

Evaluation of the Tiv and Igbo Marriage Systems

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Abstract

The article x-rays the similarities and differences in marriage systems amongst the Tiv and Igbo. Tiv and Igbo share several culturally characteristics in common. The 'yamshe'/exchange marriage systems often practiced by the Tiv people got abolished paving way for the *kem kwase/bride price* marriage system which is said to have been copied by the Tiv from the Chamba people (Ugenyi). Though, there are varied approaches within communities in these groups on the performance of marriage rites. The study observes that payment in cash or in kind to parents of a girl is made in installments among Tivs' (It is often considered as an endless rite). While among the Igbos, *Ikwu Ugwo Isi Na Ikporo* is done at once. Globalisation and cross culturally interferences are perceived to have influenced the core marriage systems of these ethnic groups. In general, the studies observe considerable similarities between Tiv and Igbo, religious practices and marriage systems. It is important for the custodians of the respective cultures (traditional rulers) to as a matter of urgency preserve the traditional marriage systems thereby sustaining the moral values of the people.

Keywords: Marriage, Tiv, Igbo, culture and Globalisation.

Background knowledge

Marriage is a social contract in which a person of either sex (corporate or individual) in person or by proxy has a subsisting claim to the right of sexual access to his/her partner(s) in which it is culturally acceptable for children to result. From the definition, it is at least clear that marriage involves at least two people (most commonly of the opposite sex) who agree to live together (or sometimes apart) in a relationship capable of producing children who are recognised as legitimate constituents of the society. The object of marriage in society has been changing over time. In the very early stages of humanity, the marriage contract could have been predominantly entered into for survival reasons. The imperative then could have been to ensure continuity of species since only marriage could have given the couple better chances of making it through to their children's maturity by combining to get shelter, food, water and security. Prior to this, when marriage could have been absent, the lone woman impregnated by a casual contact could have been left alone to give birth even at the mercy of the elements, beasts and even other humans. Marriage could have therefore given the woman more chances of surviving the hazards of pregnancies and nurturing children to maturity.

Further human development could have thrown up convenience as an additional meaning of marriage. This was the era of "arranged marriages" in which the poor contracted marriages as a strategy to pool resources and to connect through space and time. The rich could have on the hand, married as a strategy to combine wealth and property. In between these two reasons are other related to sexual gratification, religious obligation (depending) on the society and economic reasons.

According to Alkawe (2012) two main forms of marriage exist across cultures. These are plural marriages and singular marriages. Plural marriages are referred to in anthropological parlance as polygamy and have two basic variants. The first polygamy is the marriage form in which a husband has several wives while the second, polyandry is the opposite where the wife has several husbands. About 80% of societies recorded by anthropologists are polygamous (Bergstrom 1994) thus making polygamy the most popular form of marriage in the world.

Singular marriages otherwise referred to as monogamy are exclusive marriages in which one has a single spouse for life. Between the two main forms is a complex range of variations depending on the different histories and cultures of mankind. While marriage may be contracted through the exchange of sisters in other societies, in others, it is through paying the appropriate dowry or bride price as the case may be. Other variations are predicated on the rules of endogamy and exogamy. While endogamous marriages occur between members of the same social or kin groups, exogamous marriages occur between members of different social/kin groups. Without exception, all human societies – even those that are endogamous – recognize incest and prohibit sexual relations and marriage between people who are "closely related by blood". Examples include brother/sister and parent/child relationships, though specific incest rules and sanctions for dealing with breaches may vary from one culture to the other. Another aspect of marriage that underscores the complex differences in the marriage institution across cultures is the issue of residency rules.

Each marriage system has its own unique rule guiding where the couple would reside. There are all

together about seven residency rules. These are neolocal, patrilocal, matrilocal, matrifocal, avunculocal, ambilocal and natalocal;

Neolocal residence rule requires each partner to a marriage to move out of his/ parents home to a new and neutral residence which becomes the core of an independent nuclear family. Neolocal residences are common in complex societies with a high rate of geographical and labour mobility as well as in simple hunting and gathering societies in which nomadic movements are part of the subsistence strategy. In the patrilocal residence rule, the couple resides in the man's father's house; their offspring are counted as part of the extended family which overtime develops into a patrilineage. In its simplest form, this rule involves the movement of the woman to the man's house upon marriage. This is sometimes referred to as virilocal residence. Matrilocal residence on the other hand evolves the movement of the man upon marriage to the wife's place. Their children become part of the matrilocal extended family which also developed over time into a matrilineage. Uxorilocal residence is the simplest form of matrilocal residence and involves the husband moving to join the wife in her place of birth. The next residency type, matrifocal arises when a woman and her children and daughters children have to establish a home without their husbands nor adult men. Matrifocal residences are often as a result of war or situations when the husband(s) are unable to support their wives. It is therefore not a common residence rule in most cultures. Avunculocal residence rule is a two-stage rule. The first stage involves the virilocal rule in which the wife joins her husband in his father's place after being married. The second stage is when their children are matured and the couple is required to relocate his family to live with his mother's brothers – who together with him make up an avunculocal extended family. Avunculocal residences are characteristic of matrilineal societies. In ambilocal residence rule, the couple makes the decision to either join the wife's parents or the husband's parents. Whoever they agree to join an ambilocal extended family is created. In the last residency rule, natalocal partners to the marriage remain apart. Each with his/her parents. Children for obvious reasons remain with the mother. Natalocal residences are characteristics of matrilineage societies and in societies like the Ashanti where the rule is common, settlements are in large towns where husbands and wives can be within reach of each other.

