

# Shuwa Arab's Socio-Cultural Practice of Marriage in Maiduguri

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## Abstract

*Socio-Cultural Perspective seeks to understand why people act as they do base on the influences of their social and cultural group membership. Socio-Culture is part of man's existence on earth, also people, societies, tribes, and ethnic groups have their socio-cultural patterns which gear their lives and most of the time they stick to further purpose of having sanity and coherence in their societies. Among these socio-cultural patterns of life, marriage, is part and parcels of every society's cultural observance. This form of culture dwell more on sociology of each society.*

**Keywords:** *Shuwa, Culture, Maiduguri, Practices*

## Introduction

Socio is used to form adjectives and noun which describes or refers to thing relating to or involving social factors. Culture is defined by the dictionary to include the tastes in art and manners that are favored by a social group; it also contains all the knowledge and values shared by a society. Culture is the habits, traditions and beliefs of a community, society, or group of people. Socio-Culture, combining social and cultural factors. Socio-Cultural Perspective seeks to understand why people act as they do base on the influences of their social and cultural group membership. Socio-Culture is part of man's existence on earth, also people, societies, tribes, and ethnic groups have their socio-cultural patterns which gear their lives and most of the time they stick to further purpose of having sanity and coherence in their societies. Among these socio-cultural patterns of life, marriage, is in every society's cultural observance.

## Brief History of Maiduguri

Maiduguri is located on latitude 11, 84 5 north of equator and longitude 13, 16 east of Greenwich meridian and its time is under GMT+1 and its at 65, 9414 in east [*Qiblah*]. Maiduguri is located at the centre of the map of Borno in the northeast of Nigeria. Maiduguri is engulfed by Jere and Konduga local government areas, and it is drained by the river Alau and Ngadabul which they emptied their water into Lake Chad. Maiduguri has been the capital and remains the capital of former North-Eastern Borno state since independence up to now. Maiduguri's landmass is estimated at 60,778 square kilometre and its land is good for farming/cultivation, and it is good in growing varieties of food e.g, rice, beans, onions, wheat, groundnuts, and varieties of fruits to mention but a few. Maiduguri is good for inhabitation and it accommodating various people, tribes and cultures e.t.c. Maiduguri is better than Kukawa, Monguno and others in term of living and its atmospheric condition is moderate. The summer and winter conditions are very high compared to other cities that are not in the zone (DailyTrust, 2006).

## **The Shuwa Arabs**

The Shuwa-Arabs according to history had come to West Africa through the Nile valley. They entered the Chad Basin through the Sudan after the destruction of Christian Kingdom of Nubai between the years fifteenth and sixteenth century C.E. The Shuwa-Arabs moved into the Lake Chad region because they found ecological environment attractive with adequate pasture and for their cattle.

In addition to that the largest movement of these Arabs into Nigeria and Borno in particular was at the time of the invitation of Sheikh Mohammad Al'amin El-kanemi in 1809 C.E. He invited them to help him against the Fallata uprising in Borno. The Shuwa-Arabs under El-kanemi enjoyed considerable support and in fact he gave them high position in the government for their contribution in bringing the El-kanemi dynasty into power. In fact, this led to give the Shuwa-Arabs the institution of Wazirship and exercised a very strong influence in the administration of the Kanimiyyin. It further led to introduction of new titles and positions as Mallam Terab, Ahmad Gonimi, and Ibrahim Wadaima were prominent personalities in recognition of their contributions. These personalities did a lot in shaping the political destiny of Borno in the nineteenth Century. El-kanemi also gave Ngumati an area south of Lake Chad, where they are still found in large numbers. Currently, the Shuwa-Arabs are found in a number of local government areas of Borno, like Marte, Monguno, Dikwa, Mafa, Ngala, Kala-Balge, Jere, Bama, Konduga, Damboa and Maiduguri Metropolis (Muhammad, 2007).

## **Socio-Culture**

Socio-Culture combining of social and cultural factors. Socio-Cultural Perspective seeks to understand why people act as they do base on the influences of their social and cultural group membership.

