

The Igbo and Chinese Marriage Culture: Analysis Showing Similarities and Differences in Marriage Custom and Marriage Sense



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ABSTRACT: Day by day, as China is opening up and coming up in economy, affinity grows between the Chinese and the Igbos of Nigeria. The Igbos being doggedly industrious in their yearnings for more economic prosperity have seen the need to cooperate with the Chinese more frequently, same way has the Chinese people seen need to cooperate more with the Igbos who are the main drivers of Nigerian economy. This, resultantly, raises the need for both sides to have a good hold of each other's culture. This paper, therefore, has focused on Igbo marriage culture and Chinese marriage culture. The paper, based on the literature survey methods and analysis of primary data, attempts to show the similarities and differences in marriage culture between the Chinese and the Igbos using their "marriage custom" and "marriage sense". The research went further to analyze the reasons behind the foregoing through contrasting their differences. The research reveals that traditional culture plays a leading role in each of the cultures in the areas of marriage values, history, religion, politics and geography.

KEYWORDS: Igbo, Chinese, marriage culture, Igbo marriage culture, Chinese marriage culture, similarities, differences, reasons

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

There has always been communication in every international business activity. In every business activities, especially such that involves exchange of information, negotiation, entrepreneurial migration, abroad residence, intermarriages etc., ability to understand and communicate properly with the locals, without any iota of misunderstanding is highly required. This therefore calls for people with international interests, to get themselves abreast with the differences in values and beliefs of other cultures. The need for providing people in this class necessary informative materials for getting themselves balanced in this knowledge has this research topic been chose.

Across different societies, it is believed that marriage is the traditional means of creating and co-mingling families. Even when the responsibilities, nature and rites of marriage may vary among different cultures or in different periods of history, the fundamental workings of marriage is to define a new family unit—a new set of potential parents and children. This therefore brings to fore the process of family formation and that process is called marriage. This process of family formation is recorded to differ from place to place from and from people to people.

1.2 Marriage Culture

Marriage is recognized globally as a matrimonial relationship or union of person(s) who most often are usually of the opposite sex. It is an institution which represents all the behaviors, norms, roles, expectations, and values that are associated with legal union of a man and woman (Gove 1986). It marks transition into maturity or adulthood, and stands for a life-long union of two people who will remain committed to each other (Borgatta and Edgor, 2000; Asana, 1990).

From time immemorial, marriage customs have played major roles in ethnic studies. In the evolution of human history, many wedding customs have passed through various changes, as the basic pattern, "six etiquettes" in China has not changed much. It remains essential and core in wedding custom. In Igbo part of Nigeria, a valid marriage should experience things like proposal, choosing of date and holding the wedding (Igba Nkwu). This paper will explore some of the different aspects seen in the wedding customs. Worthy of note is that the difference in the origin, religion, concept and geography of this different people (Chinese and Igbos), definitely engender differences between their marriage culture often seen in the area of procedures, dresses, activities, colors and wedding day ceremonies. This paper will also discuss some similarities and differences of wedding culture between the Chinese culture and Igbos. Through the study of marriage custom and marriage sense of these two peoples, we can easily find out tangible things of them especially in the area of marriage custom and marriage sense.

The Igbo and Chinese Marriage Culture: Analysis Showing Similarities and Differences in Marriage Custom and Marriage Sense

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Intercultural Communication Model

Broadly speaking, intercultural communication is said to take place when people of different places, cultures and ethnicities start communicating amongst themselves. Intercultural communication, cross-cultural communication and inter-discourse communication were highlighted as the three distinct areas of communication between people from different cultures (Scollon, Scollon & Jones, 2012). The actual interaction between members of different cultures goes to majorly portray intercultural communication, e.g. how Chinese managers communicate when they are not satisfied with the work of Spanish subordinates.