Given all these complexities in the institution of marriage, any deep understanding of the institution must not only be situated in the context of a particular culture and tradition, but also a specific time period. In the paper, we try to do a comparison of Tiv and Igbo marriage systems in order to provide a template for further studies in this direction.

The Tiv Concept of Marriage

The Tiv concept of marriage can be appreciated by first understanding the way they people conceptualize the concept family. The Tiv word for the family is "*tsombor*". *Tsombur* is also the word for the umbilical cord, which joins mother and child before birth. Conceptualising the family as *tsombur* is acknowledging its organic unity and the common blood implied in its composition. Consequently, the Tiv family which is also the basic genealogical unit can comprise the couple and their children or the man, his several wives, their children including their wives after several generations. The family is therefore theoretically speaking an "endless" line of relations and offspring tracing their descent to a common ancestor. Marriage to the Tiv is therefore more than a sexual and economic union. It is also a strategy to perpetuate the family through having more and more children. This strategy also allowed the development of complicated group alliances aimed at maintaining societal equilibrium and cohesion. Because of all these, the perceived "ability" of the woman to have children and contribute to a farmland (in producing food) were primary considerations in the choice of a woman as a wife — since it was only additional children (produced by the new wife) and food (also produced by her) that could ensure the growth of the family and guide against its extinction. Male children derived their rights primarily from their affiliation with their father's kinsmen (*ityo*) on the one hand and their mother's kinsmen (*igba*) on the other hand. While a male child regarded his father's kinsmen as his *ityo*, they in turn regarded him as their "*anter*" according him the full compliments of rights and privileges due to him as the son of their brother.

Conversely, his mother's kinsmen regarded him as their "*anigba*" and also accorded him full compliments due to the son of their sister (*ingyor*). As "*anigba*", a man could demand and get full attention from his mother's kinsmen and in time of stress and conflicts, he was the most appropriate person to act as an emissary between his *ityo* and his mother's kinsmen.

The Igbo Concept of Marriage

Marriage is a very important human relationship in Igboland. In Igboland, the choice of a wife is not the sole responsibility of the man or the woman. It involves the entire family. On sighting the woman or man of one's choice and love, the man will first introduce the lady to his family so that the parents and the kins will give their blessings. If the relatives do not give a positive approval to the marriage, it may not take place. If everybody is satisfied, then the marriage process will be initiated and the necessary rites will be performed. Marriage is a very important human relationship in Igboland. Ogbalu (1982) noted that Igbo marriage is not just an affair or a

relationship between a man and a woman, it involves the whole Umunna to some extent.

Marriage takes many forms in Igbo society. Throughout the continent, the diversity of system reflects the traditional religions and economic circumstance of a wide variety of distance cultures. In recent years, modern life, industry and cities have brought change to Igbo marriages and to the role of men and women. Igbo marriage systems do share several characteristics. They almost always involve the transfer of dowry cash, goods or services from the groom or his family to the bride's family. This exchange is both real and symbolic, as it marks the woman's passage from one social group to the other. Thus, for Igbo marriages, marriage is a matter between families as much as between the bride and groom and many families arrange the marriages of their members. Igbo cultures emphasize that the union of two individuals must fit into the larger picture of social networks known as kinship, clan or tribal groups. The clan has always an important say in the acceptance of a marriage partner, precisely because marriage involves the welcoming of a new member into the clan.

There are three defining aspects of marriage; first is a transfer of legal rights to a woman from her kin to husband. Not only does the husband gain rights to the wife's labour, sexuality and offsprings, but also the rights to receive compensation for the harm done to her by others. Second, marriage modifies to some extent ruptures, the relations between the bride and her immediate kin. In Igbo society, the wife moves out of her parents' home and they lose a family member. Third, marriage is an alliance, an agreement or contract between two families or groups of kins, because Igbo society see marriage not as a relationship between two individuals people but also as a structural link between two individuals but also as a structural link between groups.

Before the colonists came to influence how the norms were perceived in marriages, marriage was definitely no exception when it comes to celebrating. In the pre-colonialism period of the Igbo culture, arranged marriage where the tradition and women did not have much of a choice of whom they married. The assumption is that love between the partners come after marriage and more thoughts is given to the socioeconomic advantages accruing to larger family from the marriage than romantic love. These arranged marriages were set up with ladies in their teens to be married off to much older man. The potential groom visited his potential wife in her father's Obi, or hut but before an agreement can be settled for the marriage, a bride price must be paid by the suitor. Bride prices can range from cowrie shells to goats. During this negotiation, food like foo-foo and soup are given out to everyone in the obi. Kola nuts were also eaten and palm wine was the drink of choice for the night. The potential bride will be presented at her best with camwood rubbed all over her skin with black patterns made by Uli (Achebe : 19).

