marriage needs careful analysis with an emphasis to the socio-cultural and political transnationalism in which migrants operate. The author, thus, departs from the rational-instrumental analysis and understands decisions as response to layers of motives, responsibilities, pressure, and hopes tied with migrants’ transnational life.

Methodology

Research design

This study examines why Gondare migrants seek a home-based spouse and intends to bring insights into the existing scholarship. To investigate the issue in-depth and to enrich the analysis with supplementary data, a mixed research approach is adopted. Data are obtained from different sources and diverse ways of knowing. To get a better insight into what drives

the Gondare to such a marriage, it is desirable to examine migrants from different backgrounds. The study, thus, purposively included the Gondare from main host states (US, Israel, Canada, and Australia) coming home for this purpose. Study participants are selected from each country in reference to the proportion in the deal. Although studying their life and adaptation to host could enrich the analysis, this is not possible owing to financial constraints. Data are collected from migrants who availed themselves at Gondar. Emic understanding overlooks migrants' transnational life and other actors' role, thus families, with different experiences and demographics, are purposefully included as participants. The data is analyzed in light of transnational social spaces theory and empirical scholarships.

Methods of data collection and analysis

Both qualitative and quantitative methods are used to investigate the causes of these marriages. Data are collected mainly from primarily sources. Interviews are conducted with informants selected purposively from migrant spouses and their families. 12 migrants of different sex, age, and cultural background are interviewed to grasp diverse perspectives. Interviews are also held with 10 families. Besides, structured questionnaire is used to collect data from representative samples of the migrants coming home for marriage. 108 respondents participated in the survey. Since the study population is undefined and house-to-house survey is unfeasible, the size of respondents' is determined by accidental sampling of administering questionnaires when couples show up at the GCMRD¹. Documents and archives are consulted to supplement the data. The qualitative data are transcribed, thematized, and, then, analyzed vis-à-vis testimonies of the informants. SPSS-15 is used to analyze the quantitative data and generate descriptive statistical measures.

Backgrounds of the Gondare migrant spouses

The crises of the 1970s targeted and selectively dislocated the male segment of the population of Gondar. As a result, the Gondare abroad is mostly male, as Solomon (2007), found out in examining the case in the US. Migrant women are often reluctant to get married at home, as they are not culturally entitled to look for their own husbands (Pankhurst 1990). Besides, they are doubtful of the marriage success with home-based men, who, in their opinion, deem migrants as sexual objects that exhaust all what they would deliver as a marriage partner. Thus, as the analysis of the marriage database reveals, there is a significant gender imbalance, with males contributing 70.5 % of the overall Gondare involved in the deal.

Gondare migrants lead a transnational life with multiple commitments. While this way of life causes delayed decisions, the context at home also would encourage them to postpone their marriage plans. Ending poverty is the target for home-based women seeking migrant spouses. Yet, safe arrangement or avoiding risks of desertion and abuse is central in doing so. Marriage, not any but with ageing migrants of adequate savings and fading marital prospects, is considered useful to this end. Hence, home-based women are attracted to and, indeed, marry ageing migrants (older by 12.42 years on average, according to statistic from 1193 couples) whom they hope to provide safe, sound, and direct returns. This affords preeminence and encourages migrants to seek a spouse late in their age. Thus, Gondare involved in this marriage are mostly aged, while the participation of the youth is negligible.

Table 1: Age of the Gondare migrant spouses

Age Group	Frequency	Percent
≤ 33	435	36.5
33-43	529	44.3
43-53	167	14.0
53-63	38	3.2
63-73	20	1.7
≥73	4	.3
Total	N = 1193	100

Source: Gondare transnational marriage database, Gondar, 2013

Reasons for marriage with a home-based spouse

Gondare migrants choose to marry back from home; mainly, because of lack of marriageable people in the host, time constraint, desire for an acknowledged marriage, and family pressure. Bad political mood at home also appears to be among the factors hindering migrants from concluding marriage from their birthplace.

Table 2: Summary of causes of the marriage from survey respondents

Reasons for the marriage	Frequency	Percent
Lack of marriageable people in the host	86	79.6
Transnational life and time constraints	78	72.2
Desire for an acknowledged marriage	69	63.9
Persuasion and family pressure	57	52.8
Total number of respondents	290²	100

Source: Field survey, 2013

Lack of marriageable people in the host

Studies by Shaw (2001), Shaw and Charley (2006), and others reveal that migrants choose to marry a spouse at home to shift gender relations in marital life to their favor. Findings of this study also verify the centrality of this trajectory. Indeed, this is a prime factor motivating the Gondare for such a marriage, as evidenced from 79.6 % of survey respondents.