Bailey (2000) carried out a research on the way Korean shop owners and African-American customers communicate during business transaction. A video recordings of conversations going on between Korean shop owners and African-American customers was used for the research and the results showed that the Koreans were very brief and straight to the point in their communication. African-American customers weren't happy with the conciseness of their conversation and as a result tried engaging them in small talks and made communication more personal. Doing this, they felt ignored as the Koreans' response to their attempts was not received with enthusiasm. This, African-Americans, interpreted to mean a lack of interest in communicating with them because of racist attitudes. The Koreans, on the other hand, interpreted the African-Americans sudden small talks and personalization of communication as a sign of bad manners.

The Intercultural Communication Model therefore points out the fact that cultures differ, and as it does, the communication behaviors and practices of people will inevitably differ as a result of their different perceptions of the world (Samovar & Porter, 1997). In this light, one will define Intercultural communication as the study of communication between people whose cultural symbol and awareness systems are sufficiently distinguished to modify their communication. This goes to show how the meaning of a message changes when it is encoded by a person from one culture and then being decoded by another from another culture. This message is likely going to receive a different interpretation. So this model points to the possibility of misunderstandings which always exist in intercultural communication due to significant difference in culture.

2.2 Rainbow Model

Obviously very challenging is the task of achieving a high degree of communication competence in an intercultural contact situations. This is so owing to the exposed risks of misinterpretations possible to ensue due to difference in the cultural and contextual relevance of behavioral responses, which is liable to foster failures in these tasks. Another major factors for increased misunderstandings in intercultural communications are increased levels of uncertainty, anxiety, ambiguity, and excessive demands on knowledge, skills and performance application (Gudykunst and Kim 2003). These changes calls for further development and adaptation of appropriate and effective framework for effective intercultural/cross-cultural engagements. The steadily growing in complexity and globalization of our world require a constant evolution of interactive perspectives which in turns produces better approaches to life. The recent understanding of intercultural communication is by no means an exception to this necessity, especially as it has to do with the question,

- i. What makes a person a capable communicator across cultural boundaries?
- ii. How is it possible to improve, evaluate and further develop this key competence

3. SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE IGBO MARRIAGE CULTURE AND THE CHINESE MARRIAG

The Igbo and Chinese marriage culture are clearly two different cultures of two groups of people living at miles and many miles apart. Literature review, on this two cultures, shows clearly that some practices are common between the two cultures. In some case, the common practices show in their ancient times and then fades as time draws near to modern. Sometimes one practice will survive time in one culture and fade in the other. This brings to light the activity of certain factors acting on those practices over time to either cause a blossoming or fading away of the practices.

Members from both cultures desire to have a happy and perfect marriage. They will also want to be stronger and wealthier as well. Nowadays, in the trend of globalization, more and more Igbo girls marry foreign men and more and more of Chinese girls marry foreign men. And same with Igbo and Chinese men, they do fall in love with foreign girls. Discussing and comparing Igbo and Chinese culture especially as regards marriage then become more important a thing to do especially as it shows that there is no known scholarly work on this. Below is a comparing and contrasting of the Igbo and Chinese marriage culture to show their similarities and differences in the area of marriage custom and marriage sense.

3.1 The Marriage Custom

Marriage custom is a tradition which is a common way of observing the marriage things. It is something that many people **do**, and have done for a long time. Usually, the people come from the same country, culture, or religion. Below are some of the similarities and differences between the marriage customs of the Igbos and Chinese.

The Igbo and Chinese Marriage Culture: Analysis Showing Similarities and Differences in Marriage Custom and Marriage Sense

3.1.1 Similarities in Marriage Custom

3.1.1.1 Bride Price

Bride price is described as the money paid by the groom to the family of the woman he wants to marry their daughter. Sometimes it could be in the form of property, or other form of wealth. The bride price phenomenon has been part of the marriage pact in most part of China for centuries. Today, in China, bride price it is actually going up and becoming a thing of great concern to men who are considering to marry. This poses big impedance to low-income earner family who wants their son to get married since it sometimes stops them from getting married.