Kinds of Marriages among the Tiv's

In Tiv, the following kinds of marriage systems were known during the Pre colonial times. These include *yamshe*, *kwase ngohol*, *kem kwase*, *kwase yamen* and *kwase dyako*. Meanwhile '*kem kwase*' bride price has been retained.

Yamshe

'Yamshe' otherwise known as exchange marriage involved the "direct" exchange of sisters and was the earliest institutional system of marriage known to the Tiv. Under the system, a father was required to distribute his female children amongst his male children (or brothers as the case may be) who would then use them to exchange for wives. Through this system, each male child had a sister called (*ingyor*) with which he could exchange with another person for a wife. In circumstances where *angor* (plural of *ingyor*) were not enough to go round, the distribution formula was based on age with the oldest taking their turn before the younger ones. For example, if a father had three sons and one daughter, the lone daughter was given to the first son to exchange for a wife and it was mandatory for the two brothers to wait their turn until their elder brother had daughters from his marriage to give them (for exchange) or suitable females identified in the extended family and given to them for exchange. Because, these two were getting their "sisters" for exchange from their "brothers" instead of their father, they were incurring a debt which they were obliged to pay at a later date by returning one of their female children to the brother who gave his daughter (or sister) for his exchange.

The whole process was designed to guide against "loss" in the family. By exchanging fertile sisters (with a capacity to work on the farm), continuity of the family was assured and the productivity of the entire compound preserved. Though the woman had "little" say in the exchange process, the status of the exchange wife was very high. She had complete control over food supply in the house and her control over domestic matters was virtually total. Her position was also enhanced as the true "replacement" of her husband's sister (*ingyor*) who would raise children and carry on the direct line of her husband's sister. Because the young depended on their parents (elders) to give them *angor* with which to exchange for wives, the elders had an efficient social control value with which to hold the society. Exchange marriage also provided an excellent guard against the disintegration of the society since no one could opt out of the group and still have a chance to marry from within. As pointed out by Makar (1975), exchange marriage (and other related forms of marriage) were social ingredients functioning to hold society through group alliances linked by corresponding obligations which

each party to the exchange was bound to respect. Children of the exchange marriage were not only a special link between their father's kinsmen and their mother's kinsmen in time of stress but also highly respected emissaries of peace.

The actual process of marriage by exchange started when a person identified a woman outside his lineage he wanted to marry. He then introduced himself to the father of the woman or her brother (*tien*) who normally requested him to come a second time if he was really serious. On his second coming, the initiator of the process would then invite the person whose daughter (or sister) he had seen and admired to come over to his place, to also have an opportunity to meet his daughter or (*ingyor*). After the second man to the exchange might have seen and consented to the arrangement in principle, each party to the exchange was required to identify a witness, normally one whose mother came from the same lineage with the partner (*anigba*). This witness thus became the main broker to the exchange or "*Or sughur Ishe*". As a broker, he was required to lead his mother's kinsmen to the father or (*tien*) of the woman to be exchanged. By this time, the man was allowed to sleep together in the same hut (*yough*) with his intended wife. If in the course of the night the man was able to sleep with the woman, he wrote her off as a flirt and had reason to reconsider the whole proposal. If on the other hand, the woman refused his entreaties for love making, the man was elated in finding a good wife and preceded on the final lap of the exchange.

On the final lap, he was required to take his *ingyor* to the other partner to the exchange through the broker. He was normally accompanied by the woman's mother (*Ngo kem*) at least a kinsman and a composer whose main task was to announce the object of their coming through songs. On arrival (normally timed for the night) the host *tien* was required to give a token present to the wife brought for him before she could sit down. This token gift was called "*tile shisha*" literally meaning 'stand up'. Similarly, the girl was required not to eat until her "mouth was opened" by another gift from the host *tien* called "*ivende ruam*" – literally meaning refusal to eat food. While all these gifts were collected by the wife (to be) they were actually intended for the mother-in-law (*ngo kem*). On the following morning, the host invited his kinsmen particularly those in the primary endogamic circle (*iyé igo, ikoko genga or iye ingyor*) to witness the actual exchange at which both women were required to publicly consent to the exchange and asked to embrace their husbands. After the embrace, the host was required to kill a chicken (*mtanshe*) and prepare food for his visitors, who after eating could decide to take their wife and leave. Some people however returned and requested their host to also bring his sister (*ingyor*) and give them in their own place.