People in the host are hardly fit for the kind of marriage migrants, men and women, aspire to attain. Most women in the host do not fit for the patriarchal matrimony migrant men seek. As gender equality is the norm and women are accustomed to such relationships only rarely, patriarchal privileges in domestic relations vis-à-vis a wife from host are not likely. Focusing on the gender order, these scholars and others, including Shaw (2001), fail to cross examine in detail how the overlapping effects of economic empowerment and political protection in the host make women incompatible to a marriage migrant men seek. While the gender order

nurtures women's consciousness on equality, economic and political empowerment offer them the context to decide their destiny thus serving the same purpose the former does.

As women in migrants' host states are capable of making their own living, that economic status enables them to become autonomous who no longer want to subject themselves to spousal control. For instance, women who hold their own homestead may call upon the husband to join in their dwelling on marriage. This arrangement would afford, as the account from Gondare men, the wife with authority in the household. As vital to the economic empowerment is the political framework. Women's right is not a subject for negotiation and host states offer protection, allowing them make freewill decisions. Given this, women exercise their choice, at times exceeding limits tolerable by their partners. They, for example, may be unwilling to pay even the slightest sacrifice for marriage sake, as a Gondare man puts it, 'your wife will bring you to court if you try to have sex without her goodwill.' They also enjoy sexual liaison whether or not they are engaged which migrants who take such relations for granted consider as excessive intrusions in private affairs. Such entitlement of women and disappointment of men commonly lead to domestic violence, murder, and abuse.

Such empowerment communicates gendered meaning-making processes. While it would constitute messages of lack of masculine authority, thus change of customary standards; it also reflects migrants mediocre status compared to men from the mainstream host. Migrant men would be convinced that they would suffer marital misfortunes should they marry a woman from the host. Thus, they ignore the idea of marriage there, as the interview with a Gondare based in Melbourne reveals.

Let me tell you a story that took Melbourne into shock. An Ethiopian couple lived in my village. The wife had an affair with an Australian police. When she knew that her husband had known the truth, she plotted to blackmail him. She installed a camera to file sexual activities and provoked him for awkward sex. The husband did not know the plot and practiced [emphasis avoided] in accordance with her offer. According to the rule of the land, such practices are violence. In Australia, women are protected. The man was sentenced to three years in jail. The Ethiopian community contributed £15,000 and hired a lawyer, as the accused was known for his good personality. After three months, he was able to prove his innocence. We hear many similar stories, more shocking than this every day. Couples kill each other. One cannot be sure whether such crises will not occur in his life. Indeed, they may! I canceled a marriage there for a wife in Gondar.

When they realize adjusting to the context in the host can be elusive, migrant men decide for a home-based woman. This is because women cultivated under patriarchal norms of the home possess uncorrupted tradition to offer a chaste wife (Shaw and Charsley 2006; Charsley 2012).

Scholars investigating the causes of transnational marriage usually analyze the issue in relation to qualities of women raised at home in a manner acquiescent to men to bear an obedient wife. But, such analysis hinders our understandings of how migrant men engage in the process of considering the economic status of and what strategies they adopt to acquire a chaste home-based wife. Home-based women might suffer a continuum of poverty that has interrelated effects on the short-and long-term aspects of life. Parents would be critical of the way members put to household's socio-economic welfare. Indeed, smooth relations would depend on how well a member contributes. Due to the high value placed upon the contribution of each member to a household, a dependent woman would suffer disrespect or poor integrity in which there would be psychological consequences. In addition, and even more important, poverty is a barrier to lifetime prospects such as marriage because people

would need one with own means of income which people we are referring to might not afford. Migrant men would assume that women remaining with few life opportunities deliver the required type of marriage. One paradoxical criterion, avoiding rich-background women, the Gondare apply in fixing a home-based wife would illumine this.

Destined for a patriarchal marriage, migrant men would also adopt subtle processes of destroying prospects of a home-based wife, and they do so through victimizing hopes. Yet, researchers fail to deem migrant men can do so and distance themselves from the debate. However, ignoring this diminishes command of understanding migrants' trajectories and the egoistic actions they would pursue to attain this sort of marriage. If a home-based wife were a desperate alternative, migrant men could assess control measures, as it would be tricky to foresee the ultimate innocence of imported women. The Gondare case offers a solid example of how migrant men would show such strategic flexibility. It is believed that a woman who gives birth loses her potent mixture of physical charm and authority thus slight prospect of making impression in the marriage market in the host. Besides, it incurs a man who needs to marry such a woman to share nurturing tasks, a costly piece of commitment which people might not be interested in. Thus, as interview accounts disclose, Gondare migrants require a home-based wife to give birth before moving to the host state and drop her behind until she consents to do so. A bride must agree should she need the visa or cancel the marriage deal, an option that most do not need. Thus, the explanation of uncorrupted women cultivated in a patriarchal norm is not just the only but only one aspect of valuation in targeting such a marriage.

