

TRACES OF UN-ISLAMIC CULTURAL PRACTICES IN MARRIAGE AMONG IGALA MUSLIMS

Mohammed Yusuf Danladi

Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies
Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Kogi State University, Anyigba
Email: danladiyusuf0012@gmail.com; 08020338366, 08168007743

Abstract

Islam as a religion and a total way of life which cuts across all aspects of human endeavour had in one way or the other proffered solution to the general problem of mankind in his undertakings. In view of this, the paper aimed at looking into the infiltration of Igala culture into Islamic marriage through the perspective of the Quran and the Hadith. The study reviews the major need for the redirection of the Igala's cultures penetration into Islam. Using the descriptive method of research, the paper observed that marriage among Igala people is done while mixing cultural practices with Islamic regulations. It therefore recommends a possible outcome and solutions in which marriage should be conducted in line with the teachings of the Quran and the Sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) as regards the major components of marriage in Islam.

Keywords: *Culture, Igala, Infiltration, Islamic, Marriage.*

Introduction

Islam in its laws and rulings had considered marriage with high premium in the area of man's life and also provides divine legislative mechanism which specifies legal rights and implications governing it.

Ghaanim (1993) corroborates this assertion that marriage contract unites the couple through love as they are separate individuals but who eventually becomes one. They represent one another in the area of interest, hopes and dreams. The main purpose of marriage is the establishment of a conducive and enabling atmosphere for one another to benefit one another by sharing happiness, love, support, and intimacy. In achieving this, it calls for the fear of Allah and sincerity which brings in a cordial relationship, tranquility, happiness, love, comfort

and mercy which may later extend to the children and the society at large. Marriage is a religious institution in Islam which is not just an avenue or a mere union in satisfying the sexual urge or mutual needs but an avenue for fulfillment of Allah's commandment (Ballersh 2007).

Marriage as an institution is as old as the creation of man as its origin could be traceable to the first man and woman on earth; that is Prophet Adam and Hawwau in the garden (Al-Jannah) of Eden but the payment of Mahr (Dowry) validates it. Besides this, marriages in our contemporary society have taken a different dimension among different tribes, ethnic groups, religious settings. There are traces of culture and its infiltration into institution of Islam. This could be seen in the marriages in Igala land concurrently with the

Islamic system of marriage which is not in line with the Quran and the Sunnah, hence serious efforts had to be intensified by the Muslim scholars on this. However, a lot of innovations regarding marriage practices among Igalala Muslims (Audu 2003).

This paper attempts to draw attention to some of the innovations and cultural practices that have infiltrated the institution of marriage among the Muslims and the way out for their elimination and jettison by its major perpetrators in Igalaland and the society at large, particularly the syncretic acts that are contrary to the tenets of Islam.

Definition of Marriage as a Concept

Marriage is a union between a man and a woman which makes them a husband and a wife (Adewale, 2001). According to Islamic perspective, it is a legal ruling and implications ordained on man and a woman who are capable. If the stipulated conditions are met in line with the pronouncement of Prophet Muhammed (S.A.W) which includes offer and acceptance, consent of the parents, Sadaq (Dowry) and the witness all these are to be taken into consideration.

In other words, marriage in Arabic connotes 'Nikah' which means to penetrate, or to copulate, or to have sex, but literally simply means marriage. This implies that having met the requirements of marriage by the couple, the 'Nikah' then becomes valid (Sufyan 2007).

Marriage in Islam

Islamic marriage is a commandment ordained by Allah (S.W.T) in a

number of places stated in the Quran, for instance, Allah (SWT) says in Q 4:25

“Wed them (marry them) with the leave (permission) of their guardians” (parents).

Allah also says, in Quran 4vs3.

And if you fear that you cannot act equitably towards orphans, then marry such women as seem good to you, two and three and four; but if you fear that you will not do justice (between them), then (marry) only one or what your right hands possess; this is more proper, that you may not deviate from the right course.

Allah says in Quran 24 verse 32.

And marry those among you who are single and those who are fit among your male slaves and your female slaves; if they are needy, Allah will make them free from want out of His grace; and Allah is Ample-giving, knowing.

This is a commandment and divine pronouncement by Allah (S.W.T) as regards marriage. The Prophet Muhammed S.A.W was also reported in many of his Ahadith concerning marriage. For example, he said:

Marriage is conducted based on four things namely based on her (lady) beauty, wealth, family background or lineage, and reap with the best in religious act you will be successful.

The Prophet was also reported in his appeal to the youth when he said:

(Oh you assembly of youths whosoever is capacitated should

get married and if he is incapacitated, he should hold on to fasting, for fasting is a source of protection and a gaze lower to him.

