

UNIVERSITE DE YAOUNDE I

FACULTE DES ARTS, LETTRES ET SCIENCES
HUMAINES

CENTRE DE RECHERCHE ET DE
FORMATION DOCTORALE EN SCIENCES
HUMAINES SOCIALES ET EDUCATIVES

UNITE DE RECHERCHE ET DE FORMATION
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DEPARTEMENT D'ANTHROPOLOGIE



THE UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE I

FACULTY OF ARTS, LETTERS AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES

POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
FOR SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL
SCIENCES

DOCTORAL RESEARCH
UNIT
FOR SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

BRIDE PRICE AMONG THE KOM PEOPLE OF THE NORTH WEST REGION OF CAMEROON: A CONTRIBUTION TO CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

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Presented by

Prudence CHAH ABUAH

B.A in Anthropology



Members of the jury:

President:	Paul ABOUNA (Pr)	University of Yaoundé 1
Reporter:	Paschal KUM AWAH (Pr)	University of Yaoundé 1
Examiner:	Exodus TIKERE (Dr)	University of Yaoundé 1

Academic Year 2022-2023

To

my mother, Promise Mbu and my father, Denis Chah Mulom

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ABSTRACT

This research is entitled “ **Bride price among the kom people in the Northwest region of Cameroon**”. **A contribution to Cultural Anthropology**. This study seeks to Produce a deeper understanding and knowledge on bride price and its dynamics among the kom people. Marriage payments as well as bride price are still in use in 75% of Countries globally. Much have been researched about bride price in other Cultures but very little had been done as concern bride price amongst the Kom people in the Northwest region of Cameroon. Bride price generally which is supposed to be a symbol for marriage has tend to be commercialised over time and so this research comes principally to bring out the how and what of the changes in perception and practices of bride price amongst the Kom people. From this problem emerges the following research questions;

What is the representation of bride price in the kom community?

How do the kom people go about the payment of bride price?

What are the changes in the perception of bride price with respect to modernity, urban influence, education among the kom people.?

To collect and analyze our data, qualitative methods were used which enabled us to discuss freely and confidently with our informants. We used qualitative methods such as observation, interviews and reviewing of related literature on the topic. Observation of how traditional weddings are conducted in Kom, writing daily field notes and some brief life history were all based on observation guide and about 34 informants were interviewed from the month of March through May 2022. Some pictures of traditional wedding were taken. Tools such as ; camera , audio recorder were used to collect data.

Results of the research were gotten immediately after the interpretation and analysis of the data. The results were used to verify the hypothesis and objectives of the study. The results proved that the kom people see Bride price to be a symbol and tool of negotiation in exchange for a wife though modernity which has come with education, urban influence at large has deviated these to becoming something else.

Furthermore, results proved that Bride price consists of two independent parts and could be paid at different times. The father will state his own requirements and the mother .

Explanations of every element included in the Bride price payment and their symbolism were given and most were tied to blessings that are expected in marriage, like long life, goodhealth,fertility, peace , humility, success.

Key words: Bride price, Kom people,

RESUME

Cette recherche s'intitule "**La dot chez le peuple Kom de la région du Nord-Ouest du Cameroun : Une contribution à l'anthropologie culturelle**". Cette étude vise à approfondir la compréhension et la connaissance de la dot et de sa dynamique chez le peuple Kom. Les paiements de mariage sont toujours utilisés dans 75 % des pays du monde. De nombreuses recherches ont été menées sur la dot dans d'autres cultures, mais très peu de recherches ont été faites en ce qui concerne la dot chez les Kom dans la région du nord-ouest du Cameroun. La dot en général, qui est censé être un symbole du mariage, à été commercialisée au fil du temps et ainsi cette recherche vient principalement faire ressortir le comment et le quoi des changements de perception des Kom vis-à-vis de la dot. De cette problématique émergent les questions suivantes ;

Quelle est la représentation de la dot dans la communauté Kom ?

Comment le peuple Kom procède-t-il pour le paiement de la dot ?

Quels sont les changements dans les perceptions de la dot par rapport à la modernité, l'influence urbaine, l'éducation chez les Kom ?

Pour collecter et analyser nos données, l'éthique de la recherche a été strictement respectée ce qui nous a permis de discuter librement et en toute confiance avec nos informateurs. Nous avons utilisé des méthodes qualitatives telles que ; observations, entretiens et revue de la littérature connexe sur le sujet. L'observation de la façon dont le mariage traditionnel se déroule à Kom, la rédaction de notes quotidiennes sur le terrain et une brève histoire de vie étaient toutes basées sur un guide d'observation et environ 34 informateurs ont été interrogés du mois de mars à avril 2022. Quelques photos du mariage traditionnel ont été prises. Des outils tels que ; Caméra, magnétophone ont été utilisés pour collecter les données.

Les résultats de la recherche ont été obtenus et suivie de l'interprétation et l'analyse des données. Les résultats ont permis de vérifier les hypothèses et les objectifs de l'étude. Les résultats ont prouvé que le peuple Kom perçoit la dot comme un symbole et un outil de négociation en échange d'une femme bien que la modernité qui est venue avec l'éducation, l'influence urbaine dans son ensemble les ait déviés pour devenir autre chose.

De plus, les résultats ont prouvé que la dot se compose de deux parties indépendantes et peut être payé à des moments différents. Le père énoncera ses exigences et la mère fera de même.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND INITIALS

LIST OF INITIALS

- BM** : BridesMaid
BP : Bride price
BTB : Bride to be
FIL : Father In-law
FTB : Father to the bride
GM : GroomsMen
HTB : Husband to be
NW : North West

LIST OF ACRONYMS

- APA** : American Psychological Association
ME : Middle East
MIL : Mother In-law
RMB : Ren Min Bi

INTRODUCTION

The introduction sets the stage for this dissertation. It englobes a general view on bride price, the context of the research, personal and scientific reasons, the problem and problematic of the research, justification of the topic, research questions and objectives, research hypothesis, interest of research, study design, methodology, data collection methods, techniques, procedure, data collection tools, analysis of data, sampling, data management, ethical consideration, delimitation, difficulties encountered, scope of study and ends with the plan of work.

The topic of this dissertation is **“Bride price amongst the kom people in the Northwest region of Cameroon”. A Contribution to Cultural Anthropology.**

Generally, Each culture is unique and has its own distinct ways of viewing and apprehending things. Bride price is a general aspect that cuts through most part of the world but the way it is perceived, understood and applied varies according to culture. The Kom people of the Northwest Region of Cameroon give great importance to bride price in nuptial union. Bride price is marriage payment made by a groom to the kin of the bride in order to ratify a marriage. In other words, it refers to bride token, money, property or other form of wealth paid by a groom or his father to the family of the woman he will be married to.

The tradition of giving bride price is practiced in many Asian countries, the Middle East, parts of Africa. The anthropologist Roger Keesing defined Bride price as marriage payments from the husband and his kin to the bride's kin. Essentially this means that bride price marriages are those in which the groom remits a payment in some form to the bride's family in order to make a marriage official. These payments were traditionally made in the form of valuables e.g, shell valuables in the Pacific, cattle in most parts of Africa and livestock in many countries of Asia. However, increasingly globalized market economies inform the commodities in contemporary exchanges, which can consist of cash, practical necessities and tools as well as luxury goods. Bride price remains the most common form of marriage transactions in the world. Among the 563 cultures in Murdock's world atlas of cultures, (1981), 226 practice bride price.

Comparative anthropology has shown that bride price is more likely to be paid amongst populations whose main mode of food getting system is horticulture and pastoralism. Typically, these societies are found in East, and North Africa, the middle East, Central Asia and the Pacific. In many of these societies, when the girl marries, she leaves her parents family and sometimes her village and continues in her husband's village or family (Virilocality).

Bride price is said to establish strong social bonds by opening kinship roads between the families of the bride and the groom and to formalize alliance between the different clans. It

is also understood as a form of compensation for the loss of labor the bride's family incurs when she marries and moves out.

In the years back Bride price was more considerate and a lot was being attached to the behavior and character of the man but today it's more of material focus and this has led to bride price being prone to changes which are not entirely good.

In many societies, the transfer of women in marriage is associated with the payments of various forms of wealth to the kin group of the bride. This is often said to compensate her group for the loss of her economic and reproductive services. Such payment is known as bride price. Bride price is especially prevalent in patrilineal societies and is much less common in societies having matrilineal, double or bilateral descent. Van Der Berghe (1979) reports that 71 percent of patrilineal societies make use of bride price compared to only 37 percent of matrilineal societies and only 32 percent societies with double or bilateral descent. It is not at all difficult to see why bride price should be much less frequently found among matrilineal societies. For less common is dowry, a system whereby a woman takes property with her into the marriage. Dowry is different from bride price in that a woman actually receives an inheritance from her parents she is able to use this inheritance to contract a marriage.

In Africa, bride price is fundamental to marriage. Anthropological research provides substantial information regarding characteristics of the bride price transaction but policy makers know little about its consequences for women in contemporary Africa. Contrary to marriage ceremonies in western social discrete events. In Africa marriage is a process with each stage characterized by the performance of prescribed rites (meeker, 1992, mwamwenda and monyooe, 1998). Payment of bride price secured rights over the woman to the man and his family with respect to her household labor, sexual and reproductive rights (goody and tambiah, 1973). In some cases, it also gives men rights to the children as seen in some patrilineal cultures in Ghana (dodoa 1998, nukunya, 1999).

Accordingly, the main objective of this research is to provide a theoretical sound and informative study of the Kom perceptions and representations of bride price. Thus, this study is guided by the question: what has changed the perceptions of the kom people as far as bride price is concerned?

1. Context of study

Before great nations like the USA obtained independence (1776), the kingdom of Kom was already founded in (1730). The identity of the Kom people was born since this date and through the years, efforts have been made to sustain this identity. Before 1889 when the

colonial powers entered the grassfield, the Kom people was born since this date and through the years, efforts have been made to sustain this identity. Before 1889 when colonial powers entered the grass field, the Kom kingdom was enjoying total independence in the management of their affairs. One of the immediate effects of the presence of the colonial powers in Kom was a diminishing tendency of all the powers of the traditional authorities of the Kom kingdom. This diminishing tendency continued over the years as the colonial powers diversified and intensified their actions in the kingdom.

By 1960, colonial administration ended in Cameroon, but its values and more continued to guide the daily actions of the people. The Cameroon administrative set up since then identified the Fon of Kom as a mere auxiliary Administration, a position that subjects the hitherto absolute monarch to the diktat of the government agents of territorial administration. What then is the role of the Fon in the life of a Kom person today? The Fon continues to play the role of a spiritual leader to his people, but more challenges are emerging which could finally perpetuate the Kom leader in his spiritual role, the only force he has today to sustain the identity of the Kom people.

Today ,the Kom culture is squeezing itself into a roundabout of cultures with the risk of surrendering most of its valuable parts through the influences of globalization, economic, political and cultural forces which are acting and interacting within and out of the fondom.

The Kom Fondom was established in 1730. From then developed a culture of it's people, the Kom people, under the leadership of a Fon. Before the dawn of the colonial era by 1889, the Fon of Kom could be compared to a Constitutional Monarch, meaning that he was head of government and king at the same time. He exercised executive power, legislative power and judiciary power in the entire Kom kingdom. He was seen as the personification of his kingdom. He was the "de facto" ruler of his people and to question his authority was a treasonable act that could be punished with death.

During the colonial period, a foreign culture, the Whiteman's culture, was introduced into the Kom fondom. This culture was propagated in the fondom by Missionaries through Religion and Education. The culture brought in new values and lifestyles that were assimilated by the Kom population. One of the most significant impacts of these new values in the Kom society was an open disapproval of some practices in the Kom palace. A group of royal women, through a female Organisation called "ANLU" openly challenged the authority of the Fon . Some of them violated the customary law which stated that royal wives were sacrosanct by abandoning the palace and going in search of better opportunities elsewhere.

The Fon's authority as spiritual leader as well as some existing traditional practices were questioned by the emerging elites especially the converted Christians. As the Kom community widened its doors to these foreign cultures, more challenges surfaced and the Fon gradually surrendered most of his functions to the colonial government. Globalization, which has squeezed the world into a global village, has exposed the Kom culture to other world cultures. Several sons and daughters of the kom Kingdom have established in the diaspora and are exposed to these competing world cultures. Some of them tend to admire more of some of these cultures than the Kom culture.

The kom society evolves and mutates with changing times, so too is the kom culture and tradition. Beyond the geographic bounds of the land allocated to the Kom society on earth, many of her sons and daughters are found. The Kom diaspora is gaining momentum and there are likelihood that a majority of Kom people could one day be in the diaspora. In competition with other cultures and traditions, the Kom traditional society is in a permanent process of adapting its cultural values and mores to these changes.

The human being is essentially a cultural creature and it is culture that permits us to distinguish and identify people from different areas. People in the diaspora shall be identified as the Kom people only if they live and display the Kom culture in the diaspora. It is in this respect that the Fon of Kom has in recent years engaged in a series of actions aimed at extending the Kom traditional society to include some communities in the diaspora. Several Kom communities in the diaspora have been officially recognized by the Laikom.

The Fon has appointed individuals to head some traditional offices in the officially recognized communities of the Kom diaspora. Some of the personalities appointed include; "Fon", "bobe kwifoyn", Nafoy and "Bonteh". In creating these structures, Laikom did not take into consideration the fact that they were operating in the diaspora. No specific information was given to what they meant by Fon, Ntumfoyn and bonteh with respect that exists in Kom. Consequently, the appointed personalities did not gain legitimacy in their respective communities and this resulted in division and hatred in the various Kom communities particularly in Yaoundé and in the USA.

Every society goes through different historic evolutions. The major factors that contribute to changes in bride price among the kom people has its roots in the introduction of money. In the past, the people of kom regarded marriage as a cultural institution respected by both parties. Thus, bride price played a huge role in the recognition of a marriage. Bride price was paid not by the groom but by his family to the family of the bride. Marriage was actually a transaction between two families. Some prospective husbands paid Bride price through

providing labour by working either in the in-law's farms or doing any tasks delegated by the in-laws. It is important to highlight that what was permitted over a century among the kom people is no longer the case today. There are aspects of our lives where these changes are visible one of which is the practice of bride price. Modernization and external pressures have contributed to these changes. Less and less family members become involved in the process. The bride's father becomes the sole benefactor of his daughter's bride price. These shifts are indicators that the custom has changed considerably.

2. Justification of the topic.

Bride price custom has existed for a long time, though with changes and modifications that sometimes brings its relevance and legitimacy to question. It is a common assumption that once modernization takes place in a society, there would be a corresponding reduction in the authenticity of traditional practices held by society. In Cameroon and kom community to be precise, brideprice custom and traditional marriage practices are experiencing some changes. However there are documents which provide reasons for these changes and trends in the practice in other cultures but this study will be to explore the reason for these changes , the nature of the changes so that it can be considered and our culture taken back it's true value.

Secondly, there is a lot of debate and worries in Cameroon and Africa at large about the relevance of the brideprice payment. However , these debates are held at the top level without the voice of the main people concerned and with limited cultural evidence to substantiate the different claims. This study therefore tests theory to generate evidence based knowledge about the dynamics of brideprice payment and the kom peoples perceptions about it. The produced knowledge will contribute to informing academicians, family scholars, legislators and policy makers on how best to debate on reforms in domestic relations studies basing on theoretically tested conclusions.

2.1. Personal reasons

We got interest in the kom people because we share the same geographical space. We have always wanted to understand the aspect of bride price to its full details and having grown to this stage, I observed that some traditions tied to Bride price were gradually neglected and so we found it worth to carry out a study on it so as to better understand what is really happening.

2.2. Scientific Reason

Authors like; Murdock, Mulder (1995) Plateau and Graspert (2007), Wegh(2003), Bloch and Rao (2002) , Alupo(2004), Ansell (2001), Roger's (2004), Hague and Thiara (2009) have done work on the concept of bride price and we thought it of interest to add to these knowledge in the social sciences in general and Cultural Anthropology in particular. The choice of the dynamics of bride price is therefore a continuity of the past research on bride price in the aspect of the dynamics.

3. Problem of the Research

The Kom Fondom was established in 1730. From then developed a culture of its people, the Kom people under the leadership of a Fon. Before the dawn of the Colonial era by 1889, the Fon of Kom could be compared to a Constitutional Monarch meaning that he was head of government and king at the same time. He exercised executive power, legislative power and Judiciary power in the entire Kom kingdom. He was seen as the personification of his kingdom. He was the "de facto" ruler of his people and to question his authority was a treasonable act that could be punished with death.

During the Colonial period, a foreign culture, the "Whiteman's" culture, was introduced into the Kom Fondom. This culture was propagated in the fondom of missionaries through religion and education. The culture brought in new values and lifestyles that were assimilated by the Kom population. One of the most significant impacts of these new values in the Kom society was an open disapproval of some practices in the Kom palace. A group of royal Women, through a female organization called 'ANLU' openly challenged the authority of the Fon. Some of them violated the customary law which stated that royal wives were sacrosanct by abandoning the palace and going in search of better opportunities elsewhere.

The Fon's authority as spiritual leader as well as some existing traditional practices were questioned by the emerging elites, especially the converted Christians. As the Kom community widened its doors to these foreign cultures, more challenges surfaced and the Fon gradually surrendered most of his functions to the colonial government.

Globalization, which has squeezed the world into a global village has exposed the Kom culture to other world cultures. Several sons and daughters of the Kom kingdom have established in the diaspora and are exposed to these competing world cultures. Some of them tend to admire more of some of these cultures than the Kom culture. Today, the Kom culture is squeezing itself in a roundabout of cultures with the risk if surrendering most of its valuable part in terms of marriage and Bride price in particular through the influences of globalization,

economic, political and cultural forces acting and interacting within and out of the Kom fondom. Tradition is no longer respected or followed to its peak and bride price is gradually losing its original meaning of being a symbol for marriage.

4. Statement of the problem

To bring responses to the preoccupation posed by our main research objective which is to know what influences the changes in the perceptions of Kom people as regards bride price, we decided to rest on the global, regional and local context of bride price.

In the traditional Chinese culture, an auspicious date is selected where both families will meet to discuss the amount of the bride price demanded among other things. Bride price vary from RMB 1.000,000 in famously money-centric Shanghai to as little as RMB 10.000. A house is often required along with the bride price. Bride prices are rising quickly in China largely without documentation but a definite verbal and cultural understanding of where bride prices are today.

In Europe, when you and your bride go to the required office to make the request of wanting to get marriage. There are some paper work that needs to be done that needs money to register the process of the marriage and many more. All of these expenses sum up together to a bride price in Europe. Bride price is paid to the government. This shows that in Europe everyone belongs to the government. Family members or parents have no right to cancel or reject your marriage.

In Africa, from South Africa to Zimbabwe, Uganda, Kenya, Senegal, Burkina Faso and many parts of the African Continent, the custom of paying bride price has been unquestionably celebrated as an essential part of marriage, albeit with a few legislative and policy modifications. The Ugandan bride price decision is a sign that the question is far from settled and Africa is yet to find its cultural floating in the ever-changing world.

Cameroonians consider bride price as a sign of appreciation to the bride's family for raising their daughter to be fit for marriage. Usually, the groom is asked to give goats, money, farming tools, firewood, fabric and palm oil to the bride's family. These items are negotiated between the two families. The groom and his family do sometimes present gifts to uncles and aunts to facilitate the process after which both families have reached an agreement about the bride price. All of these views bring out the symbolic nature that bride price is to have but that is fading away from the Kom culture as Globalization and Modernity come in to influence the perceptions of the Kom people as regards bride price.

5. Research questions

The following questions will guide our thoughts on this research.

5.1. Main question

What influences the changes in the experiences and perceptions of Kom people about bride price?

5.2. Secondary questions

- What is the representation of bride price in the Kom community?
- How do the Kom people go about the payment of bride price?
- How has the perceptions of Kom people as far as bride price is concerned changed?

6. Research hypothesis

These are tentative answers to the questions which have to be tested on the field.

6.1. Main hypothesis

- The Kom man believed brideprice to be a symbol and tool of negotiation in exchange for a wife but modernity that has come with education, urban influence through social media or internet at large has deviated these thoughts to that of commercializing.

6.2. Secondary hypothesis

- The Kom people see brideprice as a symbol not a payment which buys over their daughters.
- The Kom brideprice consists of two independent parts and could be paid at different times. The father will state his requirements and the mother will do same.
- Factors like education, status and age did not use to count in the determinants of bride price but today they are strictly considered.

7. Research Objectives

7.1. Main objective

- To produce a deeper understanding and knowledge about brideprice and its dynamics among the Kom people which could be as a foundation for further research in culture and for use by academicians and policy makers in their debates about the practice.

7.2. Secondary objectives

- To study the representation of brideprice among the Kom people.
- To understand how the Kom people go about the payment of bride price
- To examine the changes in bride price perceptions and practices among the Kom people so far and the cause of the changes.

8. Research methodology

This section aims at presenting research methods used in the study. A method is a process of scientific investigation which permits the researcher to attain his objectives. Qualitative methods employed include; Life histories, indepth interviews, and documentary analysis. These methods will help in the collection of people's opinion, experiences and also facilitate data collection, data analysis and explanation of the research design.

8.1. Research Design

Our study is basically an ethnological study which describes and examines the various dynamics of bride price in the Kom cultural universe . Data collection was obtained from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources being from the field while secondary sources includes; literature read on books, textbooks, thesis, encyclopedia, journals and the internet. Also, articles were derived from CPPSA .

We started by working out a literature review in the various libraries for some time and later on proceeded to the field to carry out research.

8.2. Target population

It is not objective or Scientific to carry out a research of this nature within an undefined population .The research on bride price among the Kom people in the Northwest region of Cameroon has a target population; Married people, experienced people in the domain of Kom culture, relatives of those who have gotten married and of course knowledgeable ones who master the Kom culture especially in the domain of bride price practices.

9. Sample population

Sample population refers to part of a population that is taken to represent a whole population. In this study, we shall have as sample , the elders or aged people of Kom, married women with longer experiences as well because we believe that they possess quality information on issues of Bride price in Kom.

10. Sampling type

The Sampling choice consists of moving towards resourceful informants having a good knowledge on the topic of study. This way facilitated data collection while avoiding running in circles and regulating the useful informants necessary to understand our research objective. The sampling choice in terms of qualitative approach were chosen with regards to their knowledge on the subject matter, their cultural space and residence.

