

Symbolism interpretation of marriage rites: kom marriage



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ABSTRACT

This paper will take a look at kom traditional marriage rites and the four stages the constitute the actual marriage in Kom. It will begin by citing where Kom is situated, the various 8 satellite villages that made up the Kom tribe, which are Achain, Akei, Baiso, Baicham, Bueni, Mbesinaku, Mbenkas and Mejang. How they perceived marriage, how marriage is practiced in this society. This ethnographic work will also look at the four stages of marriage in this community which comprises of courtship, Si Lun Ibi (to ask for Kola- which means ask the girl's hand for marriage), Ndo Wi (the house of the wife) and finally the actual traditional marriage which is the Ncha Wi (the chains of the wife). During the course of collecting data I will take in to consideration the symbolic interpretation of marriage rites during the four stages of marriage particularly the use of imagery. The paper will also focus on the importance of marriage and the factors that prohibits marriage in this society. Lastly, the paper will look at the socio cultural evolution of marriage in kom, trying to compare the past and present marriage, the effect on the Kom tradition and its individuals. Also the ways of over coming transgressors involved in this marriage

To effectively carry out and communicate this ethnographic work, different sources and techniques will be used to collect and analyze the data respectively. Different secondary source will be efficiently utilized. As regards primary sources, field trips, interviews, direct observations, questionnaires and other methods used to carry out ethnographic research will be exploited, the use of native narration. Finally, data will be analysed with the use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Tables,

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percentages, charts and graphs will be used after sorting, classify analyzing and interpreting the data.

INTRODUCTION

Marriage in Kom is believed to be the oldest social body that has ever existed invented by man. Marriage ceremony in Kom consuetude four stages and a series of rites, these rites are very symbolic in traditional marriage process. Marriage in kom begins with secret seeing between the boy and the girl until they have decided to make it official for their families. The union of man and woman in Kom compulsorily begins with "introduction" which is not a form of marriage but the path to marriage; this is the very first step which makes marriage as institution. A man or woman can obtain a prestigious traditional title when he/she is married. This goes alongside with three important aspects that accompanied marriage. Wain (a child), ifuonjini (food) iyamngvin (the jungle animal). These three Kom three fingers are very important any married couples lives in that a successful family must have children food and the head of the family must be strong to defend and protect and fend for the family. While the woman must provide food take care of the children and be strong as the jungle animal to carryout her matrimonial duties.

Marriage in Kom can either be polygamous or monogamous it depends on the individual concerned. Apart from the traditional marriage which comprises of three main phrases of which families choose either to do all or just one, there are also some other forms of marriages the civil marriage, and the religious marriages. These two other marriages are choices of families thus; they are not of traditional importance to the Kom society. What <https://assignbuster.com/symbolism-interpretation-of-marriage-rites-kom-marriage/>

can be defined as a marriage procedure is the marriage rite which plays an important role in marriage ceremony. With the absence of these rites the marriage procedure is considered fruitless. As time is passing by the Kom people have experienced evolution in marriage procedure and rites, that is why this paper will seek to find out while marriage have evolved? What have caused the evolution? and the effect of it on traditional marriage rites and Kom tradition as a whole which the people see it as problematic to their culture.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In matrilineal societies like kom bride-wealth is not transferred because the children belong to the wife's clan or lineage and will inherit from their mother's group the husband's heirs are his sisters' children, and not his own children who instead inherit from his wife's brothers, their maternal uncles. In Kom tradition, the groom is asked to pay bride price in cash and in material form like the various drums of oil, meat fire wood and host of other subsidiaries. This huge demands scared many young men from marrying. Some migrate and work in the plantations for year to get the necessary items for marriage, this make most of them to marry late since they have to work for years to obtain what will be demanded from them by their prosperous in laws.

Another factor that hinders marriage is the cultural notion of witchcraft, the period given to the groom's family to wait, is usually the time the bride's family consults a diviner to know the social background of the groom. The things they always look for are witchcraft, murderer, illness like madness, and mysterious death. When any of these ills are found they proposal will be

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turned down. The fact that marriage at times is strategic it is a problem to these people because background survey must be done to accord marriage which means it is not based on love.