The Prophet also said:

“Marriage is my tradition whoever shuns it is not of me”.

All these Quranic verses and the ahadith of the Prophet aforementioned corroborate the fact aiding the commandment of Allah as regards marriage and as prescribed by the Sunnah of the Prophet. The major pillars of marriage in Islam include (i) offer and acceptance, (ii) consent of the parents and contracting partners (iii) Sadaq (iv) witnesses.

Marriage in Igalaland before the advent of Islam

Many communities in the African setting have a culture peculiar to it. This is also true of Igala people before the advent of Islam in Igalaland. The Igalas had their traditional culture and with the advent of Islam, some of these cultural activities were influenced by the Islamic teachings. However, some non-Islamic elements of the culture are mixed with some Islamic tenets to form some unique ways of life to the Igalas.

Islam as a way of life is not against any culture or tradition as long as no element of the culture contradicts the teachings of Islam. Any culture, customs or tradition that falls within the framework provided in the basic guidelines of Islam can be outright described as Islamic while anything outside that may be viewed as un-Islamic (Yusuf 2015).

Marriages also pre-date Islam. In Igalaland, marriages had long been observed before the advent of Islam in Igalaland most of which were connected to their traditional religious beliefs. The marriage in Igalaland takes one form or the other across different cultures and traditions. However, regardless of culture and tradition, it is being done to achieve similar ends through different means. In achieving this aim, there are different procedures to this which include the following:

- i. Oya etene (searching for a spouse). This is usually done by the elderly people in respect of their son in search of a befitting and responsible lady on behalf of their son who is in need of marriage. If a lady is found, she will be made to come in contact with the proposed husband for a conversation and dialogue. On a mutual agreement between the spouse, another step emerged by seeing the parents of the lady in seeking their consent in marriage in respect of their son (Ogwuche 2008).
- ii. Obialo tona (official declaration) this is usually done by an elderly male of the groom's (man) family who is in quest of a spouse with some numbers of kolanuts to both parents of the bride (lady) as an official declaration in seeking their daughters' hands in marriage on behalf of their son in which these kolanuts are presented.
- iii. Ana Ese (presentation of gift) this is also an important aspect of marriage in Igalaland where the groom (husband) presents gift to his inlaws at intervals e.g tubers of yam, food items this is usually

- done at intervals based on one's capacity (Ismail 2012).
- iv. Ebi oya (seeking for the bride's hands in marriage) or traditional wedding so to say. Among the Igala people, this traditional wedding entails the presence of both the groom and the bride families right from paternal and maternal and the husband's family will be mandated to provide some kolanuts into two places (ochibu Umomi meji) one to be presented to the father of the bride and his family and the other to the mother and her family members at the point of the presentation of this kolanuts, the lady will be requested to receive the kolanuts from the family member of her husband and present to her paternal and maternal family. This signifies the acceptance of the lady that truly she is interested in her proposed husband and at the collection of the kolanuts by the bride's family, a number of questions are usually asked, where answers are to be supplied by this lady, such as:
1. Do we collect this kolanuts?
 2. Do we eat it? After the collection of the kolanuts we are not collecting any other one from you.
 3. If we eat this kolanuts, hope we are not going to vomit it? All these questions are usually asked and the lady is made, to give responses to these questions. After this session, other merriments follow. They eat, wine and dine and the lady will be made to dance to music and often cheer up and given money by the family members.

- v. Awele Ese (wedding or marriage). All the aforementioned are preambles and a major component to marriage in Igala-land. This is the special day in the life of man and woman in showing their happiness to be declared as a husband and wife, usually done by the elders of the clans in which they rain blessings upon the husband and the wife for peaceful living, success in life and good offsprings, and so forth.

In the wedding events, a number of traditions are also done, such as:

1. Oya Eteyin (Seclusion of the wife) a day or night prior to the wedding this tradition is usually held by the Igalas by having the lady secluded in a room without coming out and the use of lele on her (Inale Eni inale) the sole aim of her being hidden from the sight of people is to command respect, she will only be allowed to go out on important issues until in the evening of the wedding day when she will have the ritual birth. (Oja Achagba).
2. Inale Otoya Ola: This is also a tradition by the bride's family where she is being secluded in a room, the groom families are usually mandated to pay a ransom to buy lele (inale) local mats and calabash for the wife. The wife will be made to sit on this mat while in seclusion and drink with this calabash, (Oja Metuwo).
3. Ola Egwe Oji Agwu (The ritual bath on a motter). This is a ritual bath in public usually taken by the bride before she finally departs her parent's house to her husband's house this is usually done on a motter to be bathed by an old-