10.1. Sampling procedure

After choosing the type of informants, we needed to determine the means through which we could have access to our informants. In order to do that, we opted for the reasonable sampling. We chose people who were of age and had a good mastery of Kom culture. We equally chose married ladies who had to share their marriage experiences which helped in our study. This reflection on the dynamics of Brideprice among the Kom people did not involve the whole inhabitants of the Kom society but the married people, people of age with a good mastery of the Kom culture and equally some singles who had an idea based on their relatives experience.

11. Sampling size

The length is the number of resourceful persons who were interviewed. To each category of sample corresponds a specific number of informants. The saturation of our research goes to 34 informants elaborated as such;

Types of informants	Number
Aged	09
Married	15
Relatives of married ones	04
Matured singles	06
Total	34

Table 1 : number of informants obtained

The table above presents the number of informants obtained in the field during our research for this work. Those who made were made up of the old were nine in number. For the married they were fifteen and to add that there were more married people who were either reluctant or scared to participate. The relatives to those who had experienced marriage were four in number given that most were unavailable, and of course the few singles who also mastered the Kom tradition were six in number which got through accidental sampling.

12. Sampling Technique

Non probable sampling involves two techniques ;

12.1. Snowball sampling

This is a technique whereby through an informant, you get to know others related to the informant who are in possession of the information you need . So through one , you get another until you reach your desired number of informants. This happened in the field when while discussing with an informant, we asked if he or she knew someone around who is married or has a good knowledge of Kom traditions in order to have access to other informants . The said informant directs us to the person's compound or leads us there.

12.2. Accidental sampling

This involves a sampling technique whereby we chose the sample present before us at the moment of research. This technique permitted us to discuss with certain informants who had a good mastery of the Kom tradition especially in the domain of marriage and Brideprice but who were not married yet. Through these we were able to complete our data from the field.

13. Data collection methods

The data collection methods were both secondary and primary.

13.1. Secondary data collection

Secondary data refers to data that is collected by someone other than the primary user. Example are information collected by government departments, organizational records and data that was originally collected for other research purposes. It is research data that has previously been gathered and can be accessed by researchers. In our research case, we reviewed research works on bride price and related topics done by different authors. Documentary review helped us in a very important way as it gave us a glimpse of the research

work helping us equally to formulate our research hypothesis which were eventually tested in the Field.

13.2. Primary data collection

Primary data is the type of data that is collected by researchers directly from main sources through interviews, surveys, experiments. It is data collected by the researcher himself for a specific purpose.

14. Data collection procedure

The procedure of data collection is the way through which we proceeded to gather portions of information which helped in the understanding of the subject matter. Data collection procedure is organized as such:

14.1. Systematic literature review

It consisted in assembling documents that concerned Brideprice and its practices. We elaborated a bibliography form in which all the documents in relation with our research topic were treated. These documents were drawn from Academic libraries, personal and through friends.

14.2. Snowball literature review

Here, from a key document handling what has to do with Brideprice, we consulted bibliographic reference which opened the door to other documents treating the same subject. Each time we consulted this document, we repeated the same exercise and so on. This technique was very important as it permitted us to have other documents from a particular document.

14.3. Direct Observation

Direct observation permitted us to observe the rituals done during traditional marriage in Kom, the role of the participants and the nature of the marriage.

14.4. Indirect Observation

Here we did not observe but noted what the informants had experienced during their own traditional marriage. It was important for this work in the sense that we entered into discussions with informants nkt directly in the goal of the subject matter but in mere chats. This was realised thanks to a notebook which permitted the taking down of notes with a blue pen to write.

14.5. Indepth interviews

To collect the experiences of those who had been married in the Kom land , an indepth interviews were proposed depending on their availability. The main objective of this interview is to obtain information on the interior parts of our research to reformulate our questions in relation to what is observed and establish the link between the representations, payment and dynamics of brideprice.

14.6. Life histories

This technique of data collection permitted us to have a detailed description of the way in which traditional marriage is carried out, the payment, ways and nature and of course know the changes that have occurred.

14.7. Fieldwork procedure

The researcher had to inform the community on the purpose of the study thereby exploring themes and sub themes. Data was collected on the premise of the informants, social gatherings. It was done from morning to afternoon and transcribed in the evening in note books.

14.8. Techniques of data Collection

Techniques are derived from methods and which permit one to acquire information . We applied some techniques to the above cited methods

14.9. Systematic documentary review

A documentary review is said to be systematic when it is done in an ordered and coordinated way. It follows a particular flow.

14.10. Snowball documentary review

This refers to a sort of haphazard selection of documents drawn from the systematic technique. When we were in possession of a document, we consulted the reference page immediately which orientated us to other documents of the same order. This technique really helped in getting in contact with documents that we never thought of or even imagine.

14.11. Direct observation

This technique involves observing a particular phenomenon directly without taking part in it. During our stay on the field we observed how traditional marriage is done in Kom and the nature of behaviour displayed during the traditional marriage

14.12. Indirect observation

Equally resulting from observation, this technique proceeds from feedbacks that come from observation. Here, we did not observe directly but took note of what informants who had been married had experienced.

Nevertheless, observation and documentary review are not enough, though they give us facts, describe attitudes of the studied population but they do not indicate how people perceive, interpret or react towards those facts. Reason why they are completed with interviews and life histories.

14.13. In-depth interviews

To collect the experiences of those who had been married in the Kom land, an in-depth interviews were proposed depending on their availability. The main objective of this interview is to obtain information on the interior parts of our research to reformulate our questions in relation to what is observed and establish the link between the representations, payment and dynamics of Brideprice.

14.14. Life histories

This technique of data collection permitted us to have a detailed description of the way in which traditional marriage is carried out, the payment, ways and nature and of course know the changes that have occurred.

14.15. Language procedure

Both English Language and Kom language (itanjiKom) were used in the field during the research. Documents written in English and interview questions were interpreted in Kom language for resourceful informants to better comprehend the questions so as to answer accordingly. This was for informants who were not literates.

15. Data Collection Tools

Data Collection tools refer to the instruments used to collect data such as a paper questionnaire. They could equally be software programs that can gather and analyze information. Throughout our Fieldwork, we used tools such as note books and pens, Audio recorder in smart phone, documentary research guide, Observation guide and in depth interview guide which helped in the Collection of data.

15.1. Notebook and pen

These tools were used to take down important information from informants during interviews and documentary. This was especially for those who did not give their consent as far as recording them was concerned .

15.2. In depth Interview guide

It consisted of structured and organized points written to lead the conversation in an organized way. It included points like; Demographic details, Representation of bride price, payment method and the changes observed.

15.3. Audio recorder

An audio recorder was used to collect data during interviews. This was from the application found in our android phones.

15.4. Documentary research guide

Documentary research was conducted through the use of published and unpublished documents such as; Dissertations, published books on bride price , Articles and Journals. APA referencing style was used as our guide in referencing every information that was taken from the reviewed documents.

15.5. Observation guide

It permitted or helped us to collect information whereby traditional marriages were observed paying attention to every bit of activity that added information to our research.

16. Type of data

The data collected in the field were oral and iconographic .

16.1. Oral data

This refers to information recorded from informants through interviews. It involves all what the informant says which would be recorded to be transcribed later.

16.2. Iconographic data

This refers to data in the form of pictures or images that better explain some information from the field. We got images of traditional marriages in Kom as well as images on important Cultural elements which brought more meaning to our research.

17. Data Management and Analysis

Analysis of data involves breaking information collected from the field into its constituent parts so as to better interpret. At the end of data collection, all audios including field notes were transcribed and analyzed with the help of the program Atlas to. Manual techniques were equally used to code data in a note book. After the collection phase from the field ,the data was transcribed from audio to physical and typed using the program Word. We proceeded to the treatment phase using the method of colors to distinguish the different themes and responses. This consists of classifying the elements of the content of different texts transcribed according to the objectives of the research. Hence, we did a content analysis which is ; a research method which allows the qualitative data collected in research to be analysed systematically and reliably so that generalizations can be made from them in relation to the categories of interest to the researcher. In other words, the data was classified to retain that which corresponded to the objective of our research. They were classified according to various themes .Only the significant elements were retained and described.

Besides the content analysis, another technique was according to theme. Thematic analysis helps researchers understand those aspects of a phenomenon that participants talk about frequently or in depth and the ways in which those aspects of a phenomenon may be connected. After the transcriptions of oral data to numerical data on the computer, a first pre reading was done just in a bit to erase the general impression on the information collected. After this phase , a second proof reading was done in the light of questions and hypotheses. The phase of marking with subtitles to separate the themes and sub themes followed . Once the themes and sub themes were identified, they were classified in a form for synthesis. At the analytical phase, consensual information were classified on one side and marginal on the other side. These analysis consisted in comparing what was observed on the different sites of research. What was said by the different information and what was collected at the level of the research.

17.1. Oral data Analysis

Paratextual, pretext and textual analysis were used ; Paratextual which has to do with the first impression that we had before getting into an interview session with an informant. Analyzing the representation of bride price among the Kom people through context analysis and finally the results were analysed using textual Analysis that is, organizing every idea in it's own paragraph, perceptions, representations in an organized way for better Comprehension.

17.2. Iconographic data Analysis

In its application, iconographic analysis consists of bringing evidence of the different aspects of the image to be analysed taking note of material context (type of material) the global morphology, the partial and differential morphology (the texture, the taste) This phase therefore requires the researcher to choose an analysis model depending on the research activity.

18. Ethical consideration

Ethical considerations in research is a set of principles that guards your research designs and practices. In this study, the considerations that will be done are elaborated below Informants will have the right to voluntary participation. This means that ,no informant will be forced to participate but it will be out of their free will. Also,confidentiality will be taken on a serious note. The information provided by the informant will not be shared with anyone except with whom he or she will made aware of. The informant as well will have the right to withdraw whenever he or she feels uncomfortable continuing in the research process.

19. Research Interest

This work has both theoretical and practical interest.

19.1. Scientific interest

Our research enters the frame of cultural Anthropology which preoccupies researchers in the Social Sciences. In effect one cannot expect to interrogate the question of culture without making reference to representation. As such, many researchers in social sciences are interested in Cultural representations. In this perspective, the relationship between the representations of Brideprice, the nature of payment and more. This research permitted us to bring our modest contribution to science notably through the acquisition of new knowledge in the field of cultural Anthropology.

19.2. Practical interest

The practical interest focuses on the knowledge of bride price among the Kom people ,the dynamics which are of course the changes that have been observed as regards Brideprice thereby looking at possible ways to see exactly where to remedy the situation and how.

20. Scope of study

The scope of the study has been broken into two; Time frame and space.

20.1. Time frame

The research obviously took us back to the precolonial era when brideprice was the only form of symbol for marriage to be considered in Africa. This is intended to find out how the people of Kom saw Brideprice, how they symbolized it so as to better see the changes that have occurred as of today.

20.2. Study site

The Kom are one of the principal ethnic groups of the Northwest region of Cameroon. The capital 'laiKom' is the seat of the ruler who is a Fon. Kom includes most of Boyo division including towns as Fundong, Belo, NjiniKom and Mbingo. This is to limit our inquiry only with local people of Kom having a good knowledge of their culture. It is thought that proposed solutions that would be gotten from this study carried out in Kom would advance the scope of knowledge to other areas across the country as well as the world.

21. Delimitation of the study

The delimitation of this work shows how limited the work is , in terms of space and time.

21.1. Spatial delimitation

Our research is limited in Cameroon in the Kom community of the Northwest region, more precisely in the Boyo division.

21.2. Temporary delimitation

This research covers the academic year 2020 - 2022 which Marks the end of our training for the masters level in view of obtaining a masters 2 Certificate in Anthropology with option being Cultural Anthropology. Our work is elaborated as such; The first phase composed in the elaboration of the data collection tools and literature review. The second phase had to do with going to the field for data collection. The third and the last consisted in the analysis and interpretation of data in the field. Finally the typing of the memoir and the final deposit .

22. Difficulties encountered

The problems encountered in this research study were in various forms . The first was at the level of informants , some did not give information to the fullest due to their personal

will and satisfaction. The second was at the level of posing the questions in the Kom language for better understanding by the informants who had difficulties apprehending them in English language.

23. Plan of work

The first chapter consists of the background study of the Kom people. It presents the Physical and Human Environment. Physical being the Location, relief, vegetation, climate and Human consisting of the History, Culture, religion, Social Etiquette, political Organization, Economic organization, education and lot more.

The second chapter led us to the literature review, theoretical framework and definition of concepts. It made a point on the themes on bride price , global to local concepts of bride price and gender expression in bride price. As concern theoretical framework we used various theories to integrate our work into the structure of Anthropological understanding and interpretation. The last part brought up the definition of the Various concepts related to our research.

The third chapter consisted in presenting the different representations of bride price among the Kom people which was introduced with the prelude to bride price payment, the steps to bride price payment and narrowed to the various items of bride price payment with their representations.

The fourth chapter exposed the content of bride price among the Kom people, the nature of payment , location and what determines the nature of payment.

The fifth chapter Marks the last moment of this research work considered as the ultimate part of this dissertation. It is based on the history of bride price in Kom, the various changes in the perceptions and practices of bride price so far and how gender is expressed in bride price among the Kom people..

Finally , the research ends with a conclusion which consists of a summary of our research work.

CHAPTER ONE:

BACKGROUND OF THE KOM PEOPLE

1.1 Presentation of the study area

This chapter presents an ethnographic description of the research site. We looked at the location, culture, geography, history, economic and social Organization of the Kom people. This implied knowing the environmental factors that enabled us to better understand their cultural behaviors.

1.2 Location of the study area

The Kom people are a group found in the North West region of Cameroon. They are widely respected for their culture. They are located in the grasslands of Cameroon. Kom shares boundary with Bum to the North, it shares boundary with Banking to the south, with Mum to the west and finally with Okay to the East. The territory of the Kom fondom is dispersed throughout three subdivisions of Boyo division which are Belo, Njinikom, and Funding. The Kom people live in major valleys with Belo being the longest according to figures of population. It shares boundaries with the Mezam, Ngoketunjia, Bum and Menchum division.

1.3 Geographical situation of Cameroon

Map 1 : Map of Cameroon



Source : Google

1.4 Geographical situation of North west

Map 2 : Map of North west region



Source : Google

1.5 Geographical situation of Kom

Map 3 : Map showing Kom people



Source : Google

1.6 Physical Environment

The physical environment of the Kom community will include; Climate, the soil, and relief.

1.6.1. Climate

NjiniKom, the wet season is comfortable, humid, and overcast and the dry season is warm and partly cloudy. Over the course of the year, the temperature typically varies from 57°F to 81°F and is rarely below 53°F or above 85°F. Based on the tourism score, the best time of year to visit NjiniKom for warm-weather activities is from mid November to late February. The warm season lasts for 2.3 months, from January 23 to April 3, with an average daily high temperature above 79°F. The hottest month of the year in NjiniKom is March, with an average high of 80°F and low of 62°F.

Kom has a cool season which lasts for 3.9 months that is, from June 26 to October 22 with an average daily high temperature below 73°F. The coldest month of the year is the month of August with an average low of 60°F and high of 71°F, the clearer part of the year begins around the 3rd of March meanwhile the cloudier part begins around March 3 and lasts for 8.4 months ending around November 15.

1.6.2. The soils

The Kom highlands in the North west region of Cameroon exhibits a good example of harsh physical and environmental conditions which is evident in its poor soils, cold and harsh climate with a difficult relief and topographic landscape. All these harsh physical conditions that dominate the area , culminate in making life in the Kom construction of houses , farming to raise sufficient surpluses for sale, the construction of memorable roads, the frequent or rampant illnesses like cold and fever which result in high death rates and adaptive dressing styles of the typical Kom people.

1.6.3. Vegetation

There exist different types of vegetation in the NjiniKom subdivision, the most common of which is the Savannah shrub comprising of stunted trees and grass. Some of the hills with the highest altitudes have forest ecosystems such as the Ijim Mountain forest and the Mbueni deciduous forest.

1.6.4.Fauna

Wildlife and domesticated animals are faced within the NjiniKom subdivision. Cattle, goats, sheep, pigs, poultry, ducks, cane Ray's and rat moles constitute the domesticated animals whilst the Durler, antelope, hare, deer, monkeys, pangolins, chimpanzee, gorilla, Bush baby and squirrels constitute those found in the wild. Moreover, the wild birds include: the Barneman's Turaco, Grey headed sparrow, hawk, Weaver bird, sunbird owls and Robin.

1.7 The Human Environment

The human environment of this locality is made up of the history, population, habitat, culture, language, religion.

1.7.1. History of Kom

The history of Kom has somehow been examined at two different periods- ancient and modern periods. Ancient Kom history starts from Foyin Jinabo¹, a period during which no documentation of any sort was done. Six Foyins reigned during this period, and very little or nothing could be said about their activities. Any dates given during that period are crude estimates of the author and other researchers. Oral tradition, the only source of information available has not provided much for that period. The Emergence of Foyin Yuh in 1865 marked the beginning of the end of the ancient era. The modern era started with some limited documentation system and from the colonial period documentation intensified and has been gaining ground till date.

The Kom fondom was born in 1730 with Njinabo 1 as the first king. Kom History(proper) shall commence from this date (1730) and shall in some situations be examined at two distinct periods- the early and modern eras. The early period (1730-1865) was the period during which virtually no documentation was done. Oral tradition was and remains the only source of information for that period. The earliest attempts of the 1950s by Chilver and Kaberry among others on the documentation of Kom history did not actually capture the events of that period. That ancient period saw the reigns of six kings in the Kom Fondom. After Foyin Njinabo 1 Came Foyin Kumambong , Foyin Nkwo, Foyin Nkwain, Foyin Tufoyn, and Foyin Kimeng in succession. The modern era of Kom history started from 1865. Some limited documentation has been realised since 1865 and it has been relatively easy to capture certain events through oral traditions. The modern era started with the reign of Foyin Yuh 1, whose stay at the Kom throne (1865-1912), a reign of 47 years, could only be compared to that of Foyin Njinabo 1, who started the ancient era (1730-1788), a reign of 58 years. These

two flag bearers (Njinabo 1 and Yuh 1) of the two distinct Kom historic periods have respectively maintained the first and second records of the longest serving Foyins of the Kom fendom..

1.7.2. Population

Kom has an estimated population of about 139,360 persons distributed over the three valleys of its territory. Belo has 65,326, Fundong 51,183 and NjiniKom 22,851 inhabitants. This population is spread over an estimated surface area of 1050 square km, thus giving a population density of about 123.8 persons per square km. A significant number of Kom people are today spread all over the world and the dynamics are indicating that in some distant future, more Kom people may likely reside in the Kom diaspora than at home. The Kom Youthful population is highly migratory, mainly in search of greener pastures elsewhere out of the Kom Fendom.

1.7.3. The Kom people and its culture

Kom is an ethnic group that is found in the North West region of Cameroon, ruled by a Fon ,the seat of this Fon is found in Laikom and holds a traditional administration with instructions that are consequently implemented. When the Fon gives his pronouncement on any matter, it automatically becomes a policy to be implemented.

The Kom are patriarchal in nature and their lineage which follows from the side of the mother makes them unique. They have a traditional outfit called ‘dala’ which has a flat rounded cap made of thread called the ‘Fyndam’. Kom made up of a lot of farmers, pastoralists and a variety of pasture makes it a beautiful place. It is a host of one of the worlds existing virgin forests which is rich in fauna and flora without forgetting their traditional meal , corn fufu ‘huckleberry ad stewed chicken culturally termed ' abain-ne- mbas’.

One of the biggest events in the Kom kingdom is the annual cultural festival. During this event, the people show case their culture to their Fon and the people from outside of the Kom community. The various dance groups led by the Njong Kom includes, the Chong society, Njangwain, njang-fubom, juju dance groups, the Kom royal dance and others. On the meal menu, there is the always the main food that is known all over the Kom land as Abain and Bas (corn-fufu and Vegetables), and khati-khati to help send the corn-fufu and vegetables fast down to the stomach.

The Kom people are known for their matrilineal succession practices, which means that when an adult male dies for instance, the transfer of his property is done to his sister’s

son. That is, his nephew and not even his biological son. Though this is fast disappearing since a lot of kom people are against it or rising against it. Kom is a patriarchal society where males hold most of power and privileges. The females on their own side are most busy with children, kitchen and farm work.

The Kom people have a sort of military wing which is made up of men who fire their guns in the air during important occasions like burial as a show of force to the Kom Fon that they are ever ready for eventuality. This display is one of the most important backbones of the Kom culture.

The Kom people equally have a dance which is mainly for funeral celebration. This dance group make up a society known as ‘Chong society’s. Only a few people make up this group as the conditions to be met so as to be part are a lot. Being a member of this group is one of the most expensive titles to be held in the Kom kingdom. It is mainly for the men even though women do take part in the performance of the dance when it is done at funeral celebrations.

The Kom people also gave a particular dance which is reserved for daughters of the palace but nowadays the dance is performed by the Kom people particularly the young women who are almost ready for marriage. The dance performance exposes the beauty of the Kom woman.

The Fon used this cultural event to encourage all the sons and daughter of the Kom land wherever they may be to promote and show case their culture to the world or people outside of the Kom community in order that they can see the beauty of the Kom culture.

In order to keep the Kom culture alive, His Royal Highness Fon Vincent Yuh 2nd has named Afo-A-Kom, USA as one of the villages in the Kom kingdom. This is a means to encourage all sons and daughters of the Kom land to promote their Culture which is a tool for development. Culture goes hand-in-hand with the development of a given community. The identity of the Kom people in the diaspora especially Europe (Germany), and the United States is the Kom culture when it is promoted.

Historical Background

The Kom Fondom was born in 1730 with Njinabo 1 as the first king Kom history (proper) shall commence from this date (1730) and shall in some situations be examined at two distinct periods- the early and the modern era. The early period (1730-1865) was the period during which virtually no documentation was done. Oral tradition was and remains

the only source of information for that period. The earliest attempts of the 1950s by Chilver and Kabwry among others on the documentation of Kom history did not actually capture the events of that period. That ancient period saw the reigns of six kings in the Kom Fandom. After Foyin Njinabo¹ came Foyin Kumambong, Foyin Nkwo, Foyin Nkwain, Foyin Tufoyn, and Foyin Kimeng in succession. The modern era of Kom history started from **1865**. Some limited documentation has been realised since 1865 and it has been relatively easy to capture certain events through oral traditions. The modern era started with the reign of Foyin Yuh 1, whose stay at the Kom throne (1865-1912), a reign of 47 years could only be compared to that of Foyin Njinabo 1 who started the ancient era (1730-1788), a reign of 58 years. These two flag bearers (Njinabo¹ and Yuh 1) of the two distinct Kom historic periods have respectively maintained the first and second records of the longest reigns of the Kom Fandom. During the 19th century migration in Cameroon, most tribes moved south in search of better economic opportunities. The Kom people, who originated from upper Mbam in Tikari, moved in search of fertile soils. They first settled in Babessi. While in Babessi, their population began to grow drastically, and rapidly. The Fon of Babessi feared a possible attack from the Kom people. He then tricked the Fon of Kom (Njinabo I) into believing that the increase in their male population may someday lead to them being overthrown the fon of Kom believed this and subsequently accepted his proposal to burn all the healthy men in two separate rooms.