Intercultural marriages are also a hindrance to marriage in Kom, parents do not allow their child to marry out of the tribe because some cultural ideologies. For example daughters and sons are not supposed to get married to Bayangi tribe this because the tribe is noted for sorcery. A Kom daughter or son that does this, invites evil into the tribe thus some people remain unmarried because the only companion suitable for marriage is from this tribe.

Forceful marriages also hinders to marriage, in this society people are forced to marry because of poverty. For example the family's only way to recover its investment in a daughter may be to have her married in exchange for a dowry. Some fathers forced their daughters into marriages with men wealthy enough to give cattle, goats and money; in some cases the father owns the responsibility to get a wife for his first son. Thus he forces his girl child to a man who will pay her bride wealth so that it can be transferred to his son's wife. The preference of the individual is considered insignificant, in this situation even if the marriage holds it does not last for long, the couple end up in divorce.

Education brings about class segregation in the society, people who are educated go for educated partners for marriage. Those who suffer the weight of this cultural practice are the females, and there is the problem of discrepancies in social values: some parents, especially in Kom, prefer

sending only their male children to school and keeping the females at home. They argue that female education is a bad investment, the educated female child would later grow up and marry into another family, and so all her education would only benefit her husband and her new family. With modernity these girls suffer a set back in marriage because they educated men go looking for learned women even out of the tribe.

RESEARCH QUESTION

- To what extent has the socio cultural evolution of marriage affected traditional marriage rites and Kom culture?
- With respect to this main research question the following specific questions can be asked.
- What is marriage to a Kom man?
- Why do people marry?
- Who is entitled to marriage?
- What age is one suppose to get married?
- Is marriage same today as the past?
- What are the changes?
- What are the causes of these changes?
- What are the impacts of these changes on marriage?

OBJECTIVES

To answer the above questions, the following objectives shall be considered.

Specific objectives

- To point out the evolution of traditional marriage rites from past to present
- To assess the effect of evolution on Kom culture

- To investigate the strategies they are using to maintain these rites
- Finally to evaluate the positive effects of evolution in this institution of marriage.

METHODOLOGY

This investigation will be carried out in different parts of the eight satellites villages that make up the Kom kingdom.

The methodology use will be divided into two parts; data collection and data analysis.

Data and Information Collection

Data for ethnographic work will be collected from primary and secondary sources

Acquisition of Secondary data

Data will be collected from both published and unpublished secondary sources. They will include documents and relevant web sites on the Internet. These documents will include textbooks, archives, dissertations thesis, journals, periodicals, magazine and native narratives.

Acquisition of Primary Data

This will involve fieldwork. Fieldwork constitutes a major source of data in anthropological research. That is field trips, interviews, direct observations and questionnaires. This will be in light to obtain information symbolic interpretation of marriage rites different parts of the eight villages.

Approximately 130 people will be interviewed, random sampling methods will be used to interview those concerned. This will be accomplished by

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informal interviews and interaction with the main actors. Participant observation will not be left out since this will help to get first hand information on how the marriage rites is being carried out. This information will be collected with respect to the social, cultural and historical perspective of the tribe

Data Analyses

After collecting these data, it is going to be sorted, classified, analyzed and interpreted. The data will be analysed with the use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Tables, percentages, charts and graphs will be used.

DELINEATION RESEARCH DOMAIN

Thematic Delineation of Research Domain

Marriage is a social, religious and traditional legal union of individuals that creates kinship. It is the oldest institution which can be found in every human culture, although the forms and rules differ either polygamy, monogamy etc.

All traditional marriages ceremonies have rites that give it a special grandeur. These rites are having symbolic meaning attached to the people of a particular culture. The word symbolic comes from the word symbol which can be anything such as objects, picture, sound, sign, mark, or any gesture that represents a different meaning, for example cam wood symbolises blood or danger and white stands for purity. Therefore, symbolism is the ironical representation of something that carries a particular meaning.