- woman surrounded by her co-women with the aim of washing all iniquities, bad luck and this serves as cleansing to her husband's house, the water used in this bathing is usually collected separately with some mixture of concoctions (Ogemi and Ogegekwu) after which the lady is taken into her parents room for blessings and prayers upon her then her departure to her husband's house (Omagajiya Hajarrah Shehu interviewed 2021).
4. Abudankai or Budankai (This is a tradition that also entails in the Igala's wedding). At the arrival of the bride to her husband house, she will not be allowed to eat in her husband house until the next day afternoon after this budankai, and no one will be allowed to see her face until this tradition is performed in the afternoon.
 5. Budankai: Is the official welcoming of the wife into the groom's (Husband) family by presenting her different gifts and money, they call this in Igala (Elo oya Ayan) i.e to set the bride free of shame after which the bride will make her eyes open to every one of the husband's family and she (wife) will be taken round to greet all members of the husband's family.
 6. Oje Uyin Oko (The entertainment of the groom's family by the wife). The family members of the wife who escorted her to her husband's house does the cooking of oje (food) in respect of the wife and this food is served to all family members of her husband.
 7. Igbele Eedu (Loosing of one's virginity to her husband). This

aspect is of utmost importance to the Igalas too, they believed that the lady in question married to their son must be a virgin, in the night of this budankai is usually the night when the husband is given access and a privacy to copulate with his wife and his family members (groom or husband) will stay behind the door to hear all sort of noise and cry of the wife during the copulation. If the man finds the wife as a virgin, that is also a tradition attached to that, the family of the husband will buy a cock and slaughter it in celebration of the wife and also pounded yam will be prepared in respect of the wife, for losing her virginity to her husband and also some gifts will be sent to her parents especially to her mother for a befitting training given to the lady. This gift items are usually clothing materials and a complete kolanuts in white handkerchief signifying the lady is complete and if the case is the reverse nothing is done (Omagajiya Hajarrah Shehu interviewed 2021).

Another prominent and important aspect of this is also (Alijenu Eche) i.e. seeking refuge and protection against the Jinns: In Igala land, it is a belief that if a lady is grown up and set for marriage, there is usually a jinn that is attached to them which must be separated from them before going to their husband's house or else they may be hindered by the jinns in causing them delay in having pregnancy, or they may have stillbirth and all series of turbulence. In some places at night, the wife is usually taken to the river to take a ritual birth

with some said items of sacrifice such as a chick from hen, (Oma ebune) corn, wheat, beans, millet in other words called (Ewun Egbaro) items for procreation or sacrifice and the wife will be made to bath with some soaps and concoction in the river and she will only wrap on her waist a white cloth, when she is carrying out this exercise.

All these aforementioned and analyzed were usually the major components of the Igalas marriage before the advent of Islam in Igala land.

The Infiltration of Igala Culture into Islamic Marriage

Despite the advent of Islam in Igalaland, some cultures of the Igalas before the advent of Islam have infiltrated Islam in one way or the other, such as the issue of (Alijenu Eche), Oya Eteyin, Igbele Eedu, Ola Egwe, Oji Agwu some Igala Muslims still give preference to some un-Islamic practices but as regards the modern society, some Muslims have stopped all these due to the awareness and enlightenment which might have reached them from various sources (Aishat 2013).

The Muslim Scholars Overview on the Infiltration of Culture into Islamic Marriage

The Muslim scholars preach fervently against the un-islamic practices before the advent of Islam which were adopted by some Igala Muslims and they preach the real tenets of Islam on marriage to them as it was earlier explained. The scholars had tremendously preached against innovations infiltration and those

practices which are not in line with the tenets of Islam.

Recommendations

- It is incumbent upon Muslims to abide by the rulings of Islam in totality
- Muslims should follow the Sunnah of the Prophet (SAW) in everything they do.
- Adequate awareness should be intensified by Muslim scholars to educate the Muslims on true teachings of Islam.
- The Muslims should also shun all sorts of innovation.
- Muslim scholars should show good example to other Muslims.

Conclusion

It is pertinent to note from the ongoing discussion that Islam as a religion with tenets and divine rulings has laid down principles worthy of practice and emulation by all Muslims which must be observed accordingly without any deviation. And often some innovations promote syncretism usually caused by emulation of Western cultures and the un-islamic ways of life of the Igalas should be jettisoned and discarded completely and others that are not in conformity with Islamic teaching should be completely jettisoned and practice of Sunnah should have utmost priority.

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List of Informants

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- Hajiya Rabietu Metuwo (Oja Metuwo) 69 years trader Owelle 20/3/2021
- Omagajiya Hajara Shehu (Omagajiya) 73 years (Iye oja olubo ojo) Angwa 20/3/2021