In Igbo marriage culture, bride price remains so significant that you cannot avoid it. It is major amongst the key the factors that influence the time a man will go for marriage. Meeting the obligation of bride price is widely practiced amongst the Igbos with each town and villages having their unique the way of doing it. Amongst Igbos, the family of the bride determines the amount of money to be paid as bride price. This arrangement makes it obvious that the amount and things to be given to the family of the bride will differ from family to family.

3.1.1.2 Wedding Ring

Both the Chinese and the Igbos use rings during wedding. **Wedding ring** embodies the continuous flow of love depicted with a circle to mean that it is an eternity-thing. Love is forever a thing of “for better or worse” moving continuously in circles and as such is perfectly represented in marriage using ring. The unity that the ring brings through happy and sad times in marriage made it special in the eyes of some people. This people go as far as taking extra precautions in selecting the **wedding ring**, when they go to purchase it and even to its care during usage. Though some people give a negative meaning to the use of ring in marriage, many more focus on the positive—that the **wedding ring** is rather but a symbol of unending love, commitment and devotion between husband and wife.

3.1.1.3 Wedding Banquet

In Chinese culture, there are both formal and traditional banquet. The formal banquet is modern and/or western in nature and it comes from the influence of foreign culture. The traditional banquet follows Chinese tradition. In the Chinese traditional banquet, guests come together for a full meal which they have together and drink Chinese white wine, beer, and various other beverages as the case may be. Also served are nuts, fruits, and desserts. Wedding banquets serve as a symbol of thanksgiving and appreciation to the parents of the new married couple.

Wedding banquet in Igbo culture is commonly known as “wedding reception”. Wedding reception in Igbo culture can also be either informal or formal. The reception gives the new couple opportunity to mingle with their guests. Various Igbo food, like Egwusi soup, fufu (akpu), jollof rice, drinks, and kola are all served. Guests do toast to the new couple which is generally done with red wines poured into disposable plastic cups. Music often follow suit with the new couple will performing their first dance. The songs are carefully selected.

3.1.1.4 Wedding ceremony

Of all the rites in Chinese and Igbo marriage culture, the paying of bride price, gift giving is common between the two cultures. Some Christian wedding practices might also appear common between Chinese Christians and the Igbos like going to the church to tie the nuptial knot and then proceed to the reception hall.

3.1.1.5 External influence

Nowadays, as a result of cultural exchange, many young people in China are eager to choose western wedding style, the Chinese keeps choosing the western way and the Igbos also keep choosing the western ways. When the Chinese keep the western way and the Igbo keep the western way, the two peoples will continuously bridge the gap of their differences. So this particular act appears as one of the similarities between the Igbos and the Chinese. For example, in China, the couple forsake some unnecessary conventional rules and pursue modern open ways. The matchmaker is no longer so important, the youth chooses their spouse for their love. After engagement, they will be busy with the preparation for the wedding, which mostly is decided by themselves. With western modern furniture in their new family, while some others will still remain the traditional Chinese style. Both Chinese and Igbos people make a good choice according to their interest. The matchmaker is no longer so important, the youth chooses their spouse for their love. After engagement, they will be busy with the preparation for the wedding, which mostly is decided by themselves.

3.1.1.6 Wedding Gifts

The phenomenon of the groom giving gift to the bride's family is a common practice between the Igbos and the Chinese. It goes to tell the bride's parents and siblings that you have come because you found a treasure in the bride (their daughter and sister). Some of the gifts are being given prior to the marriage ceremony day and some on that day. Each gift has what it connotes.

The Igbo and Chinese Marriage Culture: Analysis Showing Similarities and Differences in Marriage Custom and Marriage Sense

Table 1. List of the Igbo and Chinese wedding Gifts

Chinese Marriage gift list	Igbo Marriage gift list
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comb. A comb has the sense of a couple binding together, symbolic of how hair was tied up and worn in a knot by ancient Chinese people. ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kola nuts.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruler. A ruler symbolizes a couple's measure of happiness. ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palm wine (in gallons/ jerry cans)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embroidered shoes. ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bottles of hot drinks.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ruyi. ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cartons of assorted drinks (malt, soft drinks and beer)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mirror. ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tobacco snuff.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grain bucket. ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cigarettes (rolls)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scissors. ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goat (1)

3.1.2 Differences in Marriage Custom

3.1.2.1 Wedding color and dress

In Chinese weddings, red is the tone of that special day. In traditional Chinese culture, the wedding dress of the bride is red. Today many people wear white wedding gown like westerners, but other ritual objects and some other bride’s wedding clothes are still red. Red symbols auspicious and prosperous in Chinese culture, so the wedding room is decorated with red like bright red "happiness" character is pasted on the wall, the door and other objects.