Migrant men are not transnational marriage only actors. Their counterparts do also involve in such a transaction but for a different end. As with the men, migrant women find people in the host inappropriate to the kind of marriage they aspire. In view of migrant women, men in the host are less moved to a convenient level in terms of gender equality. They live with patriarchal elements and deem women as sexual objects, bearers of future generation, and domestic services. It is viewed that marital life rooted in equality, respect, and demonstrative affection is dubious with such men. Indeed, for Gondare women, marrying men in the host is a reproduction of the customary marriage of their birthplace where a wife is acquiescent to a husband, culturally the supreme head of the household (Pankhurst 1990). Accordingly, they decide to marry at home to attain egalitarian marriage since they are accustomed to gender equity and no longer bear patriarchal relations (Charsley 2012).

The rationale of egalitarian life with a husband from home, where patriarchy is the norm, is often justified pertaining to powerlessness induced by absence of citizenship and knowledge of the host vis-à-vis a foreign-based wife. However, this theorization does not do justice in all contexts. Other migrant women would focus on normative approaches of building positive relational conditions and reciprocal connections. In a context of mass migration, an imported husband would have closer kin in the host. That would provide support should he decide to divorce his foreign-based wife. As egalitarian marriage through induced dependence makes little sense in the company of a kin, migrant women would follow a more gender-appropriate act of kindness to a home-based spouse. At the heart of the issue is that sympathy would fix indebtedness and check relations from developing negatively. From a normative position, failure to reciprocate favor would damage sense of good-self and social esteem. Practically, betrayal leads to lasting enmity back home between families of a couple. Meant for personal and family safety, a person given favors would contain personal interests and demonstrate commitment. Added to what have been referred to, parents of a husband would encourage their kin to remain loyal to his foreign-based wife. A wife in this case remits and covers

wedding and travel costs of her home-based husband, besides being the means for escaping desperate situations at home. Migrant women would expect high prospect of success and rely on such subtle approaches in having a considerate husband at home. This is evident from the account of a Gondare based in Seattle who married a husband from Gondar.

Men in US need women for sexual joy and serve them with food. A woman marrying a husband there is just a maidservant. She misses the whole lot of love because men are rich and enjoy with it. I am living in US. I have a good income. I used to help my fiancé. I will let him live happy. I believe he will value these and give me a marriage of love and equality.

Therefore, the rationale justifying women's decision is complex and should be understood in relation to migration history and the social context in which they operate.

Time constraint and challenges of accessing a spouse in the host

This is a vital factor that should not be, but has always been, ignored as a causal mechanism of transnational marriage. Among others, Ballard (2001), Cameron (2006), routinely focus on socio-cultural matters, appealing uncritical conceptions of decision for a spouse at home is only about evading marriage with empowered people or safety in terms of migrants' life. Such scholars, and even those (e.g. Constable 2005a, in Charsley 2012) who realize such a marriage as a response to incidences in the host, have troubles understanding and fail to capture the multiple ways time constraint can constitute a cause. This invalidates the researchers' curiosity about migrants' transnational life and the implication of their multiple responsibilities in upsetting their social life, ultimately hindering understandings of the synergy between decisions and collective experiences.

This study brings to light that time constraint can induce migrants to transnational marriage, through denying the simple means for role obligation. The concept of Transnational Social Spaces goes several ways to explain this. It argues that transnational life compels migrants into taking turns to ensure self-survival and, then, into playing the caretaker role to families at home (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004). Often, migrants are situated apart from their kin, meaning they can hardly rely on or look for help from relatives in case the need arises. Also, to improve their academic qualification and to successfully adapt to the sophisticated host society, migrants would be required to join school which would entail not only securing a job at all times but also dealing with the extra burden of studying and covering school fees and related expenses. But, discharging these necessities with personal earnings would be a rare prospect in the competitive host milieu. Therefore, a migrant would resort to bank credit that would incur further debts or take quite several years to clear unless dealt with sooner. As a self-reliant being, one must work hard and generate income, as failure to which means an entire setback to ensure survival.