Marriage rites are all symbols and meaning of different things in different cultural context.

Evolution is simply the act of change from one stage to another for example the change of traditional marriage rite from past to present.

Geographical and Socio-Cultural Delineation of Study Area

Kom is one of 250 indigenous ethnic groups or tribe of Cameroon which is situated about 50 miles from the North West capital of Bamenda. There are almost 126, 000 inhabitants with an area of about 300 square miles. Kom is found in Boyo division with its administrative capital Fundong. It has three sub divisions Belo, Njinikom and Bum. There are 8 satellite villages that make up this tribe Achain, Akei, Baiso, Baicham, Bueni, Mbesinaku, Mbenkas and Mejang. The people speak Itaing Ikom as their language; it is the only unique tribe in the province that practice matrilineal line of descent where succession and marriage entronement lies in the mother line.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Traditional marriage is a very interesting topic and has been of great concern to researchers and writers. They have tried to know what marriage is all about, those involved in marriage, the rites performed during traditional marriage that identify as members of that community, and the problems they face in marriage. They are also seeking to identify some proposed solutions to these problems. The works of these researchers or writers will be analyzed in regard to this ethnographic research work in the subsequent paragraph.

According to the (Journal of Religion and Science Published 15 2005 @2010 by the joint publication Board of Zygon, rituals serve to express those cosmic beliefs not for the scientific purpose of explaining or controlling the

cosmos but for the existential purpose of giving human beings a place in it. This journal points out that it expresses beliefs about society not only by keeping human beings in their social place but giving them a social place. The traditional rite performed during traditional marriage in Kom gives the couple concern a place in the society of Kom. It gives them the base to perform other rituals within their marriage and out of the marriage unit also thus it gives them a wider place in the social unit in the society.

(Jayaram V @2000-2010 Hinduwebsite. com). He portrays the marriage rite performed by the Hindu society during traditional wedding, the fire ceremony (homam). The sacred fire is lit and the priests chant sacred mantras offering obligations to various gods to make marriage a success and bless the couple. This is in line with the Kom traditional marriage rite where fire is the only object that lights the house when the bride is being brought forward to the would be family. This rite symbolises unity and love between the two families, to the Kom people is the source of food and food brings love and unity to families and the society at large.

(John Wall 2000) in his writing states that marriage is a sacrament of marital love which finds its further expression in parent's love for fruit of their sexuality. This was the case in Kom in the past, marriage was considered to be fruitful if their union was blessed with children. Today, this statement is far fetched people get married not because they want to get children but because they have some other particular strings attached to it for wealth and adventure. Thus children are not really important in marriage in Kom as compared to the past. You can find a family without children, therefore

marriage as a sacrament of marital love which finds its further expression in parents love for their sexuality is barely exist.

(Kramers K Gthinji 2008) view point about traditional marriage , is a marriage between between a man and woman which is the most acceptable form of marriage in the society. To him traditional marriage conforms to the traditional culture and religion and this can be polygamy or monogamy. These marriage categories is cultural accepted by it depends on individual to chose which type of marriage to go in to. In Kom polygamy was the highly practiced marriage this was because a large family means wealth. Those who could not afford enough to go for many wives practiced monogamy. With the evolution of time and modernity, marriage in this society is monogamy people hardly do go for polygamous marriages again.

CONCLUSION

Marriage is a union between people and it is the oldest institution that has ever existed since from creation when God created man woman as husband and wife. Marriage should be based on love it should not be a trade where human beings are sold as commodities as the case of bride price, where men are tasked to pay higher bride price if the bride is educated. Some traditional rites should be modernised, traditional leaders should put a moderate price for bride price and a fixed amount of material goods for this purpose if only if the goods are of important to the marriage. Some rite should be kept out of the scene of marriage. In a nut shell marriage rituals are good because they attaches a lot important to marriage, some of them are prayers for a fruitful marriage. The evolution of marriage its rite has played a very tremendous role in the Kom society both positively and negatively.

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