To ensure that the chain of life and fertility remained intact (Rubingh 1968) through the generations, each husband after the exchange, was required to erect a fertility *akombo* by the door (on the left as you entered the hut) of his exchanged wife's hut. These fertility *akombo* as identified by Akiga (1963) are *Ihambe* and *Twer*. The erection was on the left because this is the side the couple sleeps, and the idea is to ensure peaceful sleep by the couple and forestall the couple having bad dreams. *Ihambe* is a "two leg" *akombo*. The first leg (*ihambe i chigh ki ityough*) is erected using two wooden posts. One of these has a pointed end while the other has a blunt end. The post with the pointed end is called *Ihambe* while the one with a blunt end is called *mtam*. These posts are erected within a circle of *Borassia papyrifera* (*akuv*) together with three vegetable plants – *ichigh*, *ikarika* and *ator*. The 'second leg' of the *ihambe* (*ihambe I onmbango*) is erected in a similar way to (*ihambe i chigh ki ityough*), the only difference is in the propitiation, for while the first leg is propitiated using a male animal, the second leg is propitiated using a female animal. The *akombo twer* on the other hand are erected using stones placed in a circle (called *twer*) within which is a wooden figure of a human being (called *mtam twer*) carved out of the *gbaaye* tree (proposit oblonga). The *ikarika* shrub is also a component of the *twer* normally planted in the circle of stones.

Another component of the *twer* is a drum (also built from the *gbaaye* tree) covered with the skin of a he-goat (*kper ivo*). During the propitiation of the *twer*, the drum (*gbande twer or gbande mtam*) is hung on the *mtam twer* after which it is taken inside for upkeep. Because *twer* is a fertility *kombo*, it is normally propitiated in order to correct sterility in the couple.

The importance of exchange marriage was underscored by the special position of male children. Only these could aspire to both temporal and spiritual leadership in the community. They were the only initiates of *akombo a ibiam* and were also the only people who could aspire to erect a "*poor biam*". Given this importance, every exchange aimed at a balance. If in a particular exchange, one party was blessed with more children, the husband whose wife had less children went and got one of his sister's daughters and used her to exchange for a second wife.

Kwase Ngohol

Kwase ngohol Sha-utaha generally arose out of a complication of exchange marriage. Because a man had to wait even into old age to get a sister (*ingyor*) with which to exchange for a wife, late marriages were the norm and anxious children who did not want to wait their turn started raiding their neighbours or ambushing lone travellers to forcefully seize their women and or daughters. The Tiv learnt this type of marriage from Udam who regularly

raided and ambushed them for women (Akiga 1933). Because the Udam did spare deformed and wounded women during their regular raids, the Tiv were able to devise a strategy in which each person with a wife (or daughter) pounded the bark of *Bridelia ferruinea* (*kpine*) into a paste and applied on the legs, holding it together by a net. Because this contraption produced an effect on the legs akin to a wound, the raiders were convinced that Tiv women were generally dirty and deformed thus paving way for their husbands to have safe passage through territories which they could have otherwise lost some of their wives or daughters.

On settlement and consolidation in the middle Benue valley, people (as earlier indicated) who could not wait their turn of *angor* – or had no money with which to marry began to seize wives forcefully from others. A traveller from another segment passing through another with his wife or daughter stood the risk of losing his wife (or daughter). Sometimes when this happened (within the group) and the victim reported promptly to his *ityo* elders, an emissary (normally *anigba*) was sent to the elders of the aggressor with the *ayande* plant (a symbol of peace) with a request for the return of the “captured” woman. Sometimes this request was honoured, sometimes it was not thus leading to a full blown war. Though, this process did provide wives, it gradually heated the landscape and increased hostilities and tensions. Because of the implications of these hostilities to the corporate existence of the group, elders desirous that their anxious children (who could not wait their turn of *angyor* or for use in the exchange process) should marry without frictions within and between communities improved on the concept of forceful seizure with the introduction of *iyé*. The improvement involves an initial peace and covenant pact (*ikur*) of elders of the two communities who desired that their children should marry each other. Such pacts were sometimes sealed by human sacrifice as in the *ikur* (pact) between Shitire (Kpav) and Kparev (Mbagen) where Avaan was sacrificed to seal the pact (Akiga 1933). At other times it was sealed with the death of a dog or just the mingling of blood. In the case of a blood pact, volunteers from each side were slashed on the hand to collect their blood on a grinding stone which was mixed with locust beans, (*nune*) salt and palm oil and eaten by elders to the pact. In all, blood covenants (pacts) parties to the pact could not fight each other nor could they inflict injury on each other.

If one party inflicted unintentional injury on the other as in the process of shaving, it was mandatory for the injured party to symbolically retaliate. After the *ikur* was thus sealed, young men of the two communities to the pact went into each other’s territory (in groups) in search of wives. Each visit was designed to identify and woo a wife for a member of the group and as long as the covenant subsisted, the group continued to return until every member had a wife. In most cases, (Wegh 1989), *iyé* ended up as exchange with the *tien* (in-law) coming to claim the sister (or daughter) of the one who married his *ingyor* as his wife. This was however done only after his *ingyor* had given birth to a child.

Kem Kwase

The *kem* marriage system is said to have been copied by the Tiv from the Chamba people (Ugenyi). Though, it varied from one section of the Tiv to the other, fundamentally, it involved installmental payments in cash (and or kind) to the parents of the girl or her *tien*. Because the payments were installmental and the process could drag over a very long period of time, they were called *kem* while the father (*tien*) benefiting from them *terkem* and the mother (*ngokem*).