Equally interesting in the life of migrants is the commitment to social obligations back home. Migrants have close links with and acquire information about families' socio-economic needs. Indeed, migrants might have migrated due to or with the aim of dealing with them. Given this, they are sensitive to the troubles surrounding their families from genuine loyalty that would finally provide sense of fulfillment. A migrant would also need to ensure he/she fulfills this

obligation, for loyalty is a basic virtue in identity formation as an accountable member that would win him/her respect at home (Glick-Schiller et al.1992).

Generally, a migrant is expected not only to adapt to the host but also to become accountable to others. It means that hard work and making money is exceedingly desirable in effecting them. This would require staying for an extended period on parallel jobs. That, in turn, would leave a migrant with tiny space of time for accessing people of whom he would court a spouse who would give the often-desired smart marriage. To the extent, it would deplete migrants' cognitive consciousness and enthusiasm to think with clarity of purpose about and plan when to get married. When chances to do so are unattainable in the host, migrants travel home, as 72.2 % of survey respondents of this study so did, in the hope of getting a suitable one through family arrangement. The account of a US-based Gondare illustrates the multiple ways this can be achieved.

Life is costly in US. A small item needed for survival demands lots of money. We need to go to college. We help our parents and relatives. It is always work, work, and work! I did not have enough time and space of mind to think about marriage. Again, if I have a free time, the woman I need for marriage may not. I may be at work in the morning, while she may be on duty in the afternoon. It is hard. I decided to marry in Gondar believing that my family will find me a good wife.

Time constraint can, therefore, cause the same transnational marriage process as lack of suitable people in the host does. It applies particularly in this case where, owing to poverty and families' loyalty to arrange marriages of migrant members, access to a home-based spouse is readily available. Treating whichever migrant group as representative cannot be scholarly sound. Therefore, understanding the causes of transnational marriage necessitates a holistic approach of considering lack of eligible spouse in the host and the structural context wherein migrants operate, alongside their differential experiences.

Fidelity to natal traditions and the desire for a recognized marriage

This is another vital reason that has been grossly ignored in previous studies. Even scholars (Charsley 2012) who accept marriage with a home-based spouse as a preference of natal traditions fail to comprehend decisions in light of this issue. This stems from a risky tendency of invalidating the prejudice migrants' suffer, their loyalty to what is home, and their loyalty to keep relations with birthplaces. At best, missing such an issue in discussions of causes of this marriage invalidates scholars' understandings of migrants' passion for and the array of ways they use to place themselves as esteemed member at home, ultimately hindering understandings of how decisions can be caused by fidelity to natal mores and the desire for a recognized marriage.

Not all people in the host would be unmarriageable for migrants. Nor could all migrants be victims of constrained temporal space. Lack of marriageable people and the means for an ideal spouse would thus be causes of such a marriage for only a subset of migrants. Others may wish to marry back from home only to have a marriage formed in accordance with natal traditions. Migrants remain faithful to their values (Glick-Schiller 2009). Indeed, due to prejudices and related stresses, some remain conservative to and need to marry respective to

the authentic mores of their natal tradition. For such people, only a marriage performed in line with natal sacred traditions is the ultimate means for the secular and spiritual ends of life. However, this would be hardly possible given the objective conditions in the host. Migrants would find only a few natal religious centers existing nearby. The services they provide might also lack the necessary rituals. In others, they might not exist at all. Thus, a faithful migrant would decide to marry from home where the chances of marriage in line with conventions are simple. Some Gondare, for instance, stay conformist to traditions of Orthodox Christianity. For them, a marriage in accordance with its dogma, involving the Holy Communion, is central to even the secular aspect of life. Thus, such domains get back to Gondar for a marriage under the authentic provisions of the Church. A Gondare from Canada offers an insight into this.

I was a deacon at St Gabriel Church before I left. I needed to marry with blessings of my Church. There is no church in the district I live. If you find one, the services cannot be good enough. I had no chance to marry the way I wanted. I did not want to have civil marriage. That is why I came here. I got a wonderful wedding at my Church. The prayers, the chant, and other services were amazing. The church's congregation spent the whole night without a sleep. They made my wedding astounding. May God bless them!