After the act was committed, the Fon of Kom realized that he had been tricked. The Babessi Fon had built a secret door for his men to escape when the fire started. Unable to bear the loss and betrayal, the Fon of Kom committed suicide by hanging himself. He died without a son. Legend has it that a python appeared and led the people of Kom to their present settlement.

1.7.4. Language

Language is a vehicle of communication. The Kom language is called "itaniKom". It is the vehicle of communication that exists among the Kom people. Language is the most important attribute of any culture. The Kom language that permits a culture to be expressed in any of its forms. The Kom language today is not only a vehicle of communication in the Kom society. Its scope of influence has been widened. ItaniKom is one of the Cameroon National Languages that was selected as a key language to be taught in the primary and secondary schools in the North west region . Greater attention must therefore be given to itaniKom by the Kom people so as to render the written language accessible in various form

to the learners. The “Kom language: from oral to written” has undergone very significant changes in the course of time. Several publications have been realized including the following:

Guide to the Kom alphabet: by Emmanuel N.Chia and Joseph C Kimbi (1992).

Ghesna Ye’I itaniKom 1: by Emmanuel N. Chia , George N and Joseph Kimbi(1

Ghesna Ye’I itaniKom 2: by Emmanuel N. Chia, George N Mbeh and Joseph Kimbi(1987).

1.7.5. Economic organization

People in the region play an important part in regional trade routes connecting with the seaport of Douala in the south and with Fulani and Hausa traders in the north. The Kom are farmers who grow maize, yams, and peanuts as staple crops. They also raise some livestock, including chickens and goats, which play an important role in daily sustenance. Women, who are believed to make the soil more fruitful, are responsible for the tasks of planting and harvesting the crops. Men are responsible for clearing the fields for planting and practice some nominal hunting.

1.7.6 Social Organization

The Kom people and their surrounding populations like those of most Afrucan societies have families as the base of their social Organization. Families occupy an important place in the social group structure. Kinship organization can not be done without a family which stresses heritage from ancestral generations .Filiations tie them with an ancestor and that makes social Organization important in a community.

1.8 Agriculture

Kom has a mixed economy and predominantly agricultural comprising mainly of farming, small scale stock keeping and trade. Agricultural production is largely in the hands of woman who produce enough food for domestic consumption. Men assist in clearing of farms plots and in the harvest of corps. Kom is also noted for the production of utensils, carvings of masks and furniture as well as architectural occupations. Arts and Carvings Kom people are artistically gifted in carving powerful masks in human and animal figures which are used in ceremonies for the dead or public manifestations. During the ceremonies, the people play beautiful vigorous rhythms with drums and flute accompanied by a masquerade of spectacular bare-feet dancers dressed in heavily embroidered robes with their faces covered

1.8.1. Political Organization

The Kom Kom Fondom was founded by three Royal Clans (Ikue, Itsinilah and Achaff). But since the creation of the Fondom, only one of these clans (Ikue) has been supplying Foyns for the Kom dynasty. The other two clans (Itsinilah and Achaff) play the role of king makers in the Kom Fondom. When there is Vacancy in the Kom dynasty, these king makers play the role of choosing the successor from the Ikue clan which supplies Foyns to the Kom dynasty. After Foyn Njinabo 1, Came the lineage of NangeBo (Ndo-Nangebo) which supplied Foyns to the Kom dynasty from (1788-1865). From 1865 came the lineage of Funkuin Nayn, (NdoFunkuin) which has been supplying Foyns tongue Kom dynasty till date. The Kom, like all of the peoples who make up the Cameroon Grasslands culture area, pay allegiance to the Fon. Each village is governed by a leader who is selected by his predecessor and who is usually the head of the dominant lineage within that community. Each Fon is served by a council of elders who advise him on all important decisions and who also play an important role in the selection of the next Fon. Most chiefs serve for a lifetime, abdicating the throne or stool only when nearing death. Complex age-grade societies also help to structure the community. The Fon also oversees these secret societies.

The Kom Fondom is divided into three valleys: AbasaKom, NjiniKom and Ngvini-kejem. This division probably dates back to the early days of settlement. Ngvini-kejem refers to the hunting and farmlands of the kejem condom (Babanki). The kejem people were chased out of this area by 1845 during the reign of Foyn Tufoyn. AbasaKom was the valley occupied by some early Kom people. Today, Ngvini- kejem is made up of Belo subdivision, while AbasaKom is made up of the Fundong subdivision. Each valley today has a number of villages, which form compact territorial units under the leadership of a village head or Bonteh. (Nsom Joseph on “ Modern Kom society” , first edition 2015, NYAA PUBLISHERS)

1.8.2. Religion

The Kom reserve the highest allegiance for their lineage ancestors. Ancestral spirits are embodied in the skulls of the deceased ancestors. The skulls are in the possession of the eldest living male in each lineage, and all members of an extended family recognize the skulls as common heritage. When a family decides to relocate, a dwelling, which must be first purified by a diviner, is built to house the skulls in the new location. Although not all of the ancestral skulls are in the possession of a family, the memories of all ancestors are honored. The spirits of ancestors whose skulls are not preserved have nowhere to reside and may as a result cause trouble for the family. To compensate when a man's skull is not

preserved, a family member must undergo a ceremony in which libations are poured into the ground. Earth gathered from the site of that offering then represents the skull of the deceased. Respect is also paid to female skulls, although details about such practices are largely unrecorded. The Kom tribe covers $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Boyo division. The capital of Kom is LaiKom, and it is made up of over 43 villages. The tribe is ruled by a king or Fon (Fondom) and followed by the traditional parliament/legislative assembly (kwifoyn).[3] In Kom as elsewhere in the Bamenda Grassfields, it is the executive arm of the traditional government. Its job is to make sure that the Fon's orders are followed to the letter. Besides the traditional prime minister is the council of elders (nchidoh). Unlike any other elderly person in the Kom tribe, this set of people can easily be recognized by the red feather they carry on their hats. After the nchidoh, is the village head. He is somehow also the spiritual leader of the villages. He takes orders from the Kwifoyn and implements them.

1.8.3. Economic activity and Livelihood

The people of Kom perform various activities which permit them to obtain the essentials of living. Two economic sectors co-exist in the Kom Fondom. The traditional and the modern sectors. In the traditional sector, women are generally involved in the growing of maize, Sorghum, Cocoyam, Yams, Cassavas, Sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, beans, Soya beans, Vegetables, Pumpkins, Castor oil, melons and groundnuts. These food crops are used both for consumption as well as for sale. Men engage in several areas of activity including cash crop farming, bricklaying, hunting, carving, carpentry, and others. In the modern sector we get civil servants, mission workers, business persons and people of other professions spread all over the Kom territory. In this modern sector of activity, there is no gender differentiation in roles as is the case in the traditional sector. Females as well as males are in keen competition for the Scarce available resources.

Kom people are mostly farmers with men engaged in the cultivation of coffee, plantains, bananas and fruit trees. Women, on the other hand are involved in growing maize, sorghum, cocoa, yams, cassava, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, beans, Soya-beans, vegetables, pumpkins, Calabashes, sugar-canes, pawpaw, pine apples, castor oil, melons and groundnuts.

With the assistance of some donors, both men and women are engaged in the planting of agro- forestry trees as prunes africana and eucalyptus trees in a large scale. The majority of men rear sheep and goats. Few keep pigs and cows. The Borrros, who grazers, rear cows

and horses in a large scale. The greatest number of cows is owned by bone Alhadji Baba Ndapolo of Ndawara.

For livestock, men and women rear chickens and sometimes ducks and rabbits. The Kom people were traders before motorable roads were constructed. They used to carry kola-nuts by head-load to Northern Nigeria, Northern parts of former East Cameroon and even to Ghana. They brought back clothes and other valuables.

1.8.4. Social Etiquette

Greetings, use of proper names and use of praise names are important parts of daily etiquette in the Kom society. Individuals generally greet each other when they meet. Younger persons will generally use proper words (*tu Layn ma bà- good morning pa*) when greeting their elders. Greetings for in line with the topology of the Kom land. For someone descending (*was si kali gvi-a- are you coming down?*). For someone ascending (*was so ko' gvi-à ?- are you coming up?*). For someone on level land (*wa si tala gvi-a?*).

There is established protocol regarding speaking and seating during meetings sessions in most traditional houses. This protocol becomes stricter in the presence of the Fon. Some meetings will require formal attire for those to attend. The dala for men and the laba for women are generally appropriate for such occasions. It is often rude to touch or look at the Fon. A bow with clasped hands and indirect eye contact is an appropriate way of greeting eye Fon. The Kom people are very generous and hospitable. They hate evil and love living together. They detest war and conflict and tend to admire people who settle their differences amicably.

1.8.5. Agriculture

Kom people are mostly farmers with men engaged in the cultivation of coffee, plantains,bananas and fruit trees. Women on the other hand are involved in growing maize, sorghum, Cocoyam, tams, cassava, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes, beans, Soya beans, Vegetables, pumpkins, Calabashes, sugar canes, pawpaw, pine apples, castor oil, melons and groundnuts.

With the assistance of some donors, both men and women are engaged in the planting of agro forestry trees as prunes africana and eucalyptus trees in a large scale. The majority of men rear sheep and goats. Few keep pigs and cows. The Borrros,who grazers, rear cows and horses in a large scale. The greatest number of cows is owned by bible Alhadji Baba of Ndawara.

For livestock, men and women rear chickens and sometimes ducks and rabbits. The Kom people were traders before motorable roads were constructed. They used to carry kola nuts by head load to Northern Nigeria, Northern parts of former East Cameroon and even to Ghana. They brought back clothes and other valuables.

1.8.6. Family and kinship organization.

As far as kinship is concerned with the Kom people, they follow matrilineal systems. In fact, there are two levels of succession in the Kom matrilineal system. Level one is consist of fraternal succession, where brother succeeds brother and corporal succession where sister succeeds brother. In other words, succession at this level is between brothers and sisters. At this level, no formalities or rituals are needed for the person inheriting property. Brothers and sisters at this level are regarded as one person and so we do not actually talk of succession. When a brother dies and another is alive, it is puke jo event has occurred. Although the general practice is in favour of the Male on the Kom succession system, nothing actually prevents a woman from succeeding her brother, especially if she is single. We know of cases where courageous and determined females among male brothers have taken seniority turn in succession line.

Level two is where the nephews/nieces come in to inherit the property of their uncles. Most persons may be embarrassed to see the niece at this level. The females are indeed eligible for succession but the fact that they could likely get married and become property of different families virtually excluded them from this exercise.

Patrilineal succession coexists with matrilineal succession in Kom. Patrilineal succession is a system where children, especially the males take over positions and property of their deceased fathers. Although this position is usually known to belong to the eldest child of the deceased, there are situations where it could go to a child junior in age (if possible, a draft of traditional families in Kom).

Descriptive Term	English Term	Itanjikom
My Father	My Father	Bòwom
My Mother	My Mother	Nawom
My brother	My brother	Wayn Nawom
My sister	My sister	Jemti yem
My father's brother	Paternal Uncle	Bòwom
My Father's sister	Paternal Aunt	Na bòwom
My Father's brother's daughter/son	Paternal first cousin	Wayn bòwom
My father's Mother	Paternal grand-mother	Na bòwom
My mother's sister	Maternal aunt	Nawom
My Father's sister's daughter	My paternal first Cousin	Na bòwom
Mother of my mother	My maternal grand mother	Na na wom
Father of my mother	My maternal grand father	Bò nawom
Father of my father	Paternal Grandfather	Bòbowom
Mother of my father	My paternal grand mother	Nabowom
My Wife	My wife	Wiwom/wilum
Child of my child	My grand child	Wayn wayn wom
Brother of my mother	My maternal uncle	Lumsi nawom
Child of my mother's brother	My maternal first cousin	Wayn wom
Child of my mother's sister	My maternal first cousin	Wayn nawom
Wife of my father's brother	My paternal uncle's wife	Wi bòwom
My brother's wife	My brother's wife	Wi wayn na wom
Mother of my wife	My mother in law	Na wi nema
Father of my wife	My father in law	Bò wi nema
Sister of my wife	My Sister in law	Wi wom
Brother of my wife	My Brother in law	Wayn na wi nema *
My child (male/female)	My son or daughter	Wayn wom
Sister of my husband	My sister-in-law	Nalumnema
Brother of my husband	My brother-in-law	Lumwom
My sister's child	Nephew or niece	waynjemteyem

Table 2 : Kom kinship terms

Source : History of Kom people (Joseph Nsom)

1.9. Social differentiation

Like in most traditional African setups, Kom is entirely a patriarchal society. Males hold the vast majority of power and privileges while females mostly focus on the kitchen, farming and childbearing. Indeed, a man's power and wealth is measured by the number of wives he owns. But what makes the difference between Kom and several other communities is its matrilineal succession practices. Despite excessive male authority, lineage in the Kom culture continues on the side of the mother and not the father.

1.9.1 Education

There exist both formal and informal education on Kom. Formal education is provided in schools while parents at home and the environment do informal education. In the past education was looked upon as something of no value and not important especially to the

females as they may eventually get married. This led to a situation where only male children were given the priority to take care of the house and families.

1.9.2 Marriage system

Marriage in Kom is not actually between two persons, but between two families. It is not necessarily based on love but on family continuity and convenience or security. A woman may accept to stay with a man not necessarily because she loves the man but because she wants an umbrella to found her lineage though it's gradually changing now. A married woman in Kom is considered as a wife of the husband's clan. She is a wife to all the husband's brothers and sisters and this is where her protection lies if she behaves well with these her in laws.

There is marriage in Kom only when the Bride price has been paid. This Bride price has a very significant role in the Kom society. The giving of Bride price in Kom serves the role of acquiring the woman's fertility. Consequently, when a woman accepts bride price in marriage, it implies that she has somehow surrendered some of her fertility rights to the husband. The children she puts to birth will socially belong to the father, but will culturally belong to her. If she decides to abandon the husband, this putting an end to marriage union, she goes alone and leaves the children with the husband.

1.9.3. Political Organization.

Kom is a paramount fendom, meaning that within it there are some sub fondoms. With respect to Cameroon territorial administration, Kom is classified as a first-class chiefdom alongside Nso, Bali, Bafut, and Mankon in the Northwest region. Kom is under leadership or a first class Fon, who is the custodian of culture and tradition. The precolonial structures of the Kom to don were affected in one way or the other by the advent of foreign cultures. The traditional administrative setup in the Kom society has remained basically the same whereas its contents have undergone and continue to undergo very changes in the course of time.

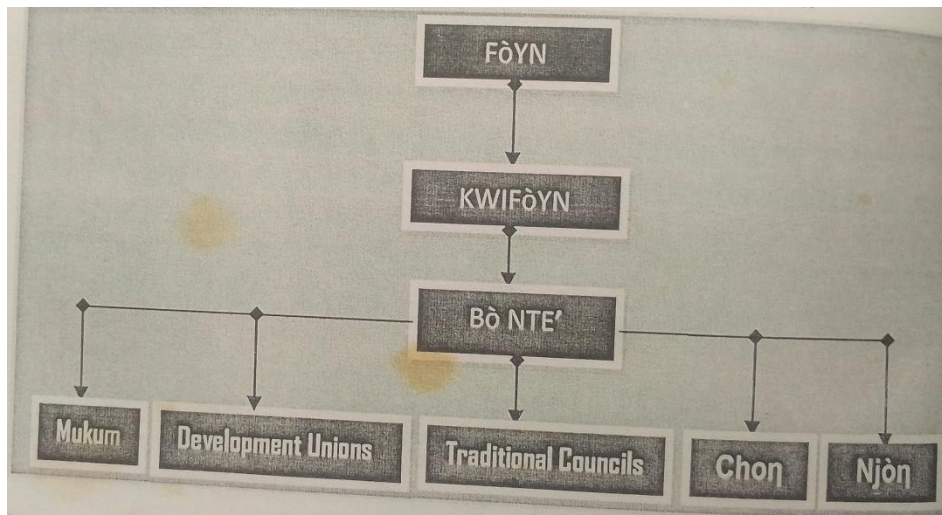


Figure 1 : Basic Administrative Set Up of the Kom traditional Government

Source : Kom Culture, Customs and Tradition by Joseph NSOM (book)

Figure 1 shows the basic traditional administrative setup of the Kom fendom. The Fon is the chief executive of the Kom traditional government. He is assisted in the daily tasks by kwifoyn and village heads. The Fon and kwifoyn constitute the central traditional authorities while the village head alongside bònchon, and bòmukum operate at village level. The economy of each village is in the hands of the council and the development unions. The traditional councils were introduced during British rule and development unions were introduced by Kom people in the diaspora-Kom people living and working outside Kom.

1.9.4 The Fon (chief executive)

The Kom dynasty is hereditary and based on matrilineal succession. The Fon in Kom gets to the throne by inheriting the brother or uncle of the matrilineal lineage. The right of succession to the throne is reserved only for the males of the ikue clan. Once a fon is enthroned, he reigns for life. But given the liberties of today, it may be possible for a Fon to resign or to be forced out of office by the population. It may thus be interesting to foresee such situations and plan for them. The Fon is a symbol of unity and derives legitimacy and authority from myths and rituals conferred on him by the Kom traditional society.

Myth and ritual offerings give a spiritual content to the exercise of the authority of the Kom Fon. Although the person of the Fon is seen as 'sacred' the sacredness stems from the royalty itself as epitomized by the royal regalia. The mythic construction of power around the Fon implies that ordinary situations could be rendered abstract when necessary. What in other circumstances would appear as ordinary discourse, open to negotiation, is simply

abstracted from the arena of daily interaction and endowed with such mythic qualities, the authority of the Kom Fon is not contested. No ordinary individual no matter how wealthy or educated can become Fon. As a spiritual leader of the Kom people, the Fon continues to play this role, as opposed to the function of the chief executive.

The functions of the Fon as a chief executive have undergone very significant changes since the colonial era. Before the dawn of the colonial era, the Kom fendom had the status of a state and the Fon could be compared to the head of the executive in a presidential system. He was a constitutional Monarch, meaning that he was head of government and king at the same time. He supervised executive power, legislative and judiciary power in the entire Kom kingdom.

Today, the legislative, judiciary and executive power which the Fon of Kom hitherto exercised have been taken over by the Cameroon territorial administration. The Fon of Kom is today qualified simply as an auxiliary of the Cameroon administration. His functions as chief executive (if any) are carried out within the strict limits of the rules and regulations of the Cameroon administration. The Fon of Kom however, maintains his total competence in all matters relating to Kom culture, custom and traditions.

The Fon's authority today is constantly being challenged by the Kom people themselves. The inability of the Fon to appoint people in some Kom royal compounds, particularly Anyajua and Mbam royal compounds tends to indicate the extent to which the Fon's authority could be challenged by his own subjects.

<i>Kom Fons of the Modern Era</i>	
	<p>FOYN YUH FUNKUIN NAIN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BORN BY 1825 • REIGN: 1865-1912
	<p>FOYN NGAM KWO FUNKUIN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BORN BY 1854 • REIGN: 1912-1926
	<p>FOYN NDZI KWO FUNKUIN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BORN BY 1860 • REIGN: 1926-1954
	<p>FOYN ALO-OH NENGSHYA FUNKUIN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BORN BY 1888 • REIGN: 1954-1966
	<p>FOYN NSOM NGWE FUNKUIN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BORN BY 1895 • REIGN: 1966-1974
	<p>FOYN JINABO FINTYA NKWAIN FUNKUIN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BORN BY 1902 • REIGN: 1974-1989
	<p>FOYN YIBAIN FINYANG NENGSHYA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BORN BY 1906 • REIGN: 1989-1994
	<p>FOYN YUH NIH FINTYA NKWAIN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BORN BY 1920 • REIGN: 1994-

picture 1: Kom Fons of modern era

Source : Kom History by Joseph NSOM (book)

1.9.5. Kom health system

In the 1948 constitution, the World Health Organization (WHO) defined health as “A state of physical, mental and social wellbeing of an individual or community. It is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The Kom person’s definition of health is broader than that of W.H.O. The Kom person defines health (iwuyn two) as “A state of complete physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social wellbeing of an individual or community.

The spiritual moral and social aspects of health in the Kom community are very important. According to Kom standards, you cannot guarantee good health if you disobey your parents, if you do evil to others, if you fail to satisfy your ancestors. A state of good health generally implies being in harmony with the environment in which you find yourself. Being in harmony with environment implies that you are in good terms with the human and spiritual world. All what we shall say about health in this section go with the assumption that the physical and mental wellbeing of individual or community are in order.

In the Kom traditional society, health services must be provided in an appropriate environment, otherwise good results may not be obtained. The family and to a very large extent, family compounds are to the milieu in which individuals obtain health services. Here we distinguish public health and individual health.

Public health is a public good, supplied at a collective basis and is guaranteed by the traditional authorities as well as the government. It aims at keeping away all evil spirits as well as diseases which could affect the community as a whole. Individual health services are provided in the family compound, in the traditional health units in modern health structures.