Traditionally, *kem* kicked off with the presentation of a necklace (*isha*) to the woman by his intended husband. Because of the extended nature of *kem* it was possible to even identify a twelve year old girl and kick start the process by sending her a necklace. After this initial deposit, the man continued to send other gifts to the girl and her parents according to his ability. A farmer could send part of his farm produce, a hunter part of his game, a blacksmith part of his craft and a fisherman, fish. Initially there was no minimum expectation such that after a series of installmental payments in kind one could seal the marriage contract with something as simple as harvesting mushroom (*ijor*) for the mother inlaw.

Increased monetization of the economy however led to the gradual insistence on cash in addition to payments made over time in kind. At this stage, parents started making specific monetary demands on in-laws as a condition for the marriage. Even after these monetary demands were met, the man was still expected to make a final gift of a bed and a goat to his in-laws. This is moreso with the Ukum and Ushitire (Akiga 1933). Amongst the Kparev, and Masev an Iherev, the situation was slightly different. Amongst the Kparev for example, after a man must have warmed himself to his in-laws through a series of installmental payments in kind, he was allowed full access to the woman. While others chose to elope with woman after having been allowed full access, others ended up putting them in the family way thus compelling the woman to have her first child in her father’s place. In the case of elopement, the man was required to meet the material expectations of the parents of his wife failing which his wife was taken back from him.

The point ought to be made that just like *kwase ngohol*, *kem* (irrespective of the variations) ended up involving the exchange of sisters. This was so because, no matter how much gifts and money were expended on the *kem* process and (*kwase ngohol*) if one was yet to give out his sister in exchange for his wife, his marriage was still not given full recognition. Even when such marriages produced children, they were merely regarded as

isheiko — children outside exchange marriage and could be recovered together with their mother by *or ngyorough (tien)* anytime if he so desired.

To ensure full recognition of the marriage and the legitimacy of the children (and forestall their recovery by an irate *tien*) it was mandatory for a man who had married either by *kwase ngohol* or *kem* to complete at a later date, the process by giving his sister in return for keeping his wife. The concept of *isheiko* was so important that even if there was a complete exchange and one of the woman to the exchange suddenly died – without an issue, her *tien* (brother) if he so wished could reach out to the other party to the exchange for one of her sister's daughters as a “replacement” with which to exchange for another wife to take the place of his deceased wife.

Another important strand running through both *kwase ngohol* and *kem* was the process of courtship (*kwase soor*). This process as indicated earlier was guided by an *anigba* who was also the broker to the marriage. In addition to this broker, the man also scouted for a friend who gave him confidential information on his intended wife. This friend was called *Orafotso* (plural is *Mbaafotsov*).

Most courtships according to Akiga (1933) started at the communal pond (*ijor*) where the man waited (in the morning) for his intended wife to come for water. On identifying her, he requested for water to wash his face, once the girl accepted, it was signal enough for the courtship to commence in earnest. From that point onwards, the men (and the friends who accompanied him) were obliged to follow the girl anywhere she went extolling her virtues and giving her reasons why he was the preferred marriage partner. This process dragged on for days on end and because it was expected that the woman and the man (including those who accompanied him) would not eat in front of each other through out the initial days of the courtship, the woman had her first opportunity of eating everyday in the night after the man might have retired to rest (and also eat) at the broker's place. The idea was to pile sufficient pressure on the girl (and her family) into accepting the hand of the man in marriage.

The woman's acceptance (though confidential) came by way of *ibumun* — a token gift of the woman to the man which was anything ranging from a bangle to a necklace. The gift signified that the woman was ready to even elope with the man. Typical elopement in Tiv culture takes place either in the afternoon or the early hours of the evening. On elopement, the new wife is normally taken to the husband's brother's house or his age grade (*or kwagh*) who has the responsibility for the ceremonial reception (*kwase kuhan*) welcoming the woman to her new home. The host is required to kill a fowl (*ikyegh avure*) and the only people permitted by tradition to eat it are the new husband and other married couples.

During the course of the reception the blood of other animals (particularly goats) killed for the entertainment of the new couple and guests are sprinkled on the two sides of the entrance (*igburhunda*) leading to the hut housing the new couple. In the meantime, the new husband (*or kwase he*) was required to distribute gifts (*ichegh*) to his friends and age grades. At the end of the reception, the host was required to accompany the new couple to their house where depending on whether the man's father was a man of means, another elaborate reception ceremony called *genka* – (*amar a kwase*) was organized for the couple.

Kwase u sha Uika

This was a system of marriage through which the individual could purchase or buy women already sold into slavery as house wives. It was not a very popular mode of marriage, since only a few wealthy people could afford the cost. It was also a marriage relationship strictly between the Tiv and other neighbouring groups.

Kwase Dyako

This system of marriage allowed a brother to inherit the widow of his dead brother. A son could also inherit the widow of his father (other than his mother). Such women were also called either *kwase ikoson* or *kwase ichoghol*. In all cases where the widow had children for the deceased, all additional children arising from the new arrangement remained the children of the deceased since the widow's relationship with the new “husband” was not recognised technically as marriage. The idea was to forestall the disintegration of the family, ensure continued protection of the widow and support for her to still champion the line of her deceased husband. To ensure maximum protection of the widow in the new relationship, she and her new “husband” were taken through the “megh” ritual. Essentially the ritual “u aver megh” was a process in which the widow and her husband joined their legs under which a fowl was passed to ensure the ability of the widow to still bear children.