At the heart of such humility is, though, the desire for a recognized marriage loaded with symbolic and practical implications. People at home recognize marriages made in line with their traditions as “blessed”. In so doing, migrants would earn their families respect from the community. Thus, a migrant would involve in such a scheme, as such loyalty helps him/her to secure status at home, and to afford emotional fulfillment and satisfaction (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992). Also indispensable, migrants who observe natal traditions would receive cordial care or support from parents. From normative standpoint, failure to get such a marriage is failure to reciprocate debt of compassion that would mean an entire failure, as parents would curse to spoil life. Moreover, a recognized marriage would be desired for practical reasons and even can be viewed as a decisive means to the primary end of secured marital life. Migrants and families are mutually dependent. The latter naturally need and, in fact, obtain support from the other. Given this, family consent for the overall union would be critical to save marriages from disaster, as caustic family dynamics would infiltrate into and ruin peaceful life if not. In line with the approval of 63.9 % of survey participants, an informant confirms how decisions for a home-based spouse can be shaped by such mixed motives as:

My mother was alone, but she raised me in a good manner. I decided to marry here because I wanted to compensate her, and get her blessings. Her tears will ruin my life if I marry without her permission. She was delighted when I told her my decision. Marriage is not just a personal thing. It is more a family stuff. You have to make sure that things you do are not affecting their life because they will trouble your life too. They must accept my marriage. Otherwise, they will never have harmony with my husband or in-laws and, even, with me.

Therefore, the values ascribed to a marriage performed in line with natal traditions are several and are implicated in various ways.

Decision from above: family pressure as causal mechanism

Marriage with a home-based spouse is often understood merely as an outcome of self-impelled drives. Yet, this is not necessarily the case and decisions for such a marriage cannot be comprehended by looking only at migrants' needs, as they are embedded in and dictated by layers of relations with families at home. Migrants could come to such a transaction because of derived desires emanating from family pressure, as this case study discloses. Migrants are transnational beings that remain loyal to families. They are responsible for the material needs and for ensuring families' survival through remittance in which there are social dimensions (Glick-Schiller 2009). Since they seek esteemed status at home, they also afford foreign goods, health checkup, and vacation trips for their families. This might help the development of conservative attitudes and would afford families with egoistic reasons and play roles in matters of migrants' marriage back from home.

Being a means for improved material and social needs, a migrant is a "guardian angel" of families. Unfortunately, migrants are lured to drugs, even of hyper-addictives ones. Due to this, there are potentials for contracting syndromes, including HIV/AIDS (Yewoubdar 2000). Families at home would be informed of the troubles their relatives might suffer in the other end through social networks. Unless a member of that value is protected, not only the material but also the social benefits would be in trouble. Vital to families is, thus, protecting a "guardian angel" from risks by which the benefits persist. They would view marriage-not any but a union with a loyal life partner wherein one takes up responsibilities and from which he/she acquires myriad pleasure- as a vital means to that end. Only a home-based person that grew up in poverty and socialized in conformist norms is believed to fit the role. Indeed, such a marriage could be viewed as a fate that would redefine status quo or ensure a brighter future in migrants' life, by definition in the life of families who, as a result, need to marry off a member to a spouse at home.

However, this would be beyond the ideal plan and migrants would remain indifferent to such a marriage. Migrants would view people at home as disloyal, seeking such a marriage for migration sake, and an arrangement with them as a futile plan. They might also need to marry whom they love. Meanwhile, families hold motives they need to protect through this scheme and would exert pressure, which might vary both in character and in extent, to induce change of perspective of a migrant. Some might place priority on and aim only to facilitate subjective decisions. In this regard, they adopt subtle approaches that would allow migrants to make informed decisions. They would inform migrants of the extent to which access to a spouse of quality is far too easy at home. Otherwise, they would discourage a marriage plan in the host, telling how marrying empowered people would lead, in economic terms, to costly life and the likelihood of ending up being victim of gender-based abuse. Thus, migrants with slim chance of finding a spouse in the host would know the status and access to a quality spouse they would have at home (Nauck 2004). Families would urge migrants to assess their life in light of successful people married to a home-based spouse. They would also adopt a functional perspective and promise to assume the marriage arrangement to marry off members to the best of their choice. This would be a precious gift that cannot be ignored by a migrant under the pressure of shortage of time to court a spouse in the host. In extreme cases, this sort of marriage could be viewed as a distorted practice and persuasion could not be useful to get migrants' consent. When they are sure that a member will not be convinced, families would carry it to extreme affective schemes, which migrants find hard to disregard. They, for example, would intimidate reminding a migrant member that they would not carry relations with them forward. Equally, they would issue cautions to use their cursing power, which migrants would deem to constitute elements of divine power that would ruin one's life. They would also issue to deny parenthood, which would leave a migrant living far from kin with a

neglected air, if their scheme is ignored. A migrant trapped on all these different levels of pressure decides to marry at home, as responding positively to such appeals grants esteemed status (Glick-Schiller et al.1992). Indeed, denial is viewed as disrespect to families that would spoil identity formation, as the account from an informant illumines.