Traditionally, the bride born of a rich family would wear a phoenix coronet and robes of rank on the wedding day. The groom usually wear red long gown and mandarin jacket with a silk flower on his breast. Brides born of ordinary family would wear red clothes and a pair of red shoes.

In Igbo marriage, the bride and the groom choose the color of the day. There is no specific color to designate as a cultural color. Brides usually wear a blouse and skirt to symbolize glory. She uses different types of beads s accessories to beautify herself. The beads are worn round the waist, on the neck and round the head. In wedding the only color that is forbidden is dominant black. Dress with touch of black will also be allowed but not with dominant black. The groom can dress in an “Agbada”.

In the modern times, the main wedding attires, for the Chinese, is Tang suit and cheongsam if the new couple wants to hold a traditional wedding ceremony. However, although the form of a wedding gown in China has changed with time, a very important feature has been kept. It is easy to find that all the clothes are red. Even nowadays many young people tend to choose a white wedding gown, they must put on something red like red flowers. Igbo wedding cultures have some special requirements for the bride’s dressing on the wedding ceremony.

Table 2. Differences in the Igbo and Chinese wedding colors and dresses

Culture	Wedding dress	Color	Dress type
Chinese	Traditional wedding dress	Red	phoenix coronet and robes
	Formal wedding dress	White	Men: long gown and mandarin jacket
Igbo	Traditional wedding dress	Any color as chose	Agbada, blouse and skirt, gown

Furthermore, the white wedding gown is the most popular dressing for brides in church wedding. Prior to the 16th century, however, this most important Western European wedding tradition was not common. It wasn’t until Anne of Brittany popularized the white wedding dress in 1499 that the tradition became part of Western European wedding culture. Later it was Queen Victoria (1840) who began the present day fashion of wearing white as the wedding dress. For both Chinese and Igbos, it is required of the bride to wear the white gown.

The Igbo and Chinese Marriage Culture: Analysis Showing Similarities and Differences in Marriage Custom and Marriage Sense

3.1.1.2 Wedding Ceremony

This wedding ceremony has some specified rites or ritual. In Chinese wedding custom, this rites are as indispensable as the exchange of wedding rings and vows in church wedding. It dates to the ancient times of showing respect to nature and God. Next, the newlywed couple bows to their parents in order to show their thanks and appreciation. Finally, they bow to each other which symbolizes that they will respect and love each other in their future life. Nowadays, motorcades are becoming a popular ritual in China. A motorcade is a line of slowing-moving cars carrying the newlywed couple and some relatives. The motorcade moves along a certain route through the city. Flowers and colorful laces are used to decorate the cars.

Table 3. Characteristics and differences of Igbo and Chinese wedding ceremonies

Culture	Rituals
Chinese	Bowing to the Heaven and the Earth: respect to nature and God Bowing to parents: show thanksgiving and appreciation Bowing to each other: respect and love Motorcade: motor show
Igbo	Finding the groom: giving of wine, prayer, love, dancing, feeding each other

In Igbo land, the couple kneeling before the bride`s father for prayer of blessing is highly symbolic in the Igbo traditional wedding custom. The exchange of wedding vows is made by the bride locating her groom with a cup of wine and the groom accept, drink and embrace the bride. When the father of the bride prays for the couple, it goes to bring blessings to consolidate the union.