Kinds of Marriage in Igbo

Child Marriage

Alumdi na nwunye na nwata (child marriage): The Igbo people recognize child marriage. Ogbalu (1982), opined on child marriage in Igbo land, he says:

A person who sees a new born baby girl might decide to marry her for her son (probably also a child) to marry. He in forms the parents with a calabash of wine

and performs the ceremony of Ido Oku mmiri of the child. From that day he might begin to pay from time to time some unspecified amount of dowry and performs other ceremonies required until she attains marriage age.

Such marriage is legal in Igboland and the young girl can not reject the man chosen by her parents. A young man will also not reject the girl chosen for him by the parents. But today, such marriage is no longer tenable due to education, Christianity and civilization.

Nwanyi Ilu Nwanyi (Woman To Woman Marriage)

In this type of marriage, a woman marries another woman and it is binding and also legal in Igbo land. Usually, this may happen if a man's wife could not deliver children for the man or if the man dies without a child and the wife is advanced in age to bear children. Ogbalu (1982), commenting on this type of marriage said;

There is a custom whereby a woman who has no issue or who is sufficiently wealthy to foot the bill marries a wife. Naturally, the husband looks after her wife's wife. A woman who has lost her husband but has no issue may marry a wife to attempt to raise male issues for her husband.

In Igbo land, woman to woman marriage is allowed where the family has no child or male child. If the husband dies, the woman may decide to marry another woman in order to have a male or a child. In this type of marriage, the bride may go and hire a man by herself or the family where she married to may hire a man for her, preferable, a close relation of the late husband. The institution in which woman were allowed to marry woman was not created to facilitate gay marriage. Also, this type of marriage is what Chukwuemeka (2012) labels woman-to-woman "an improvisation to sustain patriarchy" and "simply an instrument for the preservation and extension of patriarchy and its tradition", the basic argument being that in Igbo society, the male child was of utmost importance and it was in this obsession to have a male child to continue the lineage that woman-to-woman came about and also apparently because when a female husband wants to marry a wife, a male relative is required to do the talking for her.

Propitiation Marriage

This is an olden days' marriage where marriage is made to appease or make peace or appease the gods or an oracle. This type of marriage is contracted between the woman and the gods. At times, the oracle or the gods may direct that as a means of making peace or pleasing an injured party, a woman be married to the party or person injured or the gods or the oracle. Ogbalu (1982) said this on this type of marriage.

Sometimes as a way of propitiation, a wrong done (usually sale or murder of a relation), the idol may require restitution through marrying a wife any of the descendants of the injured person. Where the idol is the injured party the girl will be married to it.

This type of marriage is no longer in vogue in Igbo land today due to the problems associated with it in addition to education, Christianity, civilization, and civilized governance. Most Igbo people are Christians today; hence no body is there to hear from the gods any longer.

Ikuchi Nwanyi (Inheriting a Wife)

Another type of marriage that may occur is a traditional adherence to levirate – termed as 'augmenting' (inochi). Both symbolic and practical, this form of is displayed through widow-inherited marriage – that is, marriage of a brother or other close kinsman of a deceased man to his widow. 'Taking over' (ikuchi nwunye), as it is called, means that a man, upon the death of his brother, will acquire his brother's wife. Folklore surrounding this form of marriage is drawn from a widow's tears and lamentations over her loss.

Monetization and Materialism of the Marriage Process in Tiv

As indicted earlier, *kem* marriage which was adopted to replace *yamshe* involved installmental payments in cash and kind. Increase in income levels, the resources implied in the training of daughters and the tendency towards materialism has continuously heightened the stakes in *kem* marriage. First is the understanding that *kem* is endless thus allowing the father in law (*ter kem*) to continue coming for it at intervals determined by the birth of every additional child. Sometimes, even after the death of a husband, the children may be asked to *kem* their mother. Though the aggravation of *kem* differs from one Tiv group to the other, with differences in the amount of money required or expected differing across groups, generally when one goes for *kem* now he is expected to go through the following processes most of which are monetized.