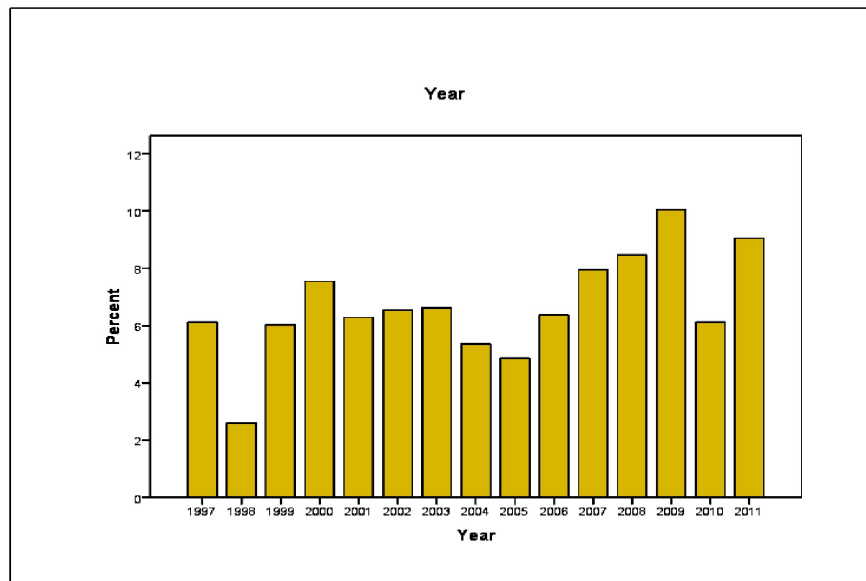
Lots of Gondare are addicted to alcohol, cocaine, and marijuana. Families are aware of this. My family insisted me to marry from Gondar to protect me from such misfortunes. This has influenced my decision. They told me about the availability of decent women. They also promised to find me a good wife. If I pursue my own feeling, it damages my relations with them. They will curse me in their dying age. It is useful to respect their advice because it gives you their regard. I do not want to be labeled bad. I do not want to make them sad and ashamed of me.

Thus, as the quotation and the account from 52.8 % of the survey respondents' show, family pressure is an important cause for transnational marriage. Interestingly, the Gondare hold a pride in their respect for parental appeals and its social reward.

Political ambivalence as a deterrent factor

Interest in marrying a home-based spouse could emanate either from self-impelled motives or from external drives. But, decision for a marriage at home is not an easy chore that merely relies on such issues but on the context wherein it is situated. A move to do so could be determined, decisively, by the political context at home, a critical feature glossed over by scholars. Volatile politics would lead migrants develop conservative attitudes and, hence, force them abandon marriage plans at home. Migrants know that political instability at home is an adverse factor that would hamper them from carrying out their plans. They would also realize that a scheme in erratic state costs much, including loss of life. After all, marriage is about life, so ensuring subjective safety would be vital to migrants. Before making the journey, they would assess the situations at home to ensure whether their marriage could be done without involving risks to life and would abandon their plan if they find it unfavorable. The case of the Gondare under inquiry seems to substantiate this claim, as can be understood from the uneven pattern of transnational marriage shown in the graph below.

Figure 1: Pattern of the Gondare transnational marriage



Source: Gondare transnational marriage database, Gondar, 2013

It can be seen from the graph that the transnational marriage is highly irregular. As the graph depicts, the practice showed a sharp decline in 1998, 2004, 2005, and 2010, when Ethiopia had suffered political crises. The country was at war with Eritrea in 1998. During the other years aforementioned, the internal chaos that erupted following the second and third national elections flustered the nation. The political instability in those years could have discouraged the Gondare from coming, as the relative peace from 1999 to 2003 and from 2006 to 2009 might have done the reverse as can be witnessed from the sharp increase in the number of marriages in this period. The practice has been gaining momentum since 2007 and reached its peak late in 2009 due perhaps to the growing peace in the country that could have allowed them to travel home for marriage.

Conclusion

Migrants decide to marry from their birthplace for several reasons. One of these is the desire to shift gender power balance in domestic relations to their favor. Socialized in a patriarchal gender order, migrant men wish for marriage wherein the wife remains obedient. However, raised in an egalitarian order, women in the host would not bear with such marriage. Thus, the men decide to marry a home-based woman acculturated to gender inequality to deliver a chaste wife (Shaw and Charsley 2006). Scholars often analyze such decisions with respect to gender orders. Targeting such a home-based wife, though, is not straightforward and migrant men would involve other strategies. Owing to their poverty, migrant men would view such women as being less accustomed to the taste of luxury and consider them ideal to ensure an increased chance of success in terms of the marriage they wish to attain. Meanwhile, because it would be difficult to foresee lasting loyalty of imported women, migrant men would assume indirect schemes of coercing a home-based wife to give birth before moving to the host. As witnessed in Gondare marriage case, for her children's safety and for that fact that she loses her charm, a woman who gave birth is deemed to remain an obedient wife.