3.1.1.3 Wedding venue

It is believed that in the past, the Chinese wedding used to be held in the bridegroom`s house with one of the groom`s friends or classmates hosting their wedding ceremony. This practice has been amongst the Chinese up until recently that some started followed other ways. In some rural areas, most wedding ceremonies are usually held in a larger restaurant where a special stage will be arranged on the wedding with a special host from the wedding company hosting the whole ceremony.

For the Igbo culture, picking or choosing of venue has been designed to take a particular pattern. By mere hearing the venue of the wedding ceremony, it helps to answer many questions about the wedding. In Igbo land, the compound of the bride`s family house situate in her own home town is the venue for the wedding. According to the requirement of the culture, the wedding should hold at that venue and nowhere else.

3.3 The Marriage Sense

Marriage ssense is the understanding, recognition, value, or reaction put to marriage especially as it is seen amongst a certain group of people united by culture, ethnicity, or religion. Below are some of the similarities and differences between the marriage sense of the Igbos and Chinese.

3.3.1 Similarities in Marriage Sense

3.3.1.1 Purpose to get married

In the Igbo culture, one of the prominent purposes for going into marriage is to get children. It is believed that to sustain the continuity of any community, children must be born, grown and well taken care of. When the child is fully grown and has attained the heights of responsibility, the child is integrated back to the community to keep the community going. Marriage therefore becomes a vital process in producing those children who will reproduce to keep the community on.

China even up to now do believe that one of the purposes of getting married is to have children especially boys. This is still regarded as the most important function for the young couple to come together and it is looked on as the biggest expectation to most grandparents.

3.3.2 Differences in Marriage Sense

3.3.2.1 Decision making right in the marriage

A good number of Chinese people believed that in the processes involved in getting, that decision making belongs to the parents or that their position on any matter to be decided should majorly count. According to them, the children themselves had no right to make their own choice or decide without due consultations from their parents. This is still visible in the Chinese society today, before the young people make any decision about their marriage, it is a common practice for them to first seek their parents` approval.

The Igbo and Chinese Marriage Culture: Analysis Showing Similarities and Differences in Marriage Custom and Marriage Sense

In Igbo culture, decisions regarding marriage, with ensuing processes and customs, decision making is majorly on the bride and the groom. Parents' assistance in decision making come to fore when the bride and the groom sense they are about to make mistake or have made one already. Even at that, the bride and the groom reserves the right to reject the advice from the parents especially when they think the advice will not be healthy for them.

3.3.2.2. Standard for choosing the spouse

Age, stature, appearance, family background, house, money, work etc. are some of the major things a typical Chinese will pay enormous attention to trying to make the choice of a spouse, just like what a realist or utilitarian will do. The Chinese are known with giving special concern to the material aspects or what is known as "class" in whatever they do which of course will not leave out the choice of spouse. The search for a spouse is not only for themselves, but also a thing they do to win others' praise or approval. For the girl child, they pay attention to the height. They always wanted boys of more than 180cm. They do this to achieve a feeling of security. Most boys, in the other hand, would prefer to make friends with the pretty looking girls, especially the slim fit ones, to satisfy their psychological and aesthetic requirements. Other personal factors like family situation, the personal profession, the social status and the educational standard are also considered.

Though the Igbos are gently catching up on the Chinese on the area of considering material things in choosing their spouse, but it is not widely practiced amongst them and as such not popular and not a standard. For the Igbos, attention tends more to some intrinsic qualities in the girl child before approaching her for marriage. For example, an Igbo man will prefer to go for the girls who live with her parents, do not hang out with men, can cook meals and the likes.

3.3.2.3 Spousal relationship in marriage

In Chinese culture, dealing with family matters, men are believed to be in charge of the outside affairs, and women of the inside affairs. That is to say, the man being the breadwinner in a family, he does not only take on the responsibility of earning the money to support the whole family, but also he has to deal with some other troubles or problems inside and especially outside the family. Money of the family is to be held by the woman of the house. That goes to mean that when the man goes out, makes money and comes home, he has to hand over the money to the custody of the wife who now holds the money and determines how the money will be spent.