## **Marriage According to Shuwa-Arabs Socio-Culture**

Marriage is a contract between two persons who agree to live together as husband and wife. This contract is signed between a man and a woman or a lady and young man. All can happen after considering maturity age of both the parties. After due consultation between the two persons

their representatives [parents]. It is expected of them to prepare for legal unification. The process involved in legalizing the contract for unification has been institutionalized as marriage between husband and wife.

The marriage institution differs from one to another and varies in every society due to some cultural and traditional activities involved during the process in bringing two persons as husband and wife. One has to undergo some different stages of traditional and cultural initiation. However, marriage initiators involved the parents of the two parties either financially or morally (Fatime, 2017).

## **Types of Marriage According to Shuwa Arabs Socio-Culture**

Shuwa-Arabs have five types of marriage namely;

- i. **Azzala-Shalaah**; known as Free-choice
- ii. **Ma'agulah**; known as marrying wife's sister after the death of the wife
- iii. **Gistal-khuwe**; known as Intra-family marriage
- iv. **Gistal-Sadaqa**; known as marriage for charity
- v. **Gistal-Amheliye/Amheliye**; known as force marriage

These are the types of marriage according to Shuwa-Arabs culture (Fatime, 2017).

### **Free Choice**

The process of this type of marriage is almost like that of Kanuri, but there are slight differences. In the Shuwa-Arabs culture of making propose, the coming of seeking for date known as {*malfaha*} after this process then the marriage comes. *Malfaha* means a large number of wrappers that will be used to cover the lady after the conclusion of the contract of the marriage (Fatime, 2017).

### **Date of Marriage**

Not many people are invited in fixing the date of marriage, only few people are to attend. The remaining cultural needs will be communicated through sending selected messengers for fixing a time, and the main gathering is when the marriage is due. Shuwa-Arabs avoid envies and believed that it [envy] frustrates the issues and processes of marriage.

### **Eve of the Wedding**

When few days remain, the bride will be culturally prepared by her mother by doing the following;

- i. plaiting her hair known as [*mishaat*]
- ii. cleaning/cleansing her body known as [*dilke*]
- iii. decorating her hands and legs with henna known as [*henna*]
- iv. money will be collected from the husband for preparing perfume and snacks known as [*ma'akal*] apart from the *ma'akal*, another money will be received for buying wrappers to be distributed to families that are far from the area [village] (Shuwa, 2017).

### **Wedding Day**

When a day to the wedding a cow will be brought by the husband for meal of the wedding known as [*tor hana di'ife*] means Ox for the guests for entertainments. On the wedding day people will gather to witness the contract as usually done in any marriage gathering. Then the Imam asks the father/guardian of the husband of what brought them, he [the father/guardian of the husband] will reply that he was here for his son seeking the hand of [the name of the girl will be mentioned] for marriage. Then the Imam asks the father/guardian of the bride whether he collected the dowry [*sadaaq*] of his daughter, and then the father/guardian will reply yes. This will be done publically, and the amount will be said. Then Imam says people witnessed that the father/guardian [his name will be mentioned] has given his daughter [the name mentioned] to [name of the husband is also mentioned] in marriage on the dowry amounted [the amount also will be mentioned]. Then he [the Imam] and people here present will pray for blessings in the married life as usually done.

One person among the family member enters home to inform the women gathering of the bond between their daughter and her husband as husband and wife. The women will cheer, and is called [*zagaraat*]. A wrapper will be given for that purpose.

After the pronouncement that made the marriage officially contracted, the first cultural initiation is bringing clothes [*kasaawi*] to the bride's house by the aunt, aunties and sisters of the husband and the clothes will be counted by either aunts or aunties of the bride. In every ten

wrapper one will be given out as commission. But there will be no return to the house of the husband (Shuwa, 2017).

### **Taking Bride to Husband's House**

On taking the bride to her home, four females will accompany her [aunt, aunty and two of her friends]. After the bride taken to her husband, then brothers and friends of the groom will accompany the groom to his house. Before the groom enters his wife's house, brothers and friends will send notice of arrival of their man [the groom]. Quickly the friends will come out and block the entrance while aunt and aunty are with the bride. There will be negotiations as to let the groom enter to his bride.

After the negotiations some token amount will be given then they [friends] let the groom enter to the bride. This token amount is called [*salaama*] and the amount is not fixed (Shuwa, 2017).