1. *Wonov mba fan* (knowledge of in-laws)
2. *Kwase soor* (courtship)
3. *Msorum ma ndorom* (this is not monetized and could be anything from three cartons of beer and soft drinks).
4. *Msorum ma ombor* (monetized drinks)

5. *Ibughun* (opener for the drinks – which is also monetized)
6. *Mbaate mba nyoron* (homage to elders based on the number of compounds in the *eye ngyor* or *eye igo*.)
7. *Asua ayangen* (monies to young in-laws intended to stop them from disturbing the *kem* process. Asua are noisy set of birds. The idea of *yangen asua* is the attempt to stop this “noisy set” of young men from talking and thereby disturbing during the *kem* process.
8. *Iviha i terkem* (Meat for the father-in-law when *kem* was principally in kind, hunters for example were expected to occasionally bring game to their in-laws. Today this meat (game) is expected from every son-in-law and though it is monetized, it is called *iviha* (grasscutter)
9. *Ikondo i terkem* (Garment for the father-in-law. This is also monetized)
10. *Uvegh vegh* (these are miscellaneous payments).
11. *Ihyo azenga* (The actual *kem* is symbolically fixed using grass stalks (*azenga*). *Ihyo azenga* is a reference to the knife with which your father-in-law will cut these stalks and handover to you.)
12. *Kwase sonun* (After one must have done all the above, he is required to formally ask for the girl by making some token payment called *kwase sonun*, after which he is told the specific figure of *kem* which in theory could be any amount. Because *kem* is endless, any amount the son-in-law in turn offers to “deposit” is also accepted by the father-in-law who now directs the husband to the mother-in-law.

Though mother-in-law’s requirements vary from group to group, generally they include a goat (*ivo*), salt (*bar*), a table (*tebul*) a basin (*gbangi*), a chair (*ikyonugh*), an umbrella (*nima*) and a container with which to measure and distribute the salt amongst the women of the *eye igo* (*aur*). After satisfying the mother-in-law and having given the elders a pig (*igo*) the husband is formally allowed to take his wife to his father’s compound or his own house as the case may be.

Monetization and Materialism of the Marriage Process in Igbo

Ikwu Ugwo Isi Na Ikpoto (Paying of Bride Price and taking a Bride Home)

Separate day is selected for negotiating the bride price and, when this is settled, the marriage is concluded with a traditional wedding or blessing known as *ihe nkporo* or *ihe atu*, which is parallel to the modern Christian wedding.

The amount of the bride price is paid in money or goods, depending on the social standing of the bride’s family and of the bride herself—educated or skilled and highly-resourceful girls tend to attract a higher bride price. Bride price may take the form of material goods such as cows (*ehi*, *obe aki*). A cow is symbolic in its equation with a bride’s worth in that cows are the most valuable domesticated animal in the area, and the traditional use of a cow in paying bride price exemplified the extreme value of the bride.

The pattern of negotiating the bride price differs from one locality to another, and also influenced by the ability of the marriage witnesses or ‘go-betweens’ (*ndi ebe*). Negotiations are prolonged deep into the night, or day, and the bride may be asked to present herself so that she may be praised (*ija ya mma*, *itu ogo*) by the wife-givers and appreciated (*inabata ya*, *iri yam ma*) by the wife-takers, thereby motivating the wife-takers to make a higher offer. While some groups negotiate orally, others use counting sticks called a bundle (*ukwu nkpa*—burden). A bundle is used in such a way that the wife-givers will pass a bundle of, for example, 100 short sticks to the wife-takers. The sticks may be cut broom-sticks, or chewing sticks. For that reason, an informant stated, the bundle is downright named *ihe atu* (chewing stick, or measuring stick). The bundle signifies a measurement of the bride’s value. Regardless of the material used, the sticks convey both metaphoric and symbolic nuances.

The wife-takers receive the tied bundle, count it, remove a certain number of sticks from the bundle, and return it to the wife-givers. The returned quantity signifies how much they have agreed to pay. With the wife-takers and wife-givers taking turns adding and removing sticks, the negotiations continue in that fashion until an agreeable sum is reached and endorsed. Caution is generally taken by the wife takers in order not to offer to pay too little. That is, an amount considered to be belittling, to avoid being brought to ridicule by the wife givers. So, time by time, the wife takers do make effort to pay out a good sum of which will be pleasing to the other side. In like manner, the wife givers will take their time to avoid asking for too much to hypothesize or conclude them as relentless money wanton in-laws. Achieved in all of these is a negotiation that has to show that both sides have entered into a useful in-lawship that will remain with them through the expressions of social payments and other related gender and kinship alliances. The pattern is sometimes dramatic, and so symbolic that the Igbo express strongly that marrying is the negotiation, in which the use of expressive powerful proverbs and speeches make the transaction one that serves to strengthen their ties and reveal the potentials of the parties involved.

In the Aro-Ndizuogu in Imo State area specifically, their bride price is fixed at twenty five naira (₦25.00). Nobody pays more than that amount. There are other marriage rites that follow.

The tradition of marriage affects family, kinship, negotiating bridewealth in Igboland is an important feature of marriage. Several traditional forms of marriage were observed. A wife needed to be discovered,

recommended, investigated, and formally approached. The sociocultural background did not necessitate a system that would permit engaging in love relationship before marriage. Such behavior would, in fact, be considered provocative, ethically inappropriate, and unacceptable. If friendship existed between young men and women, it was under the strict supervision and control of their families. Traditional marriage was rather, focused on family and kin relationship involvement from beginning to end. Once the traditional familiarity and assessment visits are finished the next thing to occur is the carrying out, stage by stage, of the bride wealth payments, These items can be monetized.