1.9.6. Kom modern health services

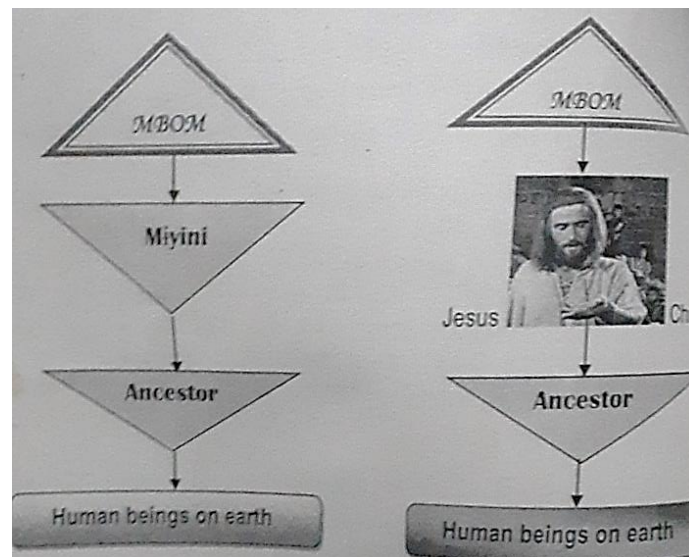
The Kom society was exposed to modern medicine long ago. Two modern hospitals existed in NjiniKom and Mbingo and still exist today alongside several others. The arrival of these modern services did not modify significantly the demand for traditional medicine. They rather complemented and continue to complement the global supply of health services in the Kom society.

1.9.7. Kom belief system

The Kom people have their views on how they see and understand the world in which they live. Such views constitute a “construct” about the makeup of life as they struggle with the questions of origin, reality, truth ethics, history as well as life and death. It is a construct

that provides a point of departure, a sense of direction, a locus of destination and a strategy of unity human thought, life and action.

The Kom people believe that the world (Mbzi) is composed of the Earth (Nse), and Heaven (ivyi). They believe that the earth is a habitat for all the creatures and things that Mbom has created. The earth is composed of land, rivers, hills, mountains, and atmosphere. In relation to other creatures on earth, the human being is superior, and can dispose of all other creatures at will. On the other hand, it is believed that heaven is the habitat of Mbom and some spiritual beings like Angel's. Other spiritual beings (ancestors, miyini) are believed to exist between Mbom in Heaven and the human beings on earth



Picture 2: Relationship between spiritual realm and human beings in Kom

Source : *Kom Culture, Customs and Tradition* by Joseph NSOM (book)

In Kom, life does not end with death but continues on another realm. The Kom people believe that when somebody dies, he/she goes to a place called **sowi**, and it is from there that the journey to the final destination begins. The belief goes that it is the whole person who continues to live in the spirit world, receiving a new body identical to the earthly body but with enhanced powers to move about as an ancestor.

1.10. Kom belief system and Christianity

The Kom Fondom was established by 1730 and Christianity entered Kom by 1912. This means that the Christian culture reached Kom some 180 years after the Kom society

had been established. Before the arrival of this culture, a belief system had already been in existence. It was the beginning of competition in matters of belief in the Kom society. In addition to the Kom belief system in existence, the new culture came along with a message titled "The Good News", which was nothing but a container in which the culture of Christianity was found. The immediate effect of this was conflict.

1.10.1. Religion

Colonization started with religion, where missionaries penetrated the African societies with the "Good News", the word of God. In Kom, Islam was introduced by Mohamadou Fujua in 1912. The Catholic Faith (Tohmuntain 2002:8) was first introduced in 1913 by German missionaries at Fujua in AbassaKom. The defeat of the Germans in the First World War caused the church to be closed down by 1915. It was reintroduced by Tim Neng at NjiniKom in 1921. The Baptist Faith was introduced by Nteff and Jam in Wombong in 1924 and in Belo by Toh and Aseh in 1930.

1.11. Relationship between the dynamics of bride price and the physical and human ethnography

1.11.1. Relationship between the dynamics of bride price and the physical frame

The physical environment as we have presented constitutes that in which the Kom people are found. We have therefore brought to evidence the Climate, relief, Vegetation. The changes in brideprice practices are recurrent in a geographical site and in a physical environment. The choice of the site is not by chance ; be it the relief , vegetation or the climate. Every element is taken into consideration. As such, relief plays a major role in the representations or perceptions of the Kom people as regards brideprice. Kom being mostly of a valley explains the leveled nature and spirit they possess even as regards brideprice.

1.11.2. Relationship between the dynamics of bride price and the human frame

The links between bride price and the human environment is summarized in culture. Culture being that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of the society (Tylor 1958)

Geertz (1973:89) himself provides a cognitive definition of Culture as:

"...A historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life"

Bride price and the Kom Culture hold a strong link. First in the sense that through the changes in its practices, we find three dimensions of Culture; The fact that Culture is dynamic, elastic and material. The way of beliefs of the Kom people are changing as regards bride price perceptions.

**CHAPTER TWO : LITERATURE REVIEW,
DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS AND
THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK**

2.1 Literature Review

This chapter presents previous works done on the concept of bride price and focused on explaining the cultural and anthropological aspects of bride price within the context of the Kom people. This will include discussion of the historical context of bride price among the Kom people. The cultural significance of bride price, social implications, economic aspects and why not the gender perspectives without failing to bring out the gaps and methods employed in these previous works so as to suggest potential avenues for further research that can contribute to cultural Anthropology as a whole. This literature review will also help in the understanding of bride price among the Kom people and it's significance.

2.1.1 Historical context

The world is a very complex one and moving globally around Europe, America down to Africa, we find a variety of cultures and traditions. We discover different people and of course different behaviours or manners of living, of creating solutions to the different problems they face as humans running from basic necessities like food to shelter. Marriage not being left out is also one of these needs as humans and of course the way it is apprehended, considered and practiced is unique and varies according to space. In American for instance, marriage is also carried and practices accompanying them are unique to their culture and way of doing things. Since one cannot talk about marriage without the concept of payments commonly known as bride price in Africa, which of course is the bone of contention of our study. This part of our literature will give us an idea of how historically payments made in the context of marriage or with marriage in view has evolved globally. In most cultures of the united states' and much of the western world, it is the bride's family who pays a dowry to the groom's family. The idea behind this is that since the groom is taking the bride away, the bride's family will have one less person to support from Haper's Bazaar Magazine" .. tradition states that the father of the bride is responsible for paying the expenses of the wedding...''.

From antiquity till present times , payments that are done between marriages have always been done . These payments sometimes affect the distribution of wealth in a particular society. In accordance to our study which is to understand what bride price is , to the Kom people, what it represents without leaving out the changes that have been experienced overtime, this part of our literature review seeks to answer that in a more historical global context spinning through local contexts just in a bit to apprehend in a better way.

Studies indicate that Bride price has been an integral part of the Kom culture for centuries (Axhah, 2015, Talla,2017). It is believed that the practice predates the colonial era and has undergone transformations overtime. Early historical records suggest that bride price served as a means to establish marital alliances, maintain social cohesion and regulate marriages within the Kom society (Talla 2017). The historical context of bride price provides valuable insights into the cultural and social dynamics of the Kom people.

Bride price carries deep cultural meaning within the Kom community. It is often considered a symbol of respect, appreciation, recognition of the bride's value (Achah, 2015). The payment is seen as a demonstration of the groom's commitment and ability to provide for his future wife and potential children (Talla,2017).

Furthermore, bride price is intertwined with notions of honour, social status and family reputation (Achah, 2015). The practice of bride price has significant societal implications within the Kom community. It establishes social and economic ties between families and kinship groups (Achah, 2015). The negotiation and payment of bride price often involved elaborate rituals and ceremonies, reinforcing social bonds and community cohesion (Talla, 2017). However some scholars have also highlighted potential negative consequences such as the communication of women and the perpetuation of gender inequalities (Talla,2017).

The existing literature on the historical context of bride price among the Kom people primarily relies on ethnographic and historical documents together with archival sources . This study seeks to explore on a deeper level using anthropological methods like interviews, observation and others so as to explore more of the oral traditions and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the practice.

Ember(1971) explores marriage forms and payments among the Kom people shedding light on the historical development of bride price in the community.

Collier Jane F. 1975 explores the thoughts of women in Manggarai, found in Indonesia and the concept of bride price as a symbol for women. She uses a qualitative approach whereby she interviews forty women bith married and unmarried. The study therefore argues that bride price as as a sign of respect for women is merely a social imagination. This study also shows how education has changed the status of women thereby enabling them to become independent.

Our present study will make use of qualitative methods as well but will emphasize on the factors that has Ked to a dynamism in the perception or representation of bride price among

the Kom people. Similarly to how education changed the status of Indonesian women. This study will see how this in turn affects bride price among the Kom people

Éducation already being a factor of historical evolution has shown itself to be an influence to this perception of bride price and status in Indonesia, the present study among the Kom people will tell more.

Jack Goody in his paper carries out a study among the Indo-European cultural groups and through out history, significant amounts of wealth have been exchanged as part of marriage settlements. His results indicate that dowry is more likely to have been an ancestral practice. In our context we will be diving into bride price and how the dynamism has come about.

Bronislaw Malinowski in a debate focuses on the gift exchange in terms of bride price during marriage among the people of East Africa whereby the gift to the father-in-law represents more than a payment to the father for the loss of the economic supply of his daughter. The gift here symbolises a social means of regularizing a relationship between a man and a woman who by union involves almost two clans. The recipients of the gift distributed among the relatives at the time of marriage become more than ever responsible in maintaining the stability of the marriage. This present study is not primarily focus on the gifts or marriage payments but on the symbol and how it's whole concept has changed over time

Schneider David examines the role of the bride price on the state of marriage among the Sagara of Northiof Ghana. The study reveled the role of families as part of the bride price payment and these have a play positively in the stability of the marriage. The type and amount of items used for bride price have so much cultural significance that even factors like formal education and modernity has failed to completely change this practice among the people, thus an epainogamous people with norms leading to marital stability. However the limitation in this work is that ,it doesn't really show whether bride price payment being a stabilising factor for marriage is stability indeed as stability does not necessarily mean happiness and contentment which of course our present study will bring out in the sense that individual representation of bride price will be studied from the married people's angle in terms of happiness and contentment .

Gluckman does a revised consideration of bride price and dowry.Marriage payments viewed as status symbols is shaped by cultural principles of stratification. Historically bride price is seen to increase by five is to one times in a decade as measured by the increase in maximum price per annum as compared to a corresponding increase in income.

Boserup Esther studies the relationship between multiple marriage payments and the well-being of the wife in her household. In Sénégal marriage payments are pervasive and according to the data obtained , 85% of marriages that occurred between 1996 and 2006 involved a bride price. While the bride price is the most systematic marriage payment, other transfers between parties are also commonly observed.

Stanley Tambiah does a contemporary study of marriage payments and in the course of his discussion he sets forth analytical conceptions of wealth and consumption. However his presentation amplifies this confusion that arises as the level of commoner discourse.

Maurice Bloch presents a problem where respective status of affines should be equal. From the study she did , marriage ceremonies are examined as an example of the way this opposition is handled. We find less variation between systems as regards the relative status of affines that has normally been thought.

Duran Bell does a comparative reconsideration of bride price beginning with the characterisation of various forms of wealth holding corporate groups such as lineages and other configurations of kin and consumption oriented corporate groups such as households and hunting bands. He further shows how bride price establishes alliance and it is more likely to get this property when animal stock is the means of payment . In India prior to the modern period, the Brahma rites constituted the esteemed practice involving the offering of a wealth – endowed virgin as a gift to a structurally superior groom.

Evans Pritchard provided a classic ethnographic perspective while not specific to the Kom people in the historical view, it offers foundational insights into kinship and marriage practices among African societies contributing to a broader understanding of cultural norms.

Feminist scholars criticize how bride price can undermine women's status and autonomy by treating them as a commodity that can be bought and sold (Brown,1971; Ngwena,2010). Anthropological field studies show that in some contexts, high bride price lead to viewing women as property objects over which men have control (Sthrathern,1972;Hafkin and Bay,1976) . By linking a bride's sexuality and fertility to payment bride price can limit women's rights and choices regarding marriage, reproduction and divorce (Leach,2003).

Scholars trace the origins of bride price to pre modern times when it is served important social and economic functions in many societies. In agrarian societies where land and labor

were valuable assets bride price recognized women's economic contribution through work and child bearing (Schneider,1984).

There is ongoing debate about whether or not bride price customs should be reformed or abolished given their potential negative effects on women . Those defending tradition argue foreign models of marriage are inappropriate and that reform must consider indigenous values (Mgom Belo, 2007, Lwamafa, 1989). Feminists legal theorists propose strategies like placing payments in trust for the bride or restriction amounts to symbolic exchanges as compromises to address gender biases (Humphries 1997, Sizwe,2012)

Economic modernization, urbanisation, éducation and involvement of women's organisations have contributed to the gradual decline or reform of commercial bride price in many areas (Did a et Al 2014, Ogunsiyi 2017)

2.1.2 Cultural significance of bride price

Bride price holds immense cultural significance among the Kom people in the Northwest region of Cmr. It is considered as a fundamental aspect of marriage and viewed as a demonstration of respect , appreciation and recognition of the value of the bride (Achah, 2015; Talla,2016). The payment of bride price signifies the groom's commitment to providing for his future wife and potential kids (Talla,2017).

The negotiation and payment of bride price among the Kom people involve elaborate rituals and practices that reinforce social bonds and community cohesion (Talla,2017) . These rituals often include public ceremonies, exchange of gifts and the involvement of community members (Achah,2015). The process of bride price negotiation is seen as an opportunity for families to come together showcase their cultural heritage and strengthen social relationships .

The practice of bride price among the Kom people is intertwined with gender dynamics. It influences the social roles and status of both men and women within the community (Achah,2015). The payment of bride price is often associated with notions of honor and pride for the bride's family while it places an obligation on the groom's family to fulfill their financial responsibilities (Talla,2017). However some of the scholars have also highlighted potential negative consequences such as the commodification of women and perpetuation of gender inequalities. Bride price plays a significant role in maintaining social cohesion and reinforcing the cultural identity of the Kom people . It is deeply rooted in their traditions, customs and historical practices. The payment and acceptance of bride price create a sense of belonging and acceptance within the community, contributing to the preservation of cultural and social norms

. Existing research has predominantly rested on the fact that bride price reinforces the cultural identity of the Kom people but has failed to understand that these practices are gradually losing their value due to several factors like modernization, status, education. This study will explore those areas and thus help us better know how to retrace our practices so that they go back to being very rooted like they used to be and consequently maintaining our social cohesion.

A research paper from the international institute of social studies(ISS) in Uganda examines, the changing dynamics ,trends and perceptions in the bridewealth custom in Uganda and the implications. This study focuses on how masculinity/ femininity shape the experiences of bridewealth based on a set of interrelated conceptions.

The study , Dynamics of bridewealth among the Kom people asks to understand the 21st century perceptions of the Kom people as concern bridewealth, the changes in the perceptions of bridewealth among the Kom people with bridewealth among the Kom people with the coming of education and modernization.

John U.OGBU discussed two related phenomena in their paper that is, the functions of African bridewealth and the relation of bridewealth payment to the status of women. These functions are; the legitimization of marriage, conferring of conjugal rights, keeping the marriage stable, compensation.

This present study is not interested in the functions of bridewealth nor its relation to the status of women but on the dynamics of bridewealth and within the Kom cultural setting . That is, the changes in the perceptions of bridewealth among the Kom people.

The IOSR journal of humanities and social science in their article focused in the effects of high bridewealth on marital stability. They hold that in the past, tradition of bridewealth was believed to have operated beneficially to give formal recognition to marriages and protect wives against abuse, stabilize partnership and to join the two families together. Today however, the practice appears to have become commercialized and to have lost much of its traditional value in many instances. Bridewealth van now appear to be buying off a wife as a commodity which results to abuse of women. If she does not fulfill her value. Alupo have cited instances where bridewealth has been paid but it has sometimes been seen as the basis for the claim that women are exchanged for goods as if they were commodities, normally there is bargaining between the parties concerned.

This study on it's own angle seeks to focus on the dynamics or changes of bridewealth within the Kom cultural sphere. This means that there could or are dynamics of bridewealth experienced around the world and which consequently leads to the focus of the above journal

which is the effects that come from or as a result of the dynamics of bridewealth but our focus is on the Kom community and their perceptions of today as regards bridewealth. The changes that have taken place.

According to Hague, Tharia and Turner, bridewealth is widely practiced and used as the basis to validate customary marriages in African countries. It is paid by the groom's family to the bride's family and it acts as a contract between the two families. They further admit that recently, due to modernization and westernization, other new and 'modern' gifts like; land titles, electronics, furniture, cars and other items have been introduced into the process alongside the so called 'traditional items', however these new and modern products- the 'modern' way of paying bridewealth has in some cases led to bridewealth being seen as a showy affair that has resulted in the payment of 'astronomical' amounts (moore,2013).

The present study seeks to understand the changes that have occurred bridewealthwise in the Kom community, the perceptions and beliefs that those people hold as regards bridewealth and of course know how these perceptions are gradually tilting or have tilted to something different.

In the journal of Anthropological and related Sciences article 1, their study says, in the preclinical, traditional context that has not been severely disturbed by commodity relations, African bridewealth was typically not open to negotiation. It was established by custom or chiefly edict. As such it can be presumed that many if not all transactions in bridewealth have involved less than might have been offered in a competitive context, unlike the unregulated levels of bridewealth of India, China and the middle East. Hence in order to secure a bride, a group would have to exploit friendship relations or similar personal characteristics in order to be advantaged relative to other groups that are willing to offer the same amount of cattle.

SAGE Journals published an article where the research done is on bridewealth but the focus is on the effects of bridewealth on norms constraining women's reproductive autonomy argue that bridewealth compensate a woman's family for the loss of her reproductive and domestic labour but compensating the woman's reproductive services. They say that when a man has paid the full bridewealth, he gains control over the woman's reproduction. Her attempts to take autonomous action will therefore be subject to social disapproval.

This study is rather focused on the dynamics of bridewealth and has nothing to do with the effects it plays whether on marriage stability or women's reproductive autonomy. It just seeks to know how the perceptions of bridewealth has or is changing in the Kom cultural sphere.

Ogoma Daniel Egun in his journal, focuses on the Yoruba marriage traditional system though references are made to other societies in Africa. He says that a man does not know when he is ripe for marriage in life. It is the parents after close observation of some fundamental changes in their son that would determine when it is time to marry. He essentially wants to bring out the link between well ordered societies and stable families. Of course families can only be spring up from marriages. That is why he takes the case of Yoruba marriage and describes how it is done to link it to the fact that it used to produce stable families and ordered societies. His problem lies at the level of changes that have occurred around the foundation, motive and nature of marriage which has led to instability in families and consequently unordered societies. He adopts a philosophical method throughout his reflection.

The focus of my study is around bridewealth and its dynamics among the Kom people. It is obvious that the issue of bridewealth cannot have meaning if it is done outside the context of marriage. I mean bridewealth happens only in the context of marriage and so I seek to understand what marriage is all about to a Kom person, the place of bridewealth and of course the changes that have happened around the perception of bridewealth and the context in which it finds meaning which is marriage. The method to be used though is an Anthropological one contrary to the philosophical one from Ogoma Egun.

Denis Odinga Okiya in his thesis in philosophy does a study on the "Centrality of marriage in African religions culture with reference to the Masaai of Kajiado Country, Kenya. He explored Maasai religious cultural beliefs, the place of marriage in Maasai cultural and religious beliefs to what extent Maasai cultural and religious beliefs are related to and manifested in Maasai marriage and the changes affecting Maasai marriage with regard to the religious cultural themes.

This present study is similar to the work done by Denis Odinga Okiya in the sense that it seeks to examine the dynamics of bridewealth among the Kom people and this cannot be achieved without taking into consideration the cultural beliefs of the Kom people as far as marriage is concerned, the place of marriage in the Kom cultural and religious beliefs because this knowledge will lead us to actually understand the place of bridewealth as well and consequently the dynamics or changes that are happening around bridewealth. It differs in the sense that it is a philosophical study while this study is an Anthropological one.

Goody does a sort of comparison between Brideprice and Dowry. He puts that, both Brideprice and Dowry involve the transmission of property at marriage. Whatever 'symbolic' aspects Mark's these transfers, they also have their economic functions not primarily as intermediaries in a purchase but as ways of redistributing property. Hence they must always be

seen in the context of the wider movement of property and exploitation. He further adds that the term Brideprice has been over used to cover a set of transactions each of which has very different implications for social structure. He takes an example but Comparing the ‘marriage payments ‘ among the Lowiili and the Gonja of Northern Ghana. The Gonja payment consists of a minimal amount t of 12 shillings and 12 kola. It is small by any standards though it is supplemented by courting and greeting gifts to the future bride and to ge parenrs; nowadays, the expenses of the wedding itself has increased considerably among the ‘lowiili’ the transactions flow in the same direction; there is payment of 350 dowries which is said to be all that is needed to legalise the union. In addition, payments amounting to some 3 cows, 1 goat and 20,000 cowrie shells should be made during the lifetime of the marriage. Among the Gonja the transactions are non returnable in the case of dovrice; among the lowiili ,all are returnable.

Thus work is somewhat aligned to the present study as the nature, payment and dynamics of Brideprice will be examined too and this could help to further compare and appreciate the differences in the various cultures. This present study does not aim at Comparing but at bringing to the limelight, marriage in Kom, which is the only context in which Brideprice is practiced, examine the payment and of course the dynamics of this concept among the Kom people.

Stephen Adjei in an Article titled “ How Brideprice reinforces negative stereotypes: A Ghanaian case study” talks on how Ghanaian society has undergone major changes to its cultural practices over the past years in the aspect of Brideprice. Brideprice was not negotiable. The groom and his family usually decided on what and how much to pay. This would be voluntarily and willingly paid to the family of the bride but times have changed and it has become a more individual practice and given more drastic evolution is the involvement of cash and bargaining.

This is similar to this present study as we will be looking at Brideprice and the changes that have occurred in this aspect but the difference is that it will be done in the Kom community.

Linguere Mously Mbaye and Natasha Wagner in an Article, “ Brideprice and fertility decisions: case study , rural senegal". In this paper, the provide evidence about the relationship between Brideprice payments and fertility decisions in Senegal. Higher Brideprice payments reduces the fertility pressure for women with results being robust to confounding socio-economic and contextual factors. The fertility reducing impact is greater for women who are economically dependent on their husbands. In polygamous households and for arranged marriages, a lower Brideprice increases fertility pressure while in monogamous households and for non arranged marriages, the Brideprice does not affect fertility.

In this present study we are not looking at the relationship Brideprice has with fertility decisions but rather , the representation of Brideprice in Kom, the payment and the changes that can be observed as of today.

The report by Wendo (Feb 28, p 716) blamed bride price for the spread of AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa. It also cites bride price as an important factor in polygamy. However, the contribution of bride price to these problems is minuscule. Traditionally, payment of the bride price by the groom was a demonstration that he had come of age and had the means and capability to support himself and his wife. Acceptance of the bride price signifies the families' support and blessing of the union. Rejection or non-acceptance of the bride price meant non-acceptance of the marriage proposal. Payment and acceptance of the bride price, whatever the currency used, seals the traditional marriage ceremony and authenticates the union between the man and woman.