### **A Day After the Marriage**

The first cultural norms that will happen in the day after the marriage, the husband sends some money as early as possible to his mother-in-law for preparing breakfast for them. Then the mother-in-law prepares breakfast as quickly as possible only for her daughter with her husband in small quantity. When it is launching time, the mother-in-law prepares lunch and sends but the launch will be evening time. Many varieties will be prepared such as [*Basise, Kummunia, Shurba*] meals will be sent by mother-in-law for launch. All the families and their well-wishers will eat and enjoy.

### **Seventh Day of the Marriage**

On the seventh day the aunt, aunty and two friends who remained with the bride to the day will take the bride to the family of the husband as to introduce her to the family. This will be done on the evening after people ate and disperse and left. Then gifts will be exchanged between the two families as means of bonding (Fatime, 2017).

### **Marrying Wife's Sister after Death**

This type of marriage happens when one's wife died. In this type of marriage, the culture is in low recognition. The purpose of such marriage is to protect and extend the family relationship. The proposal of such marriage can come from either side. When the decision came into being, then it will be communicated to the other side, and this is a family affair. And if the idea is accepted by the communicated side, then the mother in-law goes to the house of her daughter to inspect things that needed refurbishing, and the moneys for refurbish the house will be collected from the husband. Mother in-law delegates aunties for the refurbishing the house.

After refurbishment of the house, the husband delegates people to negotiate the dowry. {In this time add and drop measure will be looked into}. This type of marriage no heirs of inheritance is distributed to owners, because of the belief that the new coming bride has to have all that left by her dead sister as her own (Fatime, 2017).

### **Intra Family Marriage**

Hajja Adama Muhammad Shuwa an elderly Shuwa-Arab by tribe said; this type of marriage is as the same as that of free-choice marriage [*azala-shala*], but with slight difference in the side of paying dowry because it is considered in-house marriage.

Shuwa-Arabs observe this type of marriage more than the other type. This is to bring the family bond stronger. There is softness in paying dowry.

The process of the marriage is almost like that of free-choice, but there are slight differences. In the intra-family marriage [*gital-khuwe*] culture of making propose, the coming of seeking

for date known as *{malfaha}* after this process then the marriage comes. *Malfaha* means a large wrapper that will be used to cover the lady after conducting the marriage (Fatime, 2017).

### **Marriage of Charity**

This type of marriage is done between the virgin [mostly Shuwa-Arabs do this to virgin] and the one whom intended to be given as charity. The consent of the virgin is not sought and mostly this type of marriage is done to the girl [virgin] and the clergy/ scholar regardless of her love to the person (Shuwa, 2017).

### **Forced Marriage**

This type of marriage is mostly done to a virgin. Her parents will decide the person of their choice and impose on her regardless of her consent. The parent will fix the dowry without communicating anything to the girl, and the proposed husband is fully aware of the process.

The husband must work harder to win the heart of the girl, if he did not work it out, he will be at lost. This type of marriage is mostly contracted between a virgin and an elderly/middle-aged man. This type of marriage is mostly practiced at Gwange and areas that are mostly Shuwa-Arab's residence (Shuwa, 2017).

### **Recommendations:**

- Records of culture should be kept.
- Cultural values should be taught to the younger generation.
- Youth should be brought closer in participation of cultural activities.
- Parents should consider the youth as partners in promoting cultural activities.
- Cultural award and prize-giving should be encouraged.
- Disregard to foreign cultures should be encouraged.
- Modification and upgrading of cultures by youth should be discouraged.
- Reviving cultures that are diminishing by making sort of awareness/enlightenment.
- Bringing to the fore the cultural values as to mean unity among the younger and older generation.
- Tracing and teaching the cultures from the root.
- The youth should respect their cultural norms instead of westernization.
- Visitations on cultural sites should be encouraged.
- Ministry of information and culture should establish cultural data base to preserve and protect the cultural values.
- Ministry of education should include cultural activities into the school curriculum.
- The N.G. O's and individuals should create programmes that inculcate cultural values to youth.
- The traditional rulers should engage the youth toward cultural activities and show them the consequences of foreign cultures toward their norms and values.

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