These include:

- a. iku aka n'uzo (Knocking on the door): mmanya mmiri otu gbororo (2 gallons of palmwine) These cannot be monetized.
- b. ihe nna (Recognition of the father): akwa (cloth), nkpo (walking stick), anwuru (snuff), mmanya mmiri (palmwine). These are not monetized.
- c. ihe nne (Recognition of the woman's mother): akwa (cloth), ichafu (headtie), mmanya malt (malt drink), ego (money). These are not monetized
- d. Umuada: Mmanya malt (malt drink), ncha (soap), ego (money). These cannot be monetized.
- e. Co-Wives: akwa (cloth), ego (money), akpa rice (one bag or rice), anu (meat).
- f. Ibe nne: akpa rice (one bag of rice), ncha (soap), salt (nnu), ego (money). These are not monetized.
- g. ihe umuokorobia (Recognition of the male youth): siga (cigarette), ego (money), mmanya biya (beer). Some of these can be monetized such as snuff and cigarette.
- h. ihe umu agboghobia (Recognition of the female youth or lineage daughters): ncha (soap), chewing gum, ego (money), one basin of rice. These can be monetized.
- i. ihe obodo, ama ala, umunna (Recognition of the collective lineage community). These can be monetized.
- j. ihe onye isiala (Recognition of the village head): mmanya mmiri otu gbororo, (2 gallons of palmwine), Kai-Kai (Schnapp). These cannot be monetized.

All these phases necessitate elaborate feasting, the giving of listed gifts, snuff sharing, pleasantries, singing, dancing, commensality, talking, chatting, negotiating, and much more. During this time, the home of the bride is visited regularly by the groom and his friends and relatives. Cooking for, and entertaining, visitors from the groom's side in a fitting manner are common efforts that require considerable resources. It is however, expected that visitors will, from time to time, give money and other types of gifts to the bride and her parents as a matter of reciprocal social courtesy and genuine affiliation.

Igbo Marriage in contemporary Days

Throughout the stay of the British they greatly influenced many aspect of the Igbo culture and marriage was greatly affected. In today's Nigeria, there are three kinds of marriage that the Igbo people may choose to participate in. religious marriage are conducted by the Christians. Civil marriage takes place in government registry office and grooms who choose to have a civil marriage are allowed one wife regardless his religion. Traditional marriage is usually held in a proposed wife house and is full of lively music, dancing, and cultural displays. The traditional ways are usually followed due to power of traditional values and strong influences of the family. The groom offers a bride price of money, cattle, wine or other valuable goods. Some grooms may even offer to establish a small business or an agricultural venture as a bride price. In post colonialism, women have the choice of who they marry instead of having an arranged marriage. Giving women the power to choose their husband will give the women more satisfaction or content in their marriage. By contrast, in modern societies that have accepted western lifestyles where Christianity and nuclear family predominates, educated young adults now opt to choose their own mates. It is assumed that love determines proper marriage, and less thought is normally given to the socio economic aspects of the match.

Tiv and Igbo Marriage systems: Similarities and Differences

Culture is dynamic and from this study, it is clear that even during the colonial period, the systems of marriage known amongst the Tiv and Igbo underwent some changes. These changes developed to meet particular needs in society. Each change was accepted insofar as it did not subvert or distort the core values basic to it.

Igbo marriage systems share several characteristics with the Tiv. In case of Tiv, the acceptance of *kem/bride price* as alternative ways of marrying was still predicated on taking steps to ensure their legitimization through an ultimate exchange process.

One clear difference between Tiv and Igbo is the 'Yamshe' otherwise known as exchange marriage involved the "direct" exchange of sisters and was the earliest institutional system of marriage known to the Tiv marriage systems. However, the abolition of Tiv exchange marriage in 1927 changed all these. Although, the preferred system of marriage (*kem*) was in all respects not new to the Tiv, it was no longer predicated as a marriage step to be completed at a future date by a full exchange process. First is the understanding that *kem* is

endless thus allowing the father in law (*ter kem*) to continue coming for it at intervals determined by the birth of every additional child. Sometimes, even after the death of a husband, the children may be asked to *kem* their mother. Meanwhile in Igbo, Ikwu Ugwo Isi Na Ikporo is done once.

Tiv and Igbo ethnic groups are predominantly Christians. A new value system reinforced by Christianity and formal education underlies these changes in terms of direction and content. To the extent that they could not reverse the transformation triggered by the white men (and the missionaries) it is difficult to ascertain the damage and distortions visited on their respective heritage. The situation has continued to worsen not only in the consideration of marriage but other sub-cultural sectors of these respective heritages.

Summary and Recommendation

Marriage is considered in African tradition as a mark of responsibility, maturity and wealth. This position explains the degree of integrity, honour and pride often associated with those who sign this mutual contract. This work therefore explored the marriage system in Tiv and Igbo and tried to established peculiarities that exist within the different sections of the people. The people are highly cultured in their approached to issues. The study highlights the pre colonial and post colonial marriage systems practiced by the people.

Leadership starts from home. The diversity in culture is a product of spice that should be made to enrich mankind rather than divides us.

The studies therefore recommend the need for custodians of the both cultures (traditional rulers) to live up to the core moral in the contemporary society.

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