This report is similar to what happens in the Kom society as acceptance of Brideprice signifies the support and blessings of the union, payment and acceptance of Brideprice seals the traditional marriage but the blame on Brideprice for the spread of AIDS is not the focus of this study. Rather we will look at the changes that have come about in terms of traditional marriage itself, payment of Brideprice with the coming of modernization.

Nava Ashraf, in the article “ Brideprice and the returns to education for women” examines how traditional cultural practices can play an important role in development but can also inspire condemnation. The custom of Brideprice prevalent throughout sub-saharan Africa and in parts of Asia as a payment of the groom to the family of the bride. The paper shows a surprising economic consequence of this practice. They revisit one of the test studied historical development projects, the INPRES school construction program in Indonesia and shows that previously found small effects on female enrollment mask heterogeneity by Brideprice tradition. Ethnic groups that traditionally engage in Brideprice at marriage increased female enrollment in response to the program. Within these ethnic groups, higher female education at marriage is associated with a higher Brideprice received providing a greater incentive for parents to invest in girl's education.

This present study does not intend to show the economic consequence of Brideprice and how ethnic groups which practice Brideprice are highly in response to programs concerning girl's education but rather how Brideprice is being represented in Kom, how modernism with education has brought about change in the aspect of Brideprice.

Siwan Anderson , in studying why Dowry payments declined with modernization in Europe but are rising in India, explained the difference between these two experiences by focusing on the role played by Caste and non-Caste based societies; In the former, there exist

an inherited component to status that is independent of wealth and in the latter, wealth is the primary determinant of status. Modernization is assumed to involve two components. Increasing average wealth and increasing wealth dispersion within the status (or caste) groups. The paper shows that ,in caste based societies, that increase in wealth dispersion lead to increase in Dowry payments whereas in non-caste- based societies, increased dispersion has no real effect on Dowry payments and increased average wealth cause the payments to decline.

This study will examine the representation of Brideprice in Kom, the payment and the changes in Brideprice as of today which is entirely different from the above study.

Andrew Cherlin , studies the variation marriage patterns in Central Thailand. To do that, data were collected in 1978 and 1979 from every married women aged 15-44 in three settings. Three forms of Entry into marriage were identified; Ceremonial marriage with Parental involvement in the choice of spouse, ceremonial marriage with self choice of spouse and non ceremonial marriage. In general, a family background of higher socio-economic status led to a greater parental involvement in spouse choice. Women with more education were also more likely to marry with ceremony but higher education for daughters was associated with less parental involvement in spouse choice.

Our present study focuses on bride price in the Kom society, which of course is the context in which Brideprice is practiced, the representation of Brideprice in Kom, the payment and the changes that have affected this Brideprice with result to modernization.

Vijatendra Rao in the Article “ The rising price of husbands: A hedonic analysis of Dowry increases in rural india" attempts to investigate the reasons behind this increase. It adapts Rosen’s implicit market model to the Indian marriage market and tests predictions from the model with data from six villages in south Central India and from the Indian Census. It is found that a “ marriage squeeze" caused by population growth, resulting in larger younger cohorts and hence a surplus of women in the marriage market has played a significant role in the rise of Brideprice.

This study is actually part of the present study as we will be looking at the dynamics of Brideprice in the Kom society which will certainly incorporate the increase in Brideprice but will differ in the sense that , it will go a little further to other aspects like the traditional marriage itself, how Brideprice brings about conflict, gender problems.

David k.Semenya in an article titled “ The practical guidelines on the impact of Mahadi (Brideprice) on the young Basotho couples prior to marriage “ , investigates and provides guidelines to the negative impacts of mahadi on the Basotho youth before they marry. It is important to note that marriage is one of the main parts of the lifecycle amongst the Basotho

and not only joins a man and a woman together , but is also considered to unite the members of the respective families of the married couple into one family. Semenya states that the Loyola negotiators of both the wife and the husband are called bommaditsela. The impacts are tied to the mentioned who wished to honour marriage did not because of high Brideprice that they might be unable to pay before marrying their loved ones. Semenya really takes time to examine the impacts of Brideprice on the youths of mahadi of which one of them is , discouragement due to costly Brideprice.

This study does not seek to focus on the impact of Brideprice or high Brideprice but on its dynamics overtime and possibly the causes of its changes.

John A. Content April 2016, talks on Dowry and Brideprice, how the practices dates back to centuries of human existence as a way of meeting the requirements of marriage. Dowry and Brideprice are two forms of Alliance building exchanges between couples and families. The exchange or transfer of goods and services signifies a form of contract between and among groups of people with a negotiated interest. He further says the implications for Brideprice practices span across historical, economic, public health, mental health advocacy and diversity.

Our study seeks to focus on the dynamics of Brideprice in Kom, the representation of this Brideprice among the people , the payment and of course to an extent how this Brideprice could bring about conflict and how it is linked to gender.

Laura Fortunato, Clare Holden observe that ,significant amounts of wealth have been exchanged as part of marriage settlements throughout history. Although various models have been proposed for interpreting these practices, their development over time has not been investigated systematically . In that paper they used a Bayesian MCMC phylogenetic comparative approach to reconstruct the evolution of two forms of wealth transfers at marriage, dowry and Brideprice 51 into European cultural groups . Results indicated that Dowry is more likely to have been the ancestral practice and that a minimum of four changes to bridewealth is necessary to explain the observed distribution of the two states across the cultural groups.

This study does not focus on the transition from Brideprice to Dowry and how it goes about but on the dynamics of Brideprice, its representation, payment among the Kom people of the Northwest region of Cameroon.

Bell, Duran in his paper on "marriage payments" criticizes a well known book by Jack Goody and Stanley Tambiah, Bridewealth and Dowry. Given the general acceptance of Goody's framework in contemporary studies of marriage and marriage payments. It is essential that we refer to this framework as we advance new theoretical concepts of marriage related socioeconomic processes. As some reviews of this paper have observed , This critique is

certainly overdue. In the course of the discussion he set forth analytical conceptions of wealth and consumption goods that we find to be fundamental to an understanding of marriage payments and other economic processes; and he provided consistent criteria for studying the cross cultural incidence of payment, gifts, bequests and inheritance that are often associated with marriage. Unfortunately the Goody Tambiah presentation amplifies this confusion in the interest of an ethnocentric evolutionary scheme. In the context of the study of marriage payments in China, Goody's construction of the 'Indirect dowry' is particularly unfortunate.

This present study is not interested in the discourse of Brideprice and Dowry, how dowry is transferred to the position of bridewealth and used indirectly by the bride's parents to help their sons get a wife, hence the concept, "Indirect dowry". This study rather focuses on the dynamics of Brideprice, how it could lead to conflicts and possibly the link it has with gender, the representation in the Kom community and how the payment is done.

In a journal on, "Court warns against high Brideprices" by Sarah Temboh. As Brideprice continue to rise in Zambia, Lusaka local court magistrate, Daniel Phiri has warned that it is inappropriate for people to ask for huge amounts of money in exchange for their daughters. Magistrate Phiri said it was wrong for parents to ask for exorbitant amounts as Loyola (Brideprice) and compensation for damages after their daughters were impregnated.

This study is focused on the changes in the concept of Brideprice in Kom and one of these changes could be linked to high Brideprice due to modernism that brought about education. So, the study will bring to awareness what exactly is happening with Brideprice in Kom, the causes of these changes so that it won't go worse to the case presented in the journal above where the court will have to step in to remedy. I believe this study will make people know about the state of Brideprice in Kom, the changes around it and possibly correct them before they grow worse.

Borgerhoff Mulder talks on the economic approaches to the study of Brideprice, how it provides many insights into the form, content and meaning of these transactions. (Gray 1960, Schneider, Singer, Laughlin 1974, Spiro 1973) For instance, describe the market range of East African Societies, showing amongst other things that regional variations reflect the availability of livestock that high Brideprice values characterise polygamous systems in which women are scarce and that variability in payments results from the groom's ability to pay and the bride's desirability.

This study does not seek to describe the market influences on Brideprice payments but on the dynamics of Brideprice in Kom, the representation of Brideprice, how the payment is being done and of course how Brideprice is linked to marriage, conflict and gender.

Sudeshna Maitra studies population dynamics and marriage payments. She analyses the long run Equilibrium in India. In the course of this, she tries to answer the question on why scarce Indian women pay Dowry to scarce grooms even as the sex-ratio of offspring is mainly parents. She developed a dynamic general equilibrium model of demographic and marriage market outcomes with endogenous gender preference. Under a calibration of parameters suggested by Indian marriage market indicators any long run steady state equilibrium must have both Dowry and a masculine sex ratio. The key assumption that generates this result is the asymmetric marital preferences of men and women regarding own and spouse's ideal age of marriage. In this paper, she puts that men and women are identical in every respect except for their preferences regarding age of marriage, thus women prefer to marry young and prefer to marry older grooms, men prefer to marry when older and prefer younger brides. Both face high social cost of being unable to find a partner in their lifetime. In the model she presents, expected dowry payments lead to son preference, so parents do indeed choose more sons than daughters. This occurs because the excess of young boys relative to young girls that are produced in every period do not enter the marriage market immediately. By the time these boys do enter the market, there is a fresh generation of young girls that appear in the marriage market in addition to the unmatched women from the previous generation. She concludes by saying that marital preferences are identical for men and women. There remain no incentives for choosing more sons or daughters hence sex ratios are as great as exogenous in this scenario.

In this study, we will be looking at Brideprice in the Kom society. How it is represented, the payment and the areas of change that can be observed from it. I don't think African has reached the stage where women pay dowries to get grooms but we can admit that there have been some changes at the level of how things are done in that context of marriage and Brideprice payments. That is why this study seeks to study these changes in Brideprice, how payment is done and the link it could have with gender and conflict.

Michael W. Yarbrough forms one of the major structural contexts within which family lives play out, yet the precise dynamics concerning these two foundational institutions are still poorly understood. This article attempts to help bridge this gap by applying sociological concepts to empirical findings about state law's role in family and especially in marriage, drawn from across several decades and disciplines of South African scholarly research.

Darker Obaida Nasrin examines the factors affecting early marriage and early conception of women in the city of Bangladesh. The study has tried to delineate the issues across different socio-economic conditions of the respondents. The study also revealed that education, family's monthly income, religion are the most influential factors in determining

the likelihood of early age at marriage and conception as well. His intention has tried to raise awareness of the situation and where necessary to stimulate action.

Thus study does not seek to look at the factors affecting marriage but to look at marriage in the Kom cultural sphere, understand how it is done, look at Brideprice, how it is represented, what constitutes in the payment and the changes that have happened as far as Brideprice in Kom is concerned.

Dominique Meekers, demonstrates the use of multiple indicators of union formation to study marriage customs in African societies while previous studies of African marriage generally provide information only on the type of union as self reported, this study uses information from the 1980 to 1981 Cote d'ivoire fertility survey to develop a more detailed typology of events in the union formation process.

While Dominique is focused on union formation to study marriages, this study is interested in the dynamics of Brideprice which of course is in the context of marriage in the Kom society. It seeks to understand how Brideprice is represented, the payment and market multiple indicators to study marriage customs as Dominique

2.1.3 Social implication of bride price

The practice of bride price influences social dynamics and power relationship within the Kom community. It establishes social and economic ties between families, reinforcing kinship connections and creating networks of support (Achah,2015). The negotiation and payment of bride price often involve the participation of community members and elders who play a role in mediating and ensuring the fulfillment of obligations (Talla,2017). These dynamics contribute to the maintenance of social order and hierachy within the community.

Bride price influences family relationship and social status within the Kom society. The payment and acceptance of bride price are seen as significant events that shape family interactions and dynamics (Achah,2015). For the bride's family the receipt of bride price enhances their reputation and social standing as it signifies the value and desirability of the daughter. On the other hand, the groom's family is expected to fulfill their financial obligations which can impact their social and economic status within the community. This existing literature is quite similar to our present study in the sense that we cannot talk about bride price in the Kom society without including how it is related to gender and social status buy our difference lies on the fact that we are sliding towards how this same social status in turn influences a dynamism in the concept of bride price. However, there is a need for further

research to explore the diverse perspectives within the community and to understand how bride price intersects with other factors such as education, globalization and changing cultural attitudes. This present study goes in that direction and so will be very beneficial.

Bride price can also influence the social status of women and their families. Failure to meet certain expectations regarding the bride price may lead to social stigma and affect the reputation of both the bride and her family (Miller, 2019)

In some regions, bride price has legal ramifications. Questions arise about whether it should be recognized legally and to what extent it may infringe on individual rights, particularly those of women (Taylor, 2016).

The social implications of bride price are complex and multifaceted. This literature review highlights the need for a nuanced understanding of this cultural practice, considering its historical context, gender dynamics, economic factors, social status, and the evolving nature of contemporary societies.

2.2 Theoretical framework

In our study, we used the Anthropological theories of functionalism and cultural interpretative theory. A theory is defined as an intellectual method that gives sense to a group of facts . Mardi (1957; 164) expressed the importance of the theories by saying: “Facts come to mean something only as ascertained and organized in the frame of a theory “. Indeed, facts from this study, have no existence as part of the scientific knowledge outside such a frame. Henriksen(1970; 1) described theory as a coherent set of hypothetical conceptual and pragmatic principles forming the general framework of reference for a field of inquiry. We examined the functional theory which describes traditional marriage in Kom, the role of Brideprice and cultural dynamism to better understand the dynamics of Brideprice in Kom.

2.3 Functionalism

To understand a cultural phenomenon in our research, we will use the functionalism theory. Functionalism was developed by Bronislaw Malinowski (1881-1955). According to Malinowski, cultures provide various means for satisfying societal needs as he demonstrates in the study of the kula ring among the Argonauts of the Western pacific. He further adds that “no matter how bizarre a cultural element might appear , it has a meaning and perform some useful function for the individual or society" meaning there is no functionless trait in a culture. This is reflected in our work because the practice and rites performed in the traditional marriage in Kom has sociocultural roles.

Radcliffe Brown is recognized as a structural functionalism. His most prominent work was based on the Andaman Islands situated in south eastern Asia. He conducted his ethnographic study among the Andaman Islanders from 1906 to 1908. Before him, a British Government E.H Man also worked on this people. Radcliffe Brown focused on the issue of how the society has various institutions like economic, social, political and religious. These institutions are there to maintain the society as a system.

Despite these differences, these two authors still share the notion of universal function which holds that every aspect of a culture has a function within the total system. The first aspect is functional unity, which means that a culture is an integrated whole comprising a number of inter-related elements. Therefore no element of a culture functions in isolation. They are interconnected to one another such that if one is removed, that culture is empty. For instance, if rites are extinct in the culture, some societal institutions could be affected. This goes in line with our work because of marriage rituals and practices are not performed, it can lead to infertility, unstable marriages and family troubles

We choose functionalism in our study because we aim at investigating the role and significance of Brideprice and traditional marriage according to the Kom people. This significance cannot be felt without functions. Therefore these practices has many functions which include protection, healing, reproduction.

2.3.1 Function of protection

The practice of running abih on the bride's body. This consists of a powder called abih which is mixed with palm oil and then applied on the whole body of the Wilum(bride). This mixture applied on women about to get married is a sign of benediction sending away bad spirits and bad luck of infertility. To facilitate childbirth of the woman in marriage.

2.3.2 Function of honour and blessings

Another practice during ndowie (traditional marriage) in Kom, is at the level of the soap which is used to bathe the Wilum (bride) after the abih has been applied on her body. This soap is usually taken by the niece to the bride's father. It has a lot of significance in the sense that, no other person has the right to take this soap except this niece in question. This soap is like a way of honour and source of blessings too.

2.4 Cultural interpretative theory

This theory was propounded by Clifford Geertz and further developed by Byron Good 1994 and Arthur Kleinman(1998). According to Byron Good, culture is a tool used to interpret

people's attitudes, actions, perceptions and concepts. Thus, culture influence the way people perceive their world. This implies that, to understand marriage in Kom and the dynamics of Brideprice, one has to digest of all understand their culture. So through the Kom cultural belief, one can clearly understand the concept of Brideprice in Kom traditional marriage as well as the changes observed.

These theories are pertinent to our study as they facilitate our understanding of perceptions, concepts, ideas and beliefs as far as marriage is concerned in Kom.

2.5 Originality of this work

Through this present work, we hope to present a scientific document on the dynamics of Brideprice among the Kom people in the Northwest region of Cameroon . A lot of detailed study has not been carried out on Brideprice in Kom and so we think of bringing a modest contribution to Cultural Anthropology in the domain of Brideprice.

The object of the study consist of the Dynamics of Brideprice among the Kom people. This consists of the representation of bride price, to understand the payment and what it is all about, and to show the dynamics of this bride price in the Kom community overtime.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

Every serious research must comprise of the conceptual definition in order to clarify the theme of research. The definition of concepts is important for every research as they help to clarify the terms found in the topic and hence avoid misinterpretation.

Dynamics

The pattern of change or growth of an object or phenomenon personality

2.6.1 Bride price

A sum of money or quantity of goods given to a bride's family by that of the groom in some tribal situations.

In other words, Brideprice is when the family of the groom pay their future in laws at the start of their marriage. The payment can be made up of money, presents or a mixture of both and can be paid at once or in installments.¹

To Merriam Webster, Brideprice is a payment given by pr on behalf of a prospective husband to the bride's family in culture.

Sara Lowes Nunn says it's a payment from the groom to the bride's family at the time of marriage.

According to Kottack 1994, Brideprice is a physical symbol of the marriage contract that had been entered into by the two parties.

Wireland (2004), according to him a wife felt valued by a husband who paid Brideprice for her as this demonstrated that he was capable of caring and supporting her.

2.6.2 Traditional marriage. /ndowie/ & Nchawi.

This research is going to be talking about Bride price and thus cannot be done in isolation. That is why the description of how traditional marriage is done in Kom comes in. In Kom it is known as the Ndowie. It can be defined as a union between two persons not having the same sex. The phenomenon of same sex (homosexuality) is strange in the Kom society. It may be necessary to emphasize that marriage in Kom is more of a union between two families and not just two individuals.

2.6.2.1 Nchawi

When the parents of the girl are satisfied with the payment of the ndowi, the man can now proceed to ncha'wi, which is the final stage of brideprice. The requirements are; Oil, meat, clothes... of this stage are enormous and most persons often find it difficult attaining that level, but when you fail to attain this level, you shall not have the right to impose it on the suitors of your children. This implies that the mother of your wife will request for ncha'wi from you only if her husband paid it in her.

2.6.3 Perception

Perception refers to the ability to see, hear or become aware of something through the senses.

In other words, it is the way in which something is regarded, understood or interpreted.

It is the organization, identification and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand the presented information or environment.

According to Britannica Dictionary, perception is the way you think about or understand someone or something.

According to Collins English Dictionary, it is the act or faculty of apprehending by the means of the senses or the mind, cognition, understanding.

According to Macmillan Dictionary, perception is the way of understanding or thinking about something, ability to notice something, ability to understand.

According to Desiderato (as quoted by Huda), perception is an experience about an object, an event that has already happened and even what is happening. Perception can also be interpreted as a process about various things that are highly relevant senses or past experiences that aim to provide a structured picture and also have meaning in certain situations.

2.6.4 Representation

Representation can be defined as the description or portrayal of someone or something in a particular way.

According to Cambridge Dictionary, it is the way that someone or something is shown or described.

According to Dictionnaire francais Larousse , it is the act of rendering something sensitive through a figure, a symbol , or a sign. Example writing is a representation of spoken language.

2.6.5 Payment

The action or process of paying someone or something or of being paid.

Payment is the voluntary transfer of money, equivalent or other valuable items from one person to another in exchange for goods and services.

The act of giving money for something or something that is given to someone in exchange for something else.

2.6.6 Kom people

The Kom people are a people from an ethnic group located in Boyo division of the Northwest region of the Republic of Cameroon. Is shares boundaries with Mezam Division, Ngokitunjia division, Bum sub division and Menchum division. Her people are predominantly Christians particularly of the Roman Catholic and Baptist denominations. The territory of the Kom fendom is spread over three subdivisions of Boyo; Fundong, NjiniKom and Belo

These administrative subdivisions are carved out of the three valleys (Fundong, NjiniKom and Belo) that make up Kom. Each valley is composed of villages which constitute the regional units of the Kom traditional government. There are about 69 villages in Kom , 27 in Belo valley , 26 in Fundong valley and 16 in NjiniKom valley. Each village has a leader called bonteh.

2.6.7 Education

It is the process of receiving or giving systematic instruction , especially at a school or University.

In other words education is the act or process of imparting or acquiring general knowledge, developing the powers of reasoning and judgement and generally preparing oneself or others intellectually for mature life. It is the result produced by instruction, training or study.

2.6.8 Modernity

It refers to the quality or condition of being modern.

A self definition of a generation about it's own technological innovation, governance and socioeconomic.

It refers to a powerful set of cultural , political , economic and spatial relationship that have fundamentally influenced the nature of social life , the economy and the use and experience of time and space.

Modernity is best grasped as a set of relationships that have been assembled in contextual and situated ways and assumed much of their influence through their capacity to affect change in often divergent and geographically diverse contexts. Modernity is then an enduringly powerful and instrumental force but one that alternates between order and chaos and is built upon a series of contradictions and paradoxes which are perhaps symptomatic of the nature of human transformation itself.

**CHAPTER THREE: REPRESENTATION OF
BRIDEPRICE IN KOM**

The Kom society gives great importance to nuptial union. This section is focused on the representation of Bride price among the Kom people and of course Bride price in Kom cannot be over emphasized of it is not talked about in its context which is traditional marriage (Ndowie). Hence the chapter talks on traditional marriage in the Kom society, how Bride price is represented in terms of their symbol, importance.

3.1 Prelude to bride price payment

The Kom people can distributed according to families (clans). Each individual is a member of a given family (clan) that is, the maternal family. When a man and woman start indicating some concrete signs that could result in marital love, the first reaction of the lady will be to tell the man to come and see her parents. The first reactions of each of their parents is to know the family background of the partner. Background information will include issues as; clan, parents and their social profile. If the aspirants are from the same lineage, investigations go further in order to know the degree of closeness in terms of generation. When there is evidence that the two persons have close blood relations, such a union may not be validated. This is to safeguard against incest which is a taboo in the Kom society. If there is no such evidence, the process will then continue.