Ironically, migrant women hold diametrically opposed expectations from that of migrant men and get married at home seeking an egalitarian husband. Migrant women are accustomed to gender equality and no longer bear with patriarchal relations. Yet, they find men in the host overly domineering and indifferent to the sort of marriage they wish to establish. Thus, they decide to marry at home with the idea that their nationality to and knowledge of the host state makes an imported husband a vulnerable dependent; thus ideal for such a marriage (Beck-Gernsheim 2007; Charsley 2012). Acquiring a progressive home-based husband through differential power structure remains a common theme in discussions of migrant women's choice for a marriage at home. But, this might not be true in all contexts and entirely different options should be considered instead. In a context where there is a kin to provide support, for example, an egalitarian husband through duress makes no sense and women would instead rely on positive relational conditions. A migrant wife in this case would assume poignant remittances and other favors in having such a husband.

Theorizing that it is only about avoiding empowered people, prior researchers, who even conceptualized such a marriage as a response to adversities in the host (e.g. Constable 2005, in Charsley 2012), ignore the role of structural constraints including time. This invalidates migrants' post-migration lives, situated within multiple commitments within and across social fields. Migrants would decide to marry from home for not only ideal people are absent but because there is limited access to existing opportunities in the host. Migrants are transnational beings, taking turns to adapt themselves to the host and, then, deal with families' necessities (Glick-Schiller 2009). Discharging such obligations means making money takes precedence, which would require a migrant to take on multiple jobs. That leaves a migrant with depleted time for courting an ideal spouse and getting married in the host. When this holds true, migrants travel home where chances to do so can be simple, thanks to the concern of families for arranging marriage for a migrant member.

In this transition to a 'complete human', migrants also stress the rewards of marriage in line with local traditions (Lievens 1999; Nauck 2004). While this is true given migrants' loyalty to their value (Glick-Schiller 2009), the idea of marriage in accordance with natal traditions is more complex. Such a choice can rather be a move for a recognized marriage. Migrants seeking a marriage that complies with classic traditions of their religion would find only a few sacred centers in the host. The service of these centers may also lack standards. Thus, they would decide to marry at home because it would be simple. What is even more vital is that doing so would enable them gain families' blessing and recognition, which is helpful for repositioning themselves as esteemed members at home (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992). Yet, a recognized marriage is so vital to such a degree that it is a primary means for the goal of domestic safety, as evidenced by the Gondare. Family consent for and recognition of a marriage could be a prime means to shield marital life from abuses, including parental curse.

Prior studies theorized the causes of transnational marriage, focusing principally on migrants' self-impelled motives and treated the issue as independent from families, and their decision as unidirectional. This author's grasp of the issue departs from the prior analysis and considers their decision as bidirectional, and one that involves families' embedded interests, actions, and strategies. Families have transnational connection and responsibilities vested upon them to protect migrant members from adversities. Migrants remain insurance to families' socio-economic needs; thus, considered as "guardian angels". Unfortunately, they remain victims of drug, disease, and other fatal incidents. Families should protect their "guardian angels" from risks and would view that home-based people socialized in a conservative norm would offer them loyal companionship. However, migrants would hold opposed views. To induce a

migrant member, families would press, involving provision of information of how accessing a spouse is easy at home. Yet, such affective rudiments could not be useful in some cases. In this case, families would adopt extreme means such as intimidation to end relations and deny paternity to the primary end of forcing a member to conclude a marriage with a home-based spouse. As defiance to family appeals would spoil identity construction (Glick-Schiller et al. 1992) and for the fact that it could be a special offer for a person under strains of getting a spouse in the host, a migrant would respond positively.

The correlation between transnational marriage and political context at home is another fundamental issue which merit serious attention and yet recieved remarkably so little. This article suggests that volatile political climate inhibits migrants' to travel to and return from home. Migrants could not carry their plan forward in an environment that could also cost their life. Thus, at times of political instability, they drop their marriage plans, especially if they find that the context at home is critical to their safety.

The ideas which emerged in the article entail that migrants are subject to diverse challenges and of interests in marriage of this type. This underscores that normative approaches would lack the empirical scope, and a holistically nuanced understanding of the issue deserves analytical depth from multidimensional critical lenses.

Notes

¹Gondar City Marriage Registry Department

²Total is greater than survey respondents, as they cited multiple factors affecting their decisions.