For the Igbos this is different. The man is seen as the head of the family both of inside and outside affairs. The man being the head and the only one head of the family is based on the belief that a body does not have two heads, it is either the body has one head and be regarded as human or the body has two heads and be regarded as a monster. So the Igbos eschew a monstrous family, they believe that for any home to function rightly, one and only one head should be recognized and accorded the respect of leadership. Though the woman is to listen and submit to the man, it does not remove completely leadership role for the woman. The woman is believed to be the one to manage the home. To buy groceries, cook, do house chores and make sure the house is in order. In this matters, she is required to act as a pseudo-head and possibly command a leading role.

4. REASONS FOR THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

4.1 Introduction

Different nations form different marriage senses and customs under different cultural backgrounds. Marriage customs and marriage senses have been changing with the development of human society and human civilization. Below, from the comparison of the Igbo and Chinese marriage customs and marriage senses, it can be seen that there are background factors which have great influence on the marriage customs and marriage senses driving either their similarities or their differences. Some of those factors are listed, with reasons generated under each one discussed below.

4.2 Historical Perspective

As known from the history, China has been a feudalistic agricultural country overtime for the past thousands of years and the feudalistic hierarchical system has had a great influence on the marriage sense and the marriage customs traversing generations. This is why most Chinese parents want their children to marry a young person with the corresponding family background. Also ancient China has it that the female status was inferior to the male both in the family and in the society, and this still has its implication playing out on the current marriage customs or the marriage life. Generally, marriage ceremony is more conservative with the Chinese. It is also traditional with parties showing excitement for the life ahead of them. This is seen when the bride arrives at the groom's house when she jumps over the basin with the burning fire in it to show that their married life will be prosperous and booming.

On the contrary, the Igbo culture has traveled through a long history where the people are wholly dependent on agriculture. This made the men to marry more than one wives thereby making polygamy widely practiced then in history. The wives give them more children. This wives and their children join hands to provide the labor needed for the agricultural activities of the man—their husband and father. Later as the Igbos became more civilized and also as they became more and more influenced by colonization, agriculture became more mechanized and polygamy also was discouraged greatly both by reason of the need for more children and more wives

The Igbo and Chinese Marriage Culture: Analysis Showing Similarities and Differences in Marriage Custom and Marriage Sense

providing labor disappearing and by reason of the Christian teaching discouraging it. Igbos embraced Christianity, pursuing the personal value of freedom, equality and independence. Totally speaking, the Igbo marriage is simple, open and solemn, full of the atmosphere of quietness and romance.

4.3 Religious Perspective

Many have always classified Confucianism to be one of the world's religions but it is not so. Confucianism is not a religion. Confucius influence on especially the traditional Chinese marriage customs and marriage sense is believed to be remarkable. The features of traditional Chinese culture includes: emphasis on ethics/moral principles/relations of humanity, emphasis on integration and emphasis on inheritance/continuity/transmission. Amongst these many reasons, the Chinese people pay more attention to groups' interests like the family's interests and the country's interests.

The Igbo culture has traditional religion playing an important role in their lives especially in their marriage affairs. They believe in "Chukwu: the great God or "Chineke: the creator. Igbo believes that humans are made by God and that He wants us to increase and multiply in dominance, wealth and number. This is why the Igbos answer the name "Chinenye" meaning God gives. In the other hand Christianity does influence marriage customs in many ways: most people will choose church to hold their wedding ceremony regardless of their religious faith; the couple during church wedding will speak out their wedding vows when a priest officiate the ceremony.

4.5 Social Perspective

Chinese culture does emphasize the pillar-hood of the family in maintaining social stability. They believed that when two persons come together to form a home, it helps bring people into a kind of societal block as the bride and groom, together with parents and siblings from both sides, unite to see each other as one. For the Chinese, marriage is but for two major intended reasons: getting offspring and getting benefits for the family in traditional Chinese culture. Parents consider checking the two families' similarities in backgrounds as something very important. This kind of check did encourage arranged marriages by parents and matchmakers back in the days.