3.1.1. Visit from the groom's family

This visit is usually done by just the man's uncle with any other responsible relative while he stays behind. These people go and equally present their interest towards the lady in question. In Kom the expression is usually "we have seen a fresh kola nut in this compound and we have come to beg". The lady's family too will try to investigate in their own capacity to ensure the character quality of the man in question while this visit by the man's family will be repeated a number of times.

When this part is done, a lady too in the man's family sphere from the man's family will equally pay a visit to the lady's family . This is equally to present their interest towards the mother's daughter. This person also plays the role of a middle person who is expected to ; (according to Paul Nkwi in *avi a ngvim*) as such;

On her arrival she has to greet the family of the girl with such dignified and solemnity that will win the favour of her parents before actually revealing the purpose of her visit. She has to use certain fixed expressions that will give the indication that she has come to ask the hand of their daughter in marriage. The middeperson will address the mother of the girl in a low soft tone of voice: "Nini, I have come to beg a kolanut". This simply means seeking the hand of their daughter in marriage.

The mother with the head bowed in deep meditation will listen to these words. The mother after much thought and reflection will request for a second visit. The middleperson can be told to pay a third or even fourth visit when she comes the second time just to test her patience and the young man's love for their daughter. If the girl persist on her willingness to marry the man in question then the opinion of the family members is sought and should any of them give a contrary view with solid reasons, the whole affair has to be suspended for further investigations.

As soon as the girl has accepted to marry the young man, her mother has to send word to the house of the man . This is usually done by sending kolanuts to the man.

The girl's mother must be in total accord with her sisters before any further step could be undertaken. After a genuine agreement of the two parties to be united in the bonds of wedlock, the parents of the girl will ask the man's family to initialise a concrete step in the manifestation of love for their daughter. This manifestation consists on meeting the requirements of Brideprice as indicated by the girl's parents. From the information in this book, we see the importance of family in nuptial union among the Kom people. This is to say that marriage in Kom is not a two individuals thing but two families agreeing to come together through the marriage of their children.

An informant in his own words try to give an image of what happens before bride price payment in Kom which is how seeking a girl's hand in marriage is done and the things that are to be considered before ;

Marriage is something that is not done in a rush, we sit and take our time very well before really considering to marry someone. The real Kom man takes his time to investigate the woman he intends to get married in the aspect of humility, hardworking, cleanliness and all the virtues you can think of. It's not what young boys do nowadays...(frowns) .

Johnson on 12/03/22 in Tinifoinbi

This informant gets quite emotional trying to give a real view of what happens before bride price payment. He emphasises on the fact that it is not done in a hurry. Generally things that are done out of pressure mostly never end well so he lays emphasis on the fact that it is done gradually and carefully as the character of the woman and man are well investigated. This tells how seeking a girl's hand in marriage in a typical Kom way is not a joking matter , it is given much attention showing the hope of a peaceful marriage for every Kom person who seeks to get married.

In Kom, it is believed that the parents marry a wife for their son which shows the importance of families coming together and not just individuals. Another informant had this to say;

“That is why you will see that the man to get married is never at the forefront during the seeking because it is believed that the father marries a wife for his son”.

Nges Alvin, 14/03/22 in Tinifoinbi

Seeking a girl’s hand in marriage in Kom is not a one man’s show, the Kom people value respect and good living in marriage than the price you as a suitor come to pay. That is why the idea of marrying a wife for their son comes to show that they want to do things the right way ,they want to step in and get a good wife for their son. It is generally observed that when a father decides to get something for his son even when the son can actually purchase or do it by himself, it is to show the love this parent has, the importance of the thing to the parent and also the intentions of the parents towards the child. This is exactly what happens in terms of Brideprice in Kom whereby the father goes at, the forefront while the son is acting at the back. Investigating to get more information on seeking the girl’s hand in marriage in Kom, another informant added this;

“A man does not go to seek for a girl’s hand in marriage in Kom by himself and according to the Kom tradition, a father goes to seek for his first son's wife hand in marriage then the rest of his sons he can send his brothers “

Tohnain julius, 17th of March Tinifoinbi

This man is saying that a man does not go seek for a girl’s hand in marriage in Kom by himself before bride price payment because it is believed that the woman to be soke is not just for him,but for the entire family. It shows the extent to which family is very important and to an extent the significance of marriage in Kom which is not an individual issue. The father and his other brothers go before and negotiate the whole process while the man himself stays at the back. In a nutshell it is just to say that a man does not go to negotiate for his wife or woman by himself in Kom but his father especially when he is the first son according to the Kom tradition together with other responsible brothers of his .

3.2. Bride price items and their representations

Bride price in Kom compose of the Afo a Bowain and the Afo INawoin. It is the completion of these two that makes up bride price in Kom. Each of them require items which are to be given. The items for Afo a Bowain (the father's thing) are usually; Cash (money) and some quantity of palm oil. On the mothers side the items are; Palm oil, firewood and meat. These items are requested by the Kom people and each of them have representations.

3.2.1. / Ibiii/ (Kolanut)

Ibii is literally translated in English as kola nut. Bride price is represented amongst the Kom people as ibii. When a potential suitor's family is done with seeking the girl's hand in marriage, the next concrete step involves getting to see the father to the bride so as to give his ibii. This ibii is the part of brideprice received by the father to the bride as an introductory way to say that he has confirmed of the man getting married to his daughter. Ibii is usually a few tins of oil and or some meat. These are the items if the ibii in the context of bride price in Kom and they have their representations.

3.2.2. Representation of tins of oil as an item for ibii

Palm oil is one of or the item that is usually requested by the father as the ibii. It represents the introduction to *Afo a bowain* that is to come later. This palm oil is shared amongst the father to the bride's brothers indicating to them that their daughter is already in someone's hands.

3.2.3. /Ndowi/ items and representation

Traditional marriage in Kom comprise of two stages which are; *Ndowie* and *Nchawi*. *Ndowie* is compulsory while *Nchawi* depends on family.

Ndowie literally means the brides house which signifies the maternal side of the bride which include her mother and sisters together with other female relatives. This occasion takes place in the compound of the bride's father. It used to be done at night only but today even in the day it is done. In a *Ndowi* session, it is expected that the Bride price should embody part of the father and part of the mother. (Nsom Joseph,' Kom culture, customs and tradition' first edition 2015).

Ndowie in Kom is when a suitor comes for a girl's hand in marriage. This usually happens after he must have brought his people to see the girl's parents. This occasion used to start at about 10 PM at night but today it is done during the day. The items for this occasion are

usually prescribed by the mothers to the bride. The items usually include, palm oil, meat, firewood, dresses, and food items. Traditional marriage in Kom begins with the arrival of the groom and his entourage or friends. The items of bride price for Ndowi are given in terms of Palm oil, meat and some specified items.

The oil demanded by the mothers as a Ndowi item is to be used for several things like cooking, mixing of the camwood and also to share amongst the mothers.

3.3. / Nchawi/

When the parents of the girl are satisfied with the payment of the Ndowi, the man can now proceed to nchawi, which is the final stage of bride price. The items required for the Nchawi are similar to Ndowi with the exception that the oil requested for in Nchawi is much more than Ndowi. This is because the main rite performed in this process of bride price is done with oil. The lady soaks her two arms into a bowl of palm oil after which her husband to be leaks for a number of three times. The leaking here represents the oneness between the two of them. The bond that has been created and hence they have entered a life time contract of husband and wife.

Nchawi actually in Kom is what is termed marriage in Kom because it is in this occasion that the society gets to know that there is a man who has come to seek for so and so girl's hand in marriage. The Afo a Bowain which is given goes to Bowi (father of the bride), the Afo a Nawain (mother to the bride) goes to the mother and her fellow sisters. This means that at this level only they are aware that something is actually happening in terms of their daughter going out for marriage and these things especially on the mothers' side goes for the Ndowi. So, the context in which the society, the Kom society actually steps in to know that there is something happening, is at the level of Nchawi. An informant said this to clarify this understanding;

“During ndowi in Kom, the oil brought on the side of the bride's mother is shared only amongst themselves, the mothers of the bride and no stranger interferes but it is during Nchawi that what is brought can be shared amongst those available or present.

Bobé Ngong, on the 17/05/22

This informant ironed out the clear difference that Nchawi in Kom actually brings. He says in the context of traditional marriage; the Bride price is brought to the father of the bride and it is an indication that the father has actually agreed that his daughter will marry the man.

The part that is given to the mother of the bride indicates that the mother and her sisters have welcomed their son in law to the family to have their daughter as his wife. All of these are happening within the family and the Kom society or outside community is not yet aware. It is during Nchawi then that the Kom society comes to the awareness that something is happening in terms of marriage where oil, neat and other items are brought to feed the community and of course sharing of oil is equally done.

3.3.1. Description of Nchawi and significance

The main item used in representing the Nchawi is palm oil. This palm oil is poured into a pan or bowl, after which the bride soaks her two arms in it. After soaking and removing her arms, the husband is expected to leak her hands a number of three times. This act of leaking is also usually described in Kom as “Kaf Nchah” which means leaking of chain. This act symbolizes that you have acknowledged or some sort of entered a chain with your to be wife and the covenant has been more sealed. Some informants in the course of more investigation had this to say;

Look ehnn, the issue of Nchawi is not even common in Kom, since as I have been growing up, I have never experienced nor witnessed a Nchawi so it’s very rare and few people or families give much importance to that.

Promise Mbu, 22/03/22 in Yaounde

This is just to make us know how less common the aspect of Nchawi is, to the Kom people. Even though it actually exists and is a part of the traditional marriage it is not compulsory for most families and most don’t really give much attention to it. To add more flesh to this information, another informant says;

“when your man sees that he has his money he can choose to do Nchawi alongside the Ndowi only of its compulsory in your family but if not, your Ndowi is enough and your good to go my dear... (laughs)

Ntoh Emerancia, 23/03/22 in Tinifoinbi

“Emerancia just adds more strength to the fact that Nchawi which is another part of traditional marriage in Kom is actually existing but is very rare to see it been practiced. That is to tell us that Nchawi is very uncommon among the Kom people in

terms of practice but it doesn't mean it is not done in areas like for example Fundong".

This just points out the aspect of feeding the society when it comes to traditional marriage in Kom. This means that very few engage in this part of Nchawi as they maybe do not have enough to do the needful that Nchawi requires or the family they are marrying into does not oblige that.

3.4. Gender expression in Bride price in Kom

When it comes to gender expression in the aspect of bride price in Kom we see how either the male or female gender comes in this is manifested in the payment done during "Ndowi" whereby the father's thing (afo a bowain) and he mother's things (afo inawoin) are maifested

3.4.1. Ndowi

Bride price in Kom is paid in two distinct parts: One part goes to the mothers and the other to the fathers. For the mother, it is paid virtually in palm oil, meat and some specified items. It is in the occasion of Ndowi that bride price takes place and in the compound of the bride's father. The items usually demanded during ndowi are specified tons of oil, fabric and more. In this case, the father does not get involve. This shows the expression of gender in bride price practices amongst the Kom people.

3.4.2. Afo a Bowain

This refers to the part of bride price that goes to the father and usually consists of requested quantities of oil and cash(money). This aspect of bride price payment goes to the Males or fathers only.

3.4.3. Afo Inawoin

This refers to the part of bride price that goes to the mothers and are usually items to be used during ndowi. The male has nothing to decide in this occasion so it is literally reserved for the mothers only and whatever they decide is taken into serious consideration.

3.4.4. Presentation of kilum (the bride and her maids).

After the evaluation of items, the bride and her maids are then brought in whereby they are fed with some *abaiin* and *mbas* given to them directly on their palms. When they must have eaten, they go back for proper cleaning and application of Camwood on their legs and arms.

After that the woman in charge on the groom's side has to present their wife and her maids to their people and so the asking of names is done one after the other and each of the maids are presented. This gives a clue of the kind of company the bride keeps. This is done in

a kind of technical way that the bride is presented at the end accompanied with some enchantments and screaming. At this point, the bride will be dressed and decorated and then officially presented as the wife. This phase on the bride and her maids is done and that which follows is that of the groom.



Picture 3: The bride and her maids

Source : From the field 2022, Prudence Chah.

3.4.5. Presentation of lumhiki (the groom and his friends.)

The presentation of the groom and his friends follows the same procedure as that of the bride and her maids just that in this case it is the person in charge of the women in the bride's family who has the duty to present their 'husband 'to her people. She or any other woman intones a song as a way of signaling the coming of the groom or the thirst to see the groom. The same way of asking each and every of the men's names and presenting them is done and of course the groom himself is presented lastly after which he is given some vegetable with enough egussi to eat and officially presented as the groom. Meanwhile all these is going on, the father if the bride is not there with them but is aware that he has visitors in his compound who are definitely with the mothers will do something to entertain his visitors and that leads to the next phase which is the feeding of the visitors.

3.4.6. Feeding of the visitors.

The father of the bride usually provides a fowl to be roasted and given to the visitors . This fowl is roasted and given to the visitors. From here, what's left is for the women from the bride's side to give something to the groom, so they come with either bags of corn flour or corn itself and present to the groom as a sign of sealing the traditional marriage and saying that everything has been agreed and ended successfully. From this moment, traditional has typically taken place as far as the Kom people are concerned and anything chosen to be done later like buying of drinks cooking extra strange meals like rice, hiring a musician would be done out of fancy and of course be the Ceremony accompanying the traditional marriage. That is where funny people invited such as the "Gwedeng" come in to make the rest of the ceremony interesting.

3.5. "Ngwelem"

Others call him Gwedeng. He is the funniest man on the hills of Kom, you better look for "Gwedeng" else you will find your entire guests sleeping during the occasion. Since 'Ndowi' in Kom is mostly being done for a length of time. He is usually invited to keep the population funky and alive too. His fun time ranges between singing songs and telling stories which will make you laugh and fall off your sit. In fact, he is the "basket mouth" of Kom and he uses that to make a lot of money. It is to be noted that, today, the Ngwedeng has been banned from ushering traditional marriages in Kom again. This is because traditional marriage that used to be done at night is now done during the day and in a very limited timeframe.

3.6. Cultural representation of Bride price among the Kom people

This section focuses on the cultural representation of Bride price among the Kom people. It goes a long way to show how they perceive Bride price from an emic point of view, which means from a Kom cultural view.

3.6.1. Appellation of Bride price in Kom language

According to data collected from the field, in the Kom community of the Northwest region, two terms are given to the word Bride price. The first is *Afo a Bo wain* which literally means, the father's thing. This term is used to actually mean that something significant has been given on behalf of the lady to be married. The second term is *tichue*. This comes from the word *tichi* which literally means sticks. These sticks were usually used to represent the amount to be paid by the family of the groom in exchange for their wife. The amount would be equal to the

number of sticks depending on how much is attributed to a single stick. So, the appellation *tichue actually* comes from that practice which was done in the context of Bride price payment.

Tichue is never in even numbers but in odd numbers; 3,7,9,11,13.... each family has a prescribed number of 'Tichue 'that they ask their potential suitor. It can be valued in terms of cash so that it goes to the father of the bride and also it can be valued in terms of oil so that it goes to the mother.

3.7. Types of Bride price

The data collected from informants permit us determine two types of Bride price in the Kom community. The first type is the type that goes to the father called *Afo a Bo wain* and the second is the type that goes to the mother which is called in Kom *Afo a Nawain* .

3.7.1. Afo a Bo wain

According to the informants, *Afo a Bo wain* refers to the cash that the groom brings to his father in-law as a compensation for his wife to be. Attached to the cash are usually the prescribed tins of oil to be brought and prescribed quantity of firewood as well. In trying to understand more about this, some informants had these to say;

“This part of the Bride price called Afo a Bo wain is usually determined by the groom according to the love he has for his future wife or better still his pockets. If he feels like giving much, he will but if he doesn't then he gives just what he seems at his capacity” ...

Doris, the 24/03/22 at Kom in the Tinifoinbi quarter

This woman makes us to understand that the father does not mention the amount he wants as Bride price on behalf of his daughter but the groom decides according to his personal judgment. Another woman beside added some information to solidify the precedent one by saying: *The father to the girl does not have the right to mention an amount to his future son in law which is more than the amount he himself paid on his wife even though....*

Hygiena, the 28/03/22 in the quarter Tinifoinbi

Adding to the former woman's information, these informants are trying to say that this part of Bride price that goes to the father is not prescribed by the father and yet he can't demand an amount that he himself never paid on behalf of the wife. So, this means that the bride's father

demands only what he himself gave as Bride price in exchange of his wife but whatever the groom brings is as well welcomed.

Another informant says “If the man wants to give more, he can and that will be out of his free will to the bride’s father who will gladly take with two hands”.

Nkwain Evodia, 29/03/22, Yaounde

From the above informant one can understand that Afo a Bowain is not some sort of prescription by the father but what the suitor to his daughter has come with. This token is what is called Afo a Bowain which is literally the Brideprice that goes to the father.

3.7.2. Afo i Nawoin

This part which is the one that goes to the mothers of the bride. Mothers because family is Kom is matrilineal and so the sisters to the bride’s mother are her mother’s as well and these requirements demanded goes to all of them the potential mothers to the bride, that is why it is not the mother’s thing but the mothers things. They usually consist of palm oil, meat, loins and even slippers, firewood and if the groom wishes to add more. Trying to inquire more about this, an informant said:

‘The mothers’ things as it is directly translated is usually made of palm oil which she will share with her sisters, goat or cow meat that she will equally share with her sisters.

Rebekah, the 31/03/22 in Tinifoinbi

Another informant says: “What is called Afo I Nawoin is actually beneficial for the traditional marriage as they are mostly items like palm oil, goat meat and firewood. The bride’s mother shares this palm oil with her sisters and some is used in cooking for the traditional marriage ceremony “.

Nayah loveline, the 02/04/22 in the quarter of Tinifoinbi

This is to say that, this type that goes to the mothers literally does not contain cash but more of items that will be used for the traditional marriage and what the biological mother will be sharing with her sisters.

3.7.3. Brideprice as a symbol for marriage.

Bride price according to the Kom means a lot of things but the main way it is being perceived is as a symbol for marriage. To a Kom man Bride price is a token, meaning that it is not a price that one gives to purchase a wife but a sort of negotiation whereby the groom brings about what he has and upon presentation to the bride's father is very much welcomed. This is also because, Kom people place much value on character than on money. They believe marriage to be the coming together of the two families involved and only peace and harmony can maintain the bondage and nothing else. In the course of our inquiries this informant said this: *"In Kom we don't sell daughters out for marriage but we receive a token which stands as a symbol for marriage only hoping for healthy marital living"*.

Toh sam, the 20/04/22 in Yaounde

This informant says that the idea of selling is not in existence in the Kom culture but rather it is considered a token. When something is a token it means it's stands out as a symbol and not a complete payment for something. It is different from saying that is a price that one pays to have one's daughter. So, the idea of buying, selling or anything that has to do with purchasing is not found in the Kom culture when it comes to giving a daughter out in marriage. A good number of informants from the Kom community shared the idea of Brideprice to be a symbol for marriage and nothing in the light of purchase but just had different ways of saying it :

That is why in Kom we say that we give out a daughter for marriage. You will never get a Kom man saying he is selling his daughter to so and so man. We give and receive whatever the man brings as a symbol that he has recognized the worth of his wife.

Michael Johnson, 05/04/22 in Yaounde

Johnson's contribution shows that Bride price in Kom could be any other representation than the idea of selling. The moment the idea of selling enters the issue, it is no longer the Kom culture we are talking about but something else maybe from elsewhere but not from Kom. Another informant in his words;

Bride price is a symbol which stands as the middleman to unite both the family of the bride together with that of the groom. In essence, without Bride price, both families don't know each other or is not recognized by each other.

Diangha Grace, 14/05/22 in Yaounde

At times if you as the groom is a well behaved strong and responsible young man who has a way with words, you can come to a certain family, take the girl and go without giving a dime just because of your approach, your character and sound speaking... (laughs) that is just to tell you that na, Kom people are interested in peaceful living more than money and whatsoever.

Tim Neng Joyceline, 08/04/22 in Balikumato

In Kom we don't sell our daughters out for marriage but we give out, that is why no matter the financial level of a man he can never be disappointed if he comes marrying a Kom lady because we don't focus on what the man brings in terms of his money but rather we focus on his character to see if he can take care of our daughter and live in peace with her. That is what we cherish my sister.

Ngam sylvi, 09/04/22, Tinifoinbi

From the above informant's information, we see how more of a symbol Bride price is, to a Kom man and how they place much importance on character and peaceful living rather than money. That is why they use terms as, giving a daughter out in marriage and not selling, negotiation and not buying over their daughter. This is just to say that Bride price in Kom is actually more of a symbol to show that you have recognized tradition and loved your wife enough to demonstrate through payment of Bride price and all the main concerns and wishes are usually good and peaceful marriage.

You will never get one saying in Kom that that he is buying over a wife or that they are selling over a woman. It is usually said that; she has been given. The aspect of giving is very important in the context of marriage in Kom as the idea of selling is not their prior importance. This informant says this in his own words;

“They will never tell you in Kom that they sold a woman out to her husband. It is always we have given her out because once she gets to marry the man, the two families become one and begin to share things in common and even ceremonies and some rituals in common. , it is like they have just enlarged their families again by getting in-laws and so on.”

Johnson on 10/04/22 in Tinifoinbi

Bride price is primarily considered as a symbol for marriage in Kom. A symbol just standing to show that a particular thing happened. That is why the above informant says that, the Kom man literally gives out his daughter for marriage into another family which eventually becomes his own family too. This is with the idea that the two families merge and become one, so much such that they begin to share good and bad times together, they can help one another in times of trouble and much more. To them the coming of these two families is more important and their only prayer is that their children should live in peace and harmony. Another informant says this;

Even though it is usually said that a man cannot ask for more than what he gave for his wife as Bride price for his daughter, that is only in the case where the suitor asks the man what the Bride price is. He could just choose to bring what he has and the father to his future wife won't refuse because like I said it's just a symbol.

Ngam Kenneth on the 11/04/22 in Yaounde

Ngam Kenneth puts it clear that if the suitor, asks the father to the woman he intends to marry about the nature of Bride price, the father will request only that which he gave for his wife but should in case the suitor doesn't ask and brings what he has, his father-in-law will receive it as a token to give out his daughter to this suitor. This greatly shows how Bride price is a symbol among the Kom people. Taking into consideration the fact that any amount thought wise by the suitor to bring is very much welcomed. As this informant shared this information with us, another lady married in the Kom land had something to chip in which clarifies some confusion that may arise. She says;

It is not anything as well that the suitor brings that will be accepted by the father to his future wife but mind you, this suitor is not denied his wife because

of that. At times the father could ask the man to go and fetch again. That is different from completely sending the suitor away.