References

- Adejumobi, A. 2007. *The History of Ethiopia*. Westport: Greenwood.
- Ballard, R. 1990. "Migration and Kinship: The Differential Effect of Marriage Rules on the Processes of Punjabi Migration to Britain." *Migration and Ethnicity*, Clarke, C. et al. (eds.). Cambridge: Cambridge University.
- _____. 2001. "The Impact of Kinship on the Economic Dynamics of Transnational Networks." Paper Presented at the Workshop on Transnational Migration for Centre For Applied South Asian Studies, Manchester, June 29-July 1.
- Beck-Gernsheim, E. 2007. "Transnational Marriage", *Global Networks* (7):271-288.
- Cameron, H. 2006. "An Examination of the Demographic Impact of Transnational Marriage between Citizens of UK and the Indian Subcontinent." Paper Presented at the Seminar of Immigration for London School of Economics, London, September 29-30.
- Charsley, K. 2005. "Unhappy Husbands: Masculinity and Migration in Transnational Pakistani Marriages." *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 1(1):85-105.
- _____. 2012. "Transnational Marriage." In *Transnational Marriage: New Perspectives from Europe and Beyond*, Charley, K. (ed.), 1-23. New York: Routledge.
- _____. 2013. *Transnational Pakistani Connections*. New York: Routledge.
- De Waal, A. 1991. *Evil Days: 30 Years of War in Ethiopia*. New York: Africa Watch.
- Getnet Tarko and Muluneh Woldetsadik. 2013. "Contribution of Remittance to Household Livelihood and Local Development: The Case of Gondar Town." *Ethiopian Journal of Development Research* (35):55-79.
- Glick-Schiller, N. 2009. "Theorizing About and Beyond Transnational Processes." In *Caribbean Migrations to Western Europe and the United States*, Grosfoguel, R, et al (eds.), 18-40. Philadelphia: Temple University.
- Glick-Schiller, N., L. Basch, and C. Blanc-Szanton. 1992. "Transnationalism." In *Towards a Transnational Perspective on Migration*, Blanc-Szanton, C et al. (eds.), 1-24. New York: New York Academy of Science.
- Heisler, M. 2001. "Now and Then, Here and There: Migration and the Transformation of Identities, Borders, and Orders." In *Identities, Borders, Orders*, Albert, M, et al. (eds.), 225-248. Minnesota: University of Minnesota.
- Hooghiemstra, E. 2001. "Migrants, Partner Selection and Integration: Crossing Borders?" *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* (32):601-626.
- Kassahun Haile. 2012. "Double Engagements: The Transnational Experiences of Ethiopian Immigrants in the Washington Metropolitan Area." PhD diss., Syracuse University.
- Levitt, P, and Glick-Schiller, N. 2004. "Conceptualizing Simultaneity: A Transnational Social Field Perspective on Society." *International Migration Review* (38):1-49.
- Lievens, J. 1999. "Family-Forming Migration from Turkey and Morocco to Belgium: The Demand for Marriage Partners from Countries of Origin." *International Migration Review* (33):717-744.
- Nauck, B. 2004. "Familienbeziehungen und sozialintegration von migranten." in *Migration-Integration-Building*, Bade, K. and Bommes, M. (eds.), 83-104. Osnabrück: Universität Osnabrück.

- Pankhurst, R.1990. *A Social History of Ethiopia: The Northern and Central Highlands from Medieval Times to the Rise of Emperor Tewodros II*. Addis Ababa: AAU.
- Schinkel, W. 2011. "The Nationalization of Desire: Transnational Marriage in Dutch Culturalist Integration Discourse." *Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology* (59): 99-106.
- Shaw, A, and Charley, K. 2006. "Rishtas: Adding Emotion to Strategy in Understanding British Pakistani Transnational Marriages." *Global Networks* (6): 405-421.
- Shaw,A. 2001. "Kinship, Cultural Preference and Immigration: Consanguineous Marriage among British Pakistanis." *Journal of the Royal Anthropology* (7):315-334.
- Solomon Addis. 2005. *History of the City Of Gondar*. Trenton and Asmara: World.
- _____. 2007. *The History of Ethiopian Immigrants and Refugees in America, 1900-2000: Patterns of Migration, Survival, and Adjustment*. New York: LFB.
- Winner, A, and Glick-Schiller, N. 2003. "Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology." *International Migration Review* (3):576-610.
- Yewoubdar Beyene. 2000. "Potential HIV Risk Behaviors among Ethiopians and Eritreans in the Diaspora: A Bird's-Eye View." *Northeast African Studies* (7):119-142.