Husbands and wives tend to hold different attitudes towards each other after marriage. According to Confucius, the society has renowned Five Relationships: ruler-minister, father-son, husband-wife, elder-and-younger-brother, and friend-friend. In all, husband still are seen as one who holds dominant position in the family.

From the view point of the Igbos, marriage also has two intentions: one is to bring up children, especially males that will continue the lineage. The other is to find a life-long partner with whom they will live together in love to find a sense of fulfillment psychologically and physiologically. Love for each other is also a strong determining factor for two to live together as husband and wife. It is believed that when there is not love between the two, they are most likely not going to consider marrying each other. Love is priority in marriage in the Igbo culture.

Igbos believe that the man has a higher family status than the woman, and at the same time supports that couples should enjoy equal position in their families rather than a state of subordination and domination. A couple shares their family responsibility together each one according as the culture has apportioned to him/her, earning money, doing housework and raising their children together.

4.6 Geographical Perspective

Geography does influence the culture of a people, though this is not a general knowledge, but it is true. It happens when certain group, which is a part of a bigger culture, moves to a particular different location or place. When they do they tend to determine the way they practice the culture of the people they moved into their place or region. It also happens the other way round, when the people move into new region, they tend to influence the local culture of the host community. The geography of the country of china, where the Chinese predominantly lives, is extremely varied and complex, including mountains, plains, grasslands, plateaus, basins, hills, islands, glaciers, desert and frozen earth. This geographical features go a long way forming the way Chinese people live mainly by influencing them to farm more and live in groups, and then formed the patriarchal clan system with rigidly stratified. This also made marriage culture in China have variations from one part of china to the other.

The Igbo people's geography is not as complex as that of the Chinese. The Igbos predominantly live in the southeast region of Nigeria comprised of Enugu state, Anambra state, Imo state, Abia state and Ebonyi State. Southeast being their main region does not restrict them to that region alone. The Igbos are also heavily settled in all regions of Nigeria even beyond the shores of Nigeria. Though the Igbos settle predominantly in the south-east region of Nigeria, their marriage culture has little variations from one part of the region to the other. The main reason for the variation in the culture from one part to the other is the tendency of one part civilizing faster and live according to the economic level they have attained than the other.

The Igbo and Chinese Marriage Culture: Analysis Showing Similarities and Differences in Marriage Custom and Marriage Sense

4.7 Political Perspective

Politics remains another agent of influence shaping marriage custom or sense of a people's culture. It is seen in policy making and in issue of order or regulations. For example China had practiced polygamy (or more specifically polygyny, one husband with multiple wives) for thousands of years. Later the political power of the government was used to stop it. This happened when it was banned in 1949 at the dawn of the Communist government and establishment of the People's Republic of China.

In the middle period of the Qing Dynasty, foreign merchants were only permitted to contact business organizations designated by the Qing government for trade matters. The Qing government also restricted the activities of foreign merchants and the quantity of import and export goods. In addition, prior to mid-19th century, Europeans were halted from traveling in China freely. At this time China was shut out from the outside world, and strong policy of restriction on trade was imposed. Foreigners were also stopped from entering China. This resulted in loss of opportunities for external trade. Also it brought a blockage on chances for transnational marriages, broke off cultural and economic communication between China and foreign countries thereby increasing the distance between China and the rest of the world. Over time, this resulted in the limitation of Chinese people's foresight, leaving them no opportunities for marriage with foreigners.

In times when the Igbo traditional marriage ceremony was just the only type of marriage ceremony, the traditional ways were the order of the day with foreign influences kept at zero level. Later as days advance, the Eastern region yielded to the influences brought us by the British who came with colonization. This left a strong effects on the Igbos' traditional practices including their marriage culture.

CONCLUSION

Between the Chinese marriage culture and the Igbo marriage culture, it is clear that in the area of the marriage customs and the marriage sense, there are clearly more differences than similarities. In marriage customs, similarities come mainly in the area of practices. The two cultures in some cases have common practice but sometimes the common practices are not practice the same way. In the area of marriage sense, similarities appear in very few areas.

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