Emerancia bih on 12/04/22 in Tinifoinbi

This informant is saying that, in as much as the father welcomes whatever the suitor brings, it doesn't cancel the fact that the father can ask him to go and look for more. Looking for more or being given the chance to look for more is a sign that he has been accepted but is just left for him to add more efforts in what he is to bring. This woman also makes us to understand that in some cases the traditional marriage can go on while he brings something more tangible even later. A lot might think this is being focused on money and in selling their daughter out but this is just the case because, in as much as the man can be asked to go add something to what he initially presented, he is not sent away from marrying his wife. The aspect of negotiation comes in between the father and suitor whereby he goes and does something to bring a more valuable symbol to have his wife. The aspect of Bride price being a symbol is still clearly seen among the Kom people as the suitor is not rejected but negotiation is done. This other informant had this to say;

Even though it is called Bride price, which means the price on the bride, it is not like that in Kom. In Kom we don't price a lady like a shoe or bag or dresses in the market no. We give out not sell.

Ernest Njung on the 14/04/22 at Tinifoinbi

This informant is adding to the bunch of information from the Kom people to cement the fact that Bride price is a symbol for marriage and not a price that one pays to get a wife. It is not actually in terms of quantity that Bride price is prescribed in Kom but the intent of what is given that is why it stands out as a symbol to show that marriage has taken place and that a link has been created.

3.7.4. Bride price as a form of exchange

The Kom people view Bride price as a form of exchange. A sort of 'give and take' kind of a thing whereby the amount a man gives as Bride price on behalf of his wife today is the amount he should expect from his daughter in future when the time comes for her to get married. A young married lady says:

“That is why when a man gets married and eventually has a daughter, his relatives are like, so you have gotten back your thing bro (laughs) you've gotten back the token you gave on your wife...”

Nkwan Evodia, the 15/04/22, Yaoundé

This is to say that, you request from your daughter only what you gave on behalf of your wife, clearly showing the exchange part of the concept of Bride price in Kom.

3.7.5. Bride price as a cover for infertility.

It might sound quite out of place to talk about infertility in the context of bride price but the Kom people see Bride price to be something that actually hides infertility or inability to make a woman pregnant and consequently have a child. A man could be with a woman and not able to make her produce children but If he has given a Bride price on the woman’s behalf, then they can agree and do something which will not be known. An informant makes it better to understand in her words;

Take for instance a man who is unable to make his wife pregnant, they can both agree on a suitable alternative for them and later her husband will be seen as the father to the children they eventually get but if he had not paid her Bride price it won't be possible to get that alternative

This is to tell us that, to the Kom man, Bride price plays a big role in covering up for the man’s inability to procreate. This is in the sense that ,he could better cooperate with his wife to get an alternative solution but the society will still see him to be the father to their gotten children.

3.7.6. Bride price as a right for further marriage.

Among the Kom people, until you have paid the Bride price, you have no right or liberty to proceed with other forms of marriage which are the Civil and religious marriages. This is due to the high value placed on Bride price which shows that you are married in Kom. This means that without the Bride price, you are not considered married nor recognized by the woman’s family as an in-law. A young man says:

Bride price is one of the key things in marriage, without Bride price you cannot proceed to other weddings

Ndim Genesis, the 16/04/22, Yaounde

This tells us that, in the Kom community you are not seen as an inlaw if you haven't given the Bride price and hence you cannot proceed with other forms of marriage.

3.7.7. Bride price as a source of family extension

Among the Kom people, Bride price plays a very important role in enlarging the family circle. It is like a key that opens the door to welcome the in-laws into their family. Once you have paid Bride price in Kom you automatically become part and parcel of your to be wife, this creates bonds and enlarges the family Circle. If you take a woman and start living with her to the point of even having children with her without Bride price been paid, you are considered a stranger and if it happens that the woman suffers from let's say a sickness and dies, you will be held responsible and considered as a strange murderer. Some informants say;

Don't think that you a man can just come and take a woman like that without giving anything and continue living with her thinking you are married. The family considers children from that union as bastards, which means children with no father because you are not known by the woman's family.

18/04/22, Ephesian in Yaounde

From the above informant's information, it is seen how big the role of Bride price plays in the Kom community. To the extent that it creates and extends family ties, without which the groom is considered as a total stranger. Bride price in Kom also plays a great role in forming and extending family ties in the sense that, the son in-law becomes part of the family, which means that he can participate in his capacity in everything or occasion concerning his wife's family.

For instance, in the case of either of his parent's in-law's death, he has some items and role to play but if he had not paid the Bride price, he wouldn't participate in anything that has to do with the woman's family. In the course of trying to get more understanding from these, an informant in his words;

A man who hasn't paid Bride price on his woman's head is as well as a thief and total stranger according to the beliefs of the Kom people, period.

Hilda, the 19/04/22 in Yaounde

Hilda says this to concretize the fact that in Kom, Bride price is very essential and serves as a way of acceptance and recognition into your in-law's family so much such that you become a full member of the family who can participate in anything concerning your wife's family without any constraint.

3.7.8. Brideprice as a source of honour

Not everyone or every family has the opportunity to have girl children who eventually grow up and Bride price paid on their head. This is due to the fact that we live in a fast-changing world and things are evolving while bringing about its positive as well as negative effects. We find a lot of young ladies in "Come we stay" marriages. For a Kom man therefore, it is an honor to his family for Bride price to be paid on behalf of his daughter because it shows some dignity and respect towards the lady herself and to her parents. Contributing to this idea of honor, an informant says,

To have a daughter whose Bride price is paid improves my respect even before my fellow Countrymen, to show that I didn't raise useless children (smiles).

Toh sam, 20/04/22, Tini Foinbi

This father is trying to show the way he feels when a Bride price is paid on his daughters. He feels proud, he feels fulfilled and honored even as a Kom parent and this just goes a long way to show how Bride price is seen as a source of honor in the Kom community.

When Bride price is paid on your head as Kom lady, people begin to look at you much more dignity, they see you to be a responsible and well brought up lady who didn't just careless her life by flirting with men. A female respondent gives an anecdote of her experience after her Bride price was paid and he traditionally became a wife.

Judith is a 27-year-old lady from Kom and comes specifically from Belo. She got married at the age of 25 and of course had to go through every normal process beginning with the traditional and of which Bride price was paid on her head. Judith says she had never felt such respect and regards on her person they way she felt after the traditional marriage where the Bride price was paid. The attention and appreciation given to her by fellow family members, the admiration and all good things she felt. Judith says;

“My aunt was like, well done my daughter you are indeed a good example for these useless girls of mine, I respect and admire you for having being patient enough and disciplined to do things the right way.”

Judith, 21/04/22, Tinifoinbi

Judith’s experience indeed shows that people in her community attributed much regards and respect towards her to the extent that she became a yardstick to serve as example to her aunt’s daughters who probably were living rough lives as young ladies. This just goes to show one how Bride price brings about honor and respect.

Bride price does not only bring honor to the lady and her family but equally to the man himself because it is telling the community that he is responsible enough to take someone’s child in and take care of her. It brings honor to the man who is the groom because he is now seen with much more respect and kind of differentiated from the society. Bride price brings honor to the family of the bride that their daughter has grown up to the point that she can go and build her own family. The family feels honored to have raised a daughter to the point where she can build her own her own family.

3.7.9. Bride price as a source of blessing

Generally, blessings come in a lot of ways and mostly after obedience. In the Kom community, every right procedure of doing whatsoever comes along with its blessings. Marriage being one of them which requires a certain procedure is equally accompanied by blessings

When a Kom lady gets married and of course Bride price is paid on her head, blessings follow her as the prayers are usually for good and not bad. For instance, good health, peace, provision and child birth which are needed for a new founded family. In trying to get more meaning to this, an informant says;

When a Bride price is paid on your head, it shows that you are worth and have obeyed the tradition and so blessings follow you.

Ninin, 22/04/22 at Tinifoinbi

From this informant’s idea, Bride price is perceived as a source of blessing among the Kom people as the obedience of following the normal procedure which is through traditional

marriage and Bride price payment is welcomed by the people and hence, blessings are spoken upon your life.

3.7.10. Bride price as a proof for love

It is but normal that every man who claims to love a woman should prove it and one of these ways of proving is by going the right way and honoring his in-laws by paying Bride price. The Kom people believe that if you pay Bride price on a lady's head, then you are showing your love for her and her parents. It just goes a long way to show the love he has for the woman he wants to marry and also for her parents for having brought her up well. An informant says;

To a Kom person, paying Bride price just simply shows the love you have for your wife to be.

Ndim Paul, 24/04/22 at Tinifoinbi

This man confirms the fact that, Bride price in Kom or to the Kom man is perceived as a way of showing love to the person you claim to. This is to say that Bride price represents an act of love to the lady and to the lady's family once it's paid.

3.7.11. Bride price as a bond which links the woman to her husband's family

According to the Kom tradition, a woman whose husband has died, that is to say a widow and who later decides to abandon her in-laws permanently, it is advisable to refund the Bride price so as to disconnect the nuptial link with the husband's family. If she decides to abandon her in laws permanently and the Bride price is not refunded, the marriage bond continues. So, any child she brings forth belongs to the former husband and if she dies anywhere, her corpse will be carried to her former husband's compound for burial. The Bride price is what links the woman to the family of the man and this link carries with it very significant consequences (Joseph

Nsom on: "The Modern Kom Society, Culture, customs and tradition"; Nyaa Publishers, 2015).

3.7.12. Bride price as respect for tradition

One of the traditions of Kom requires that any woman ready for marriage and has a suitor should follow and respect tradition by observing marriage which of course cannot be done without payment of Bride price and so paying if Bride price shows that you respect tradition and wouldn't just go your own way. You recognize the Kom Culture and you are humble enough to follow it. Some informants had this to say in that regard;

Respecting tradition means taking off from where our ancestors left and following from their Footsteps.

Ngam Martin, 26/04/22 at Tinifoinbi

Indeed, you cannot claim to respect tradition when you fail to pay Bride price on behalf of a lady you want to get married to. The above informant just points it clear that, when you pay Bride price, then you are respecting tradition as the issue of Bride price payment did not just fall from heaven but was prescribed by our ancestors who implemented and started practicing it long before us, so if you recognize that in the aspect of Bride price payment, then you are respecting the tradition of Kom people.

3.7.13. Bride price as a source of paternity right

Bride price in Kom greatly determines paternity right, which means it determines the state of being someone's father in the Kom cultural sphere. It doesn't matter the number of children you have had with a lady in Kom, once you haven't paid her Bride price, you have no possession over these children. Trying to understand this more, an informant says;

Have 8 children with a lady in Kom, my brother if you haven't given anything as Bride price, you have no child.

Tim Joycelyn, 08/04/22. Tinifoinbi

From this woman's information, it is clear that in the Kom community what gives paternity to a man is actually the Bride price. So, with the absence of Bride price, it doesn't matter the number of children you produce with a woman, those children do not belong to you and so you have no right over them. Consequently, no paternity right.

3.8. Cultural representation of a married person in Kom

A person is considered or recognized as being married in Kom only after the Bride price has been given as a symbol to get a wife. This section therefore intends to focus on the way the Kom people view one whom a Bride price has been given upon or one who has given Bride price for a wife. It seeks to know how the Kom people view one is married, since being married means Bride price has been respected. According to the informants we met in the field, the person whom Bride price has been given upon is not represented like any other person. One whose Bride price has been given is a person with dignity. She is seen as a lady who respects herself. In this line of representation, Mme Ngam Irene, a married woman says something about her own experience:

About a few weeks my Bride price was given and I was already considered someone's wife, a lot of people around me started giving me much respect than I expected, they will greet me with some level of respect, at times the single ones are like, good morning ma, good evening ma. I felt so good.

Fumbui Loveline, on 27/04/22 at Tinifoinbi

This woman is not just narrating what she got but is actually recounting her own experience and how people in the community began to look at her, the level of respect for her amplified to a different level and she really feels so good sharing this to say that when a Bride price has been given on behalf of you, the community begins to regard you with much more respect than before. This just makes us to understand that Bride price is very much recognized and valued by the Kom people that they actually see one whom it has been given on behalf with much more dignity.

Another informant still in the line of respect says when Bride price is given on your head is just a wonderful and appreciative one and she says that in these words:

It is not easy nowadays. When I talk of nowadays I mean with the crisis we are undergoing to Find ladies who still have the guts to respect themselves to the point of waiting until a man Comes and give her Bride price before she goes to live with him as his wife, so when you as a Lady has had that patience and respect for yourself to wait for that automatically we respect You more because you have respected yourself.

Mispa Nain on 28/04/22, Tinifoinbi

This woman says, to be able to respect yourself and encourage a suitor to come give your Bride price before you become his wife or move along to his house is something the Kom people recognize much, that is why the respect and regards they have for you changes to another level. So, without the Bride price coming into play we can't be talking about that different dimension of respect that is being attributed and given to you. To add to this pile of information a male informant is not left out as he says;

Even as a male, after I gave my wife's Bride price, my uncles, aunts and many of my relatives and siblings were congratulating me, saying how I'm to be given much respect than before because I have done something

really worth a responsible Kom man. I felt and sensed the much regards I was given and how even many who use to take me for granted all of a sudden changed and were like, 'grand' ... (opens eyes widely).

Tohnain Julius on 17/03/22

This man as well is trying to give us the perception he received when he gave Bride price to get his wife. He tells us how much respect towards him had to move to another dimension or level. This tells us how much of respect the Kom people attribute to those who have indeed given Bride price or whom Bride price has been given upon. To say that, among the Kom people when Bride price is given on you or you initiate it people in the community see you with much more respect.

Among the Kom people, a family which gives out a daughter in marriage which means they have received a Bride price on behalf of their daughter, is regarded with much honor. People honor the parents as it is a sign of good education to their children and for bringing them up in a well-behaved manner. Here is a father who has given daughters out in marriage who says;

I am very much honored in my community, I receive honor from my friends, colleagues and relatives for having received Bride price from my four daughters who are all in their marital homes.

Ndah James, 08/05/22, at Tinifoinbi

The above informant solidifies the fact that in the Kom community, Bride price makes one to be regarded with much honor and he says how he is given much honor today as he received Bride price from his daughters' suitors. This is just to tell us that the Kom people literally regards one who pays Bride price, on whom the Bride price has been paid or even the parents to these initiators with much honor.

A person whom Bride price has been given on is considered to be "taken» according to the Kom people. Taken here is in the sense that, the woman is no longer open to other suitors or better still no one can come behind and claim to want to give a Bride price again on her head. So literally once your suitor gives your Bride price, you are his wife already and hence taken by him and him only. Chances for other suitors have been closed. In trying to get more information on this, an informant had this to say:

I had these two men who were showing interest in me. When I talk of interest, I mean they all claimed to love me. I had this confusion in my mind because both seemed to be good Persons. It was really so difficult for me to choose one over the other that I prayed for guidance. Eventually to cut the long story short, one of these hurriedly came asked for procedure to get married to me and did everything right which included paying my Bride price. As soon as that happened, the confusion ended. Of course, I was already taken.

Diangha Grace, 14/05/22 at Tinifoinbi

This informant kind of narrates her little experience of how as a single, she had this confusion in choosing a suitor for herself because they seemed right and okay. One of them had to do the right thing in order to have her and she became that one's wife. Which means no matter what the other could have done, she was taken already by the one who had given Bride price to have her. This shows how Bride price, when it is given on a woman, she is considered taken. It doesn't matter how many were claiming to love or will claim to love her after that.

Another informant added this to bunch of information on the representation of one whom a Bride price has been given on or the one who has given the Bride price;

What I can say is that the person who Bride price has been paid on is placed on a high table in Kom.

Bobe Ngong on 17/05/22

This just adds to the idea that the Kom man sees one who is married which means one whom a Bride price has been given on as well dignified and holds a certain level of esteem. When he says the person is put up there, then it literally means he is given a very high level of respect, considered responsible, serious and determined. Hence it shows us how the Kom people view one who has paid a Bride price or whom a Bride price has been given on, which is the lady of course.

3.9. Cultural representation on the causes of changes in Bride price in Kom

This section or part of the study is focused on the representation of the Kom people on the causes in the changes of Bride price among. We want to know what the Kom people say about the causes in the dynamics of Bride price this Bride price.

As time evolves, people change and of course culture too experience some changes as some ways are been modified to solve evolving issues and so on. The new problems need new solutions and hence culture experience changes in order to respond to problems at a specific time. That is saying that the Kom culture is not exempted and especially in the context of Bride price that has experienced some dynamism with the coming of evolution. When we talk of evolution here, we are actually talking about what evolution has brought about such as; Education, Urbanization, money as form of exchange, civilization. Trying to get information on how the Kom person represents or sees the cause of the dynamics of Bride price, an informant had this to say;

When there is evolution, change is bound to happen because new problems develop and so we We need to upgrade the ways and see what best suits for the times in which we are in.

Yong Isabella, 03/05/22, at Tinifoinbi

This woman says that evolution is like a springboard that activates change, so with evolution things are bound to take a new leap and things are shifted to suit with the growing technology and so on. This is to say that the Kom people attribute evolution to be one of the causes in the dynamics of Bride price in Kom is as a result of evolution.

3.9.1. Changes caused by education

The aspect of education is what has mostly brought about change in the concept of Bride price in Kom. Education is a good thing that came to the Kom community but has caused some adjustments as far as Bride price is concerned in Kom. In the past ,young girls were not trained to go to school to a certain level since it was believed that the place of a woman was in the kitchen and that her main focus was on how to take care of a home, cook for her husband and children and so a larger percentage of the training she was obliged to get was towards becoming a good wife, a good mother. In trying to get more of how the Kom people interprets the causes of the changes in Bride price, a lot of informants had something to chip in, a married woman had this to say about her experience;

My father received an amount of two hundred thousand francs for my Bride price and told me it is the new way of attributing Bride price in Kom.

That amount was in accordance to my education level, I mean I was a university graduate, right?

Nkwain Evodia, 29/03/22 in Tinifoinbi

This young lady's experience shows that, her Bride price was in accordance to her level of education. She says her dad told her it is the new way of attributing Bride price in Kom. This means that a change has actually occurred in terms of how Bride price is charged in Kom due to the coming of education. Her case is that of a university graduate which means the higher you go, the higher the Bride price literally.

Another informant in her own words had this to say, still in line with the changes around the concept of Bride price in Kom;

In our family mind has never asked a suitor for any amount as Bride price, it is the suitors who gave what they saw befitting for my sisters. The aspect of considering err ing the level if education is just strange to the Kom tradition, whereby the amount on a lady varies according to her level of education.

Nkwain Alphonsius, on 05/05/22 in Tinifoinbi

This informant tells us about the experience in their own family whole he was still growing up. That his father had never charged amounts on the suitors that came for his sisters but they willingly gave what they had. This shows that the idea of giving according to level of education has come because of evolution which has brought about education and therefore influenced the Kom people to take or receive Bride price according to education or literacy level. This is just to tell us that the Kom people believe that education is one of the causes in the changes that has affected Bride price in their community.

Education has also brought literacy to the Kom people and cause a change in the sense that, the parents no longer take Bride price to marry a woman on behalf of their sons. An informant says;

At first, the father will go ahead and marry a woman for his son without even the son's consent but education has said no to it right, the man is the one

who finds whom he wants to marry and the father just stands as a negotiation mediator of the Bride price.

Ndah Martin, on 12/05/22, in Tinifoinbi

That is to say, according to the Kom people, education has made men to become more aware and financially stable that they get to find their wives and give the Bride price to their father who in turns goes for negotiation. This means the man is fully aware of the wife he wants to marry and the Bride price is given with his consent not in the secret by his father to a strange woman that he doesn't know.

3.9.2. Changes caused by the coming of money

Money is something that came to be as a form of exchange much later after which the Kom people have been giving their daughters out in marriage and equally receiving Bride price. This Bride price used to be items or anything in kind like plantains, meat, oil, Atu abo (a bag made of wood), Ankuf and many other items that were required in those times but the parents of the bride. Today most of these items have been converted to cash which is money and still plays the role of Bride price among the Kom people.

At the end of this chapter, it is important to note that the representation of Bride price according to the Kom people, specifically remains a symbol. It is a symbol before any other thing and not a price placed on a lady about to get married to sell her off to her husband. Also, marriage in Kom which is the context in which Bride price is paid, is only done after the payment of Bride price has been settled with the parents.

**CHAPTER FOUR: PAYMENT OF BRIDE
PRICE IN KOM**

This chapter focuses on the payment of Bride price in Kom and will elaborate on subtopics like, what the payment consists of, those involved in the payment, the location of the payment and what determines the nature of payment.

The payment of Bride price in Kom culture is largely a symbolic act. There is no set amount or fixed quantity of items but all these come in as a symbol even in the context of the payment. The price is agreed between the families but is seen as a symbolic act rather than about buying over a wife. Bride price in Kom consists of specific items and a requested amount of cash which gives to the father of the bride. The part of the bride price that goes to the father is termed; Afo a Bowain while the part of the bride price that goes to the mother is termed 'Afo a Nawain' which literally means the mother's thing. It is usually the completion of these two parts that makes up the payment of Bride price in Kom. The payment of Bride price in Kom may continue over the span of the marriage or to the future generations as financial or material compensation is always expected from the groom's family in situations of death and traditional rituals. The value of this compensation varies from family to family as each family determines the financial or material compensation when moments of death and traditional rituals come. Bride price payment to a Kom man is not the payment for the woman herself but a symbol to represent marriage and compensate the family of the lady for their effort in raising up their daughter well up to the age of marriage.

For nuptial union to become effective, the man is expected to meet certain requirements as demanded by the Kom tradition. He must pay a Bride price (tichue) to the family of the girl. This Bride price is in two different parts:

One part goes to the father and the other to the mother. The two parts are independent and could be paid at different times. The father will state his requirements and the mother will do same. When we talk about the payment of Bride price in Kom we take into consideration or as most important the items that are part of the payment such as; Oil, Firewood, cash itself. These items are prescribed according to families and are given to particular persons in terms of Bride price. The payment that goes to the father if the bride for instance is the amount of cash that he asks from his daughter's suitor, the quantity of oil that he requires, and a quantity of firewood.

4.1. The "Afo a Bowain".

This is the part of Bride price that belongs to the father. In English it is literally translated as, the father's thing which obviously means the thing that belongs to the father. In the Kom cultural sphere, Afo a Bowain varies according to family. That is to say there is no general

amount that will be received by the fathers of the bride as Bride price in Kom. Each family according to how it was done in their own case demand what they require from a particular suitor. This thing therefore consists of the following; Money, firewood, palm oil, meat, kolanut, raffia wine, blanket. On the course of researching on this particular aspect of Bride price in Kom, informants had this to say;

Afo a Bowain is what the father of the bride requests as Bride price before his daughter can be married to her suitor. The father will state his tichue. It could be any amount depending on how it is done in that family. He will state the quantity of oil he needs with the other requirements.

Ndah James, 30/04/22, Tinifoinbi

The above informant puts it clear that Afo a Bowain refers to what the father requests as Bride price for his daughter. He says these requirements will depend on how it is done in his family. Trying to get more light this, another informant said;

The Afo a Bowain is for the father. What the father benefits from after giving his daughter out in marriage and it is demanded differently in different families.

Johnson, 12/03/22

This adds to the information above that Afo a Bowain remains the bride price received by the father and which varies according to families. Which means what a father might request in one family might differ from what another would request as Bride price in another.

4.2. Cash (money).

This money in fact is considered as a token, a symbol that represents marriage. It may vary from a hundred thousand francs to any amount based on the family involved. In the Kom culture, this token is not charged as though it were a commodity that is to be sold but rather given out of a place of symbolism. This cash can also be rejected if it's too small. An informant had this to say on money as a part of Bride price payment in the side of the father;

In Kom tradition, the bride price can be rejected if it's too small but this does not mean that the marriage is cancelled. It takes a break and can continue much later when the money is adjusted to something reasonable according to the family involved. This is especially if the two families are in one accord.

Yuh Lambert, 18/03/22

From the above informant, it is seen that the money received for Bride price in Kom might be rejected in the case where it is too small. This means that, depending on the family, they might judge an amount from suitor too be too small and then decide to halt either the marriage so that the suitor can go adjust it to something acceptable. This shows the fact that the money is actually a token because the marriage is not completely cancelled but is given a break so that the suitor gets to find for more that can represent the bride price token. To add more to this, an informant had this to say;

If the family accepts a very less significant amount after seeing it not to really be up to something, it becomes like an insult to this particular family.

Rebekah, 31/03/22

This informant adds that, accepting money that is not significant in the sense of being worth it according to the family involved is actually an insult. That is why if the family ask a Suitor to go and add something to what he already had and the suitor refuses, it becomes like an insult to the family involved. We see the money playing the role of a token because the suitor is not entirely rejected but given a chance to go and fend for more. Another informant adds;

This part of Bride price will be charged differently according to families who will depend on various factors like education, status or position of the lady.

Nayah loveline, 02/04/22

This informant says that the Amount of money that will be requested by the father if the bride as part of the payment of Bride price will vary according to family. Which means that each family knows what to ask from their suitor in terms of money depending on how it is done in their family or taking into consideration the factors that seem important to them like the education level of their daughter, their daughter's financial status or whatsoever. A lot more informants had this to share on money as part of the bride price requirement by the father;

In Kom when a man comes to get married, let's say a man comes for my daughter now, I will state the amount in cash required as Bride price. There is no specific amount for the payment of Bride price in Kom. It could be that I had given about fifty thousand francs to my father in-law at the time, by tradition I am not to take more than that amount or ask for more than that amount from my daughter's suitor but today a lot of factors come in like the fact that I've sent my daughter to school and so on.

Michael Johnson, 05/04/22

This informant just tries to narrate what he as a Kom would do in terms of Bride price payment if someone comes to get married to his daughter and is giving a general view of what happens in Kom society today in terms of Bride price payment. He actually says what he would do or what he will request in terms of cash as payment of Bride price bit indirectly painting a picture of how it happens among the Kom people today.

4.3. Firewood as part of Bride price payment.

Firewood is an important item in the payment of Bride price among the Kom people. A Kom man considers that a father should always be warm. This literally means that there should always be fire in the kitchen. So, the bringing of firewood alongside the money and other items is an indication that the suitor has lighted fire for the bride's father and this is continuous process. This is such that the father does not feel cold again so long as he is married to the daughter. To add more flesh to firewood being part of the payment of Bride price, an informant had this to say;

That is why in Kom you will get a father call his son in-law or refer to his son in-law as, my woodcutter.

Fumbui Aorone, 04/04/22

From the above informant, we see the place of wood in the payment of Bride price in Kom. This is in the sense that he calls the son in-law his woodcutter meaning he recognizes that the son in-law is the one who brings wood for him. Therefore, by bringing this wood in the context of Bride price payment, the son in-law is actually providing firewood for his bride's father.

4.4. Palm oil as a payment to the father.

Palm oil is one of the requirements in the payment of Bride price in Kom. This palm oil for the father usually are two tins of oil which is equivalent to 40litres. It is never less than two tins. It is considered in Kom that; the father doesn't eat alone that explains why the number of tins is two. A portion of this oil goes to the father's brothers and sisters together with his uncle. Just like wood, it is believed in Kom that the father will never eat without oil. Trying to research more in this, an informant had this to say;

You cannot think of getting married in Kom and the father doesn't request for palm oil. It is one of the essential items in the requirements for Bride price payment.

Doris, 24/03/22

From this informant we realize that palm oil is a must requirement when it comes to paying Bride price among the Kom people. There is no way one can talk about payment of Bride price without mentioning palm oil. The item remains essential but the quantity demanded will vary according to family.

4.5. Meat as a requirement for Bride price payment.

Meat too is one of the items that comes in the payment of Bride price on the side of the father. This meat is tied in a bundle and it symbolizes food for the father. It is believed in Kom that food is incomplete without meat. The evidence is clear in the nature of Kom traditional meal which is *abaiin* and *mbas* with *Kati Kati*. So, the meat actually is a symbol for food to the father. Most Kom people in times past were hunters and so used to get a lot of wives because of the available meat.

4.6. Kolanuts as part of Bride price payment

Kolanuts have been of high importance to the Kom people since from times past. Kom people used and still use Kolanuts today in several occasions and for different purposes like for peace agreements, engagements, consulting of ancestors, medication. So, in the context of Bride price payment, Kolanuts come in as one of the requirements to show that the agreement is accepted, peaceful and other things can proceed. In some families the kolanut is used to make marital vows, so the groom's family coming with the Kolanuts to the father is an indication that they come in peace. Trying to inquire more in this, an informant said;

It is said even in general according to Africans that he who brings kolanut brings peace and Kom is not exempted from this African belief.

Tim Neng Joyceline, 08/04/22

This woman is saying that kolanut brings peace as believed by Africans in general and so the groom bringing it as a requirement for Bride price payment in Kom is to show that he comes in peace.

4.7. Raffia wine as a requirement for Bride price payment

Raffia wine is one of the items that constitutes Bride price in the Kom society. It is either used in the confirmation of vows. The wine is poured into a traditional cup made out of wood or cow horn. The bride's father gives his daughter who takes a so and then gives the groom and or the groom's father to show family involved. This wine is not obliged to come in as a requirement for Bride price payment in Kom and so even with the absence of this wine, natural water is being used.

4.8. Blanket as requirement for Bride price payment.

Blanket is a requirement for the payment of Bride price in Kom. It is believed by the Kom people that the father is supposed to be kept warmth after his daughter who used to light fire for him to keep warmth will be taken by the suitor. So, blanket comes in as a sign that the groom thinks about the father to his bride that he cares about his wellbeing as far as keeping warmth is concerned. This is one of the items that rarely comes in as a requirement for Bride price nowadays but there still exist families in Kom which demand it as a part of the requirements for Bride price payment. This is to say that it is not a must to have item when talking about Bride price payment in Kom but some families still lay much emphasis on bringing it as part of Bride price payment.

In the course of searching on the items of Bride price payment that goes to the father, some other informants had this to say on the Afo a Bowain;

Afo a Bowain varies according to families, in our family it is a hundred thousand francs including the specified amount of oil that is to be brought.

Yuh Lambert on the 18/03/22 in Tinifoinbi

From the above informant, it is showing that Bride price payment in Kom actually varies from one family to another. This means that you will not expect to get same amount everywhere when you intend to get married. As the case in the above informant's family, it is 100.000francs together with the specified amount of oil demanded by the father to your to be wife.

The Afo a Bowain consists of a specified quantity of oil, a demanded amount of cash and some firewood which is actually the bride price to be given on behalf of marriage. From our study it was discovered that the Kom people have particular requirements as payment for Bride price on the side of the father which means when it comes to the father of the bride.

4.9. The “afo inawoin.”

This refers to the part of Bride price that goes to the mother. It is usually made up of mostly items in kind such as palm oil, firewood, loins, meat depending on the quantity demanded by the mother of the bride. Cash can come in if the groom wishes to chip in something out of love to his bride's mother but that doesn't mean it is the bride price or part of it. The mother usually states her “tichue” differently from that of the father and most of her requirements are mainly used in the traditional marriage celebration. The part of the mother has nothing to do with money but other items like earlier mentioned that will mostly be of use in the Ndownie. The groom could offer to give the mother some money out of love or personal

reasons but that is not part of bvb the requirements of Bride price payment in Kom when it comes to the mother.

4.10. Palm oil significance to the mothers as a requirement for payment.

The oil demanded by the mothers during Bride price in Kom is to be used for Ndowi (traditional marriage). The oil is used in cooking food for those who will be present in the traditional marriage. The quantity of palm oil is usually mostly 7tins. A portion of it is shared to the sisters of the bride's mother, some is used to apply on the bride and her maids, this symbolizes protection. Some is also kept to be given to the groom after the traditional marriage, then another portion is hidden to be given to the mother of the bride alone. This is because the items brought during Bride price have the tendency to be shared to the family of bride's mother such that she might have nothing for herself, that is why a certain portion is also hidden for her. The people believe that the mother will be the one to benefit from her daughter entirely after the marriage, that is why nothing literally is left for her during sharing but this particular one that is hidden.

4.11. Camwood as a part of Bride price payment to the mother

Camwood is grinded, mixed with water and applied on the bride's body together with the bridesmaid. The Kom people believe that the camwood is to beautify the woman and render her body softer and smooth for her to be husband. Camwood has always been used in Kom for tradition for special events and it's very symbolic in each of the context in which it is used. Aside from using the camwood during marriage as a sign of beautification and protection.. It is also used when a woman gives birth and during death rituals too.

4.12. Loins as part of Bride price payment

According to the Kom people, a man who comes to marry a lady is expected to clothe her. It is believed that she is not to go to her husband's house with the dresses from her parents' house. That is why the loins come in. The loins are usually demanded for the bride herself, her maids and friends and female cousins. An informant said something to clarify the item of loin in Bride price payment;

Do you know that in Kom when a lady is to get married, her husband is to provide loins that his wife to be will share to her friends, that is her maids and each of the eldest of her female direct cousins? (Opening eyes).

Ngam sylvi, 09/04/22

The above informant says that in Kom, when a man comes for a lady, he is to provide loins not only for his future wife alone but such that she will be able to share some to her female cousins. This means that each eldest female in her maternal line is entitled to a loin provided by the groom.

4.13. Meat as part of Bride price payment

Meat is usually demanded by the mothers of the bride in the context of Bride price negotiation. This meat should be dried one filled in a bucket. Some of the meat is shared amongst the mothers. Another portion of the meat is to be tied in a bundle and brought. This one tied in a bundle is actually what will be shared to the bridesmaids. Another portion of meat yet is to be brought for the traditional marriage ceremony itself, which is what the invitees will eat, and this one can be any other form of meat, it must not be dried.

4.14. Firewood as part of Bride price payment

Firewood is an essential demand by the mothers in the context of Bride price in Kom as it is used in cooking food for the traditional marriage and also shared to the mothers of the bride. The requested wood is usually in large quantity which could be 3 ,4 or more logs depending on the family involved.

4.15. Beads and bags as part of Bride price payment.

Beads and bags demanded by the mothers in Bride price payment are usually for the decoration of the bride and few of her maids. The bags too are for the bride and her maids. These bags are used as decoration and at the same time to collect money during dancing in the traditional marriage ceremony. The Fon of Kom canceled the issue of inserting money on the bride's dress during marriage ceremony. That is why bags come in, whereby the bride hangs it on her arm and whatever an invitee has to drop as money to bless and support the marriage is being put into that particular bag.

4.16. Those involved in the payment of Bride price in Kom

Generally, in Kom, the person involved in the payment of Bride price depends on who exactly is engaging a wife. In Kom, a father is required to engage a wife for his first son. That means if he is from a polygamous home, he does it for the first son of each of his wives. In this instance then, it is the father of the groom with his representatives (brother and or nephew) that are responsible for negotiations and transactions. After the first son, the maternal uncles and or elder male siblings / maternal cousins of the groom can take over from the father. In this case, they are representing the family since family in Kom is maternal. Trying to inquire more on this, informants had this to say;

During the payment of Bride price in Kom, we have the bride's father, the groom's representatives and the close friends to the bride's father if he chooses.

Ninin, 22/04/22

From this informant we see that payment of Bride price in Kom involves both families and these families are of course the family of the bride and of the groom with each having important representatives in it. So, we have the bride's father, his brothers and friends if he chooses to and then we have those who have come to pay the bride price who include representatives from the groom's side. Another informant shared the same information in his own words;

The payment of Bride price in Kom is an enclosed family affair whereby the most important people are involved. They include; the groom's representatives, the bride's father and his brothers too.

Ndin paul, 22/04/22

This informant too shares the same information to say that, during Bride price in Kom, it is the father of the bride, his brothers and then those who have come to represent the groom for the payment or negotiation. This is to say that the payment of Bride price involves the bride's father most importantly and the representatives of the groom. Another informant had this to add on those involved in the payment of Bride price in Kom;

The payment of Bride price in Kom is so much considered to be owned by the men, so on the side of the lady, the bride herself should be there, father of the bride, his brothers, sisters or any other considered head of the family on the side of the father.

Mispa nain, 28/04/22

From the above informant, we see that the payment of Bride price in Kom on the side of the lady when it is the lady that is to get married, the father of the bride is involved, the father's brothers, sisters and a friend if he wishes to. This is to say that on the side of the man, those involved too are different, an informant said this on the side of the man;

On the side of the man, we have the father of the groom, especially if he is the first son, or representatives of the groom in case he is not the first son, maternal aunts to the groom and the sister to the groom.

Ngam martin, 26/04/22

From the above informant we see that in Kom, on the side of the man, the father must be present or involved in the payment of the bride price when it is the first son, then with the maternal aunts, and sister to the man. In the case where it is not the first son, the representatives of the man are involved which include, the brother to the man, his maternal aunts and sister. The mother is not necessarily involved. Another informant said;

During payment of Bride price in Kom on the side of the man, the father of the man might not necessarily be there but will send his brothers as representatives together with one of the man's sister and maternal aunts. On the side of the lady, her father with his friends and brothers that he wishes to be there are involved.

Nkwain Alphonsius, 05/05/22

The above informant says that those involved in the payment of Bride price in Kom depend on whether it is on the side of the man or woman. On the side of the man his father or father's representatives, with the man's sister and maternal aunt are those to be involved while on the side of the lady, her father with his chosen brothers and friends are those involved in the payment

4.17. Location of payment.

In Kom, all items that constitute Bride price are handed over at the compound of the bride. That is, where she grew up (Father and mother's home). It is during a small intimate event in the house of the (Father potential father of the bride. We put emphasis on the word 'potential' because in Kom it is believed that your father's brothers are your fathers, your fathers' nephews are equally your fathers and so saying potential here means any of these ones who can stand to represent your born father if he is not.

Similarly, the things intended for the mothers of the bride to be are handed over during a slightly more crowded event (Ndowi). We interviewed a good number of informants and they had this to say concerning the location of Bride price payment in Kom;

As a lady when the time reaches for you to get married or a suitor has shown interest to the point of paying your Bride price, he is supposed to do that in your father's compound and nowhere else.

Yong Isabella, 03/05/22

This informant is actually saying that the sole location of Bride price payment in Kom is the bride's father's compound and nowhere else. So, the payment and all that proceeds with the payment is to be done in the girl's father's compound. Another informant adds this;

You cannot be getting married and your man comes to pay your Bride price in a different place, right? Yes, he is supposed to come and give that money in your father's compound. Another informant says;

Even if your father is in the village and lives there in his compound, it doesn't matter whether you are in the city, your Bride price is supposed to be paid in the village where your father's compound is.

Nkwain Alphonsius, 05/05/22

From the informants, it is clear that the location for Bride price payment in Kom is in the bride's father's compound. So as a lady in the Kom culture, if you are to get married, your Bride price is supposed to be paid at your father's compound. That's literally where the lady has grown up.

Another young female gives her own experience as thus;

My mum separated from my dad when I was 15yrs old and after some time I left to live with her together with her new husband. I actually grew up with this man, who is my mum's husband but when time came for me to get married, the bride price payment took place in my father's compound who is in the village.

Judith, 21/04/22

This lady's experience just cements the fact that the location is at the bride's father's compound. Another informant adds that;

Wherever the compound of the bride's father is located, that is where the bride price is given. It is usually said in Kom that where your navel was buried to show that it is the bride's father's compound.

Ernest njung, 14/04/22

This informant says that no matter where the bride's father's compound is located, that is where the payment of Bride price takes place. So, the location in Kom for the payment of Bride price in Kom is the compound of the bride's father. Another informant yet had this to say;

It does not matter whether you are abroad or wherever, you can have someone as representative to go to the bride's father's compound. That is where the bride price payment takes place.

Hilda, 19/04/22

The above informant says that the location for Bride price payment in Kom is in the girl's dad's compound and no other place. This tells us that the payment of Bride price is normally done in the father's compound where the girl actually grew up taking note that this father could be the one who raised her up on case her biological father is no longer alive. That is the one whom she was raised by.

My daughter, your father receives your Bride price in his compound. It is not done elsewhere except that your dad does not have a compound on his own but where he rents is still his compound right? so the bride price is paid in the compound where the lady grew up, where her navel was buried, that's her father's compound.

Emerencia bih, 12/04/22

This informant says the bride price payment is done in the compound where the lady grew up. Most at times it is where the lady's navel was buried.

4.18. How payment is done in Kom

The payment of Bride price in Kom is done in a very structured and organized way with respect taken on a serious note. The items of payment and any required cash are presented to the bride's family during the appropriate event. The bride's family then evaluate the items for completeness. The payment of Bride price is not obliged to happen at once but part of it could be given on the day of traditional marriage and the rest given later. Similarly, part could be given before the Ndowi (traditional marriage) and the rest given on the day of Ndowi. An informant says;

It is usually said in Kom that the groom has begun giving his tichue, which means he gives a part of the required tichue on a particular day and

then completes it progressively but the most important thing is to give all of the tichue that were demanded of you.

Yuh Lambert on 18/03/22

The above informant tells us how Bride price in Kom has to be given in completeness but can be paid at different times. It actually just depends on the negotiation level of the families. A family might agree with their daughter's suitor on the method or the time of payment depending on their understanding. This is just to say that the concept of Bride price payment in Kom is not a fixed prescribed unshakable way but remains flexible depending on the family involved and the understanding of themselves not forgetting that it is the intent of this payment that is essential to the Kom man and not the payment or mostly the how it is actually paid.

The father to the bride usually states his requirements to the suitor which include a certain amount of cash and some tins of oil which the suitor is to bring and present. The mother too will state her own requirements which are mostly in kind and might include cash if the suitor wishes to.

Payment of Bride price in Kom varies according to family and is mostly paid on the day of 'Ndowi' (Traditional marriage) as most of the items in kind will be used during the Ndowi. It could also be paid before the Ndowi whereby mostly the items in kind are provided and then the cash given to the father of the bride. After a man has shown interest in a lady and is serious about getting married to her, his family goes to the girl's parents where the requirements of the bride price will be given or stated. Trying to get more details on how Bride price payment is all about in Kom, an informant had this to say;

When you are the first son in your family and have reached the point of getting married or let's say you are responsible enough, by tradition in Kom, it is your father who goes to negotiate the bride price for you to be wife. Your father does this by right and not out of personal wish. This means that as his first son he has the right to go give Bride price and get a wife for you but then for the rest of male siblings, he might choose not to go and in that case your family (which in Kom is matrilineal have the right to go. That is, your maternal uncles, nephews or other responsible siblings.

Ephesian, 18/04/22

This informant is actually bringing out the detail of how it happens in Kom when a first son is about to get married. He tells us that, the father of this son by right has to be the one to get a wife to his son according to the Kom tradition. He adds that for the rest of the male

siblings, the other representatives can go which include the maternal uncles and nephews. This shows us that Kom is very organized and considers respect in the way they do their things and equally shows the much consideration and importance that is given to the payment of Bride price so much such that not any kind of person is involved.

Another informant says; After the process of seeking the girl's hand in marriage is over, the father of the bride states his requirements which is tichue (Bride price). It usually consists of some tins of oil and a requested cash for the father and then some items in kind requested by the mother.

Nges Alvin, 14/03/22

This informant makes us to understand that the payment of Bride price is done in a way that, the father of the bride states his requirements which include oil and a certain amount of cash while the mother too states hers which is mostly in kind. This tells us that the payment of Bride price in Kom is done on the two sides, that is the mother and the father both with their different requests. Thus, the bringing of these requirements means payment of Bride price. To add to this, another informant says;

In the payment of Bride price Bride price Kom, there is a special or particular part that is usually kept hidden known as 'Anleteh'. This literally means the hidden one. It is usually kept either for the bride's mother or father to be given after the traditional marriage.

Tohnain, 17/03/22

From the above informant, we are told that at times a part of the bride price payment could be hidden to give either to the mother or father of the bride after the traditional marriage. Another informant told us something to concretize this information;

This Anleteh is usually kept by the groom's mothers or family whereby they give 5obthe bride's mum much later. This is done because at times the oil which the mother of the bride receives, she shares with her sisters and at times very little or nothing is left for her to boast about from her daughter.

Promise mbu, 22/03/22

This informant makes us to understand that the part of the 'Anleteh' kept or hidden to give to the bride's mother much later is actually because she might have shared the wine given to her amongst her sisters and left with little or nothing. So, this part is actually reserved for her

benefit fully from her daughter's payment of Bride price. Another informant again had something to add as far as this part or nature of Bride price payment is concerned;

At times in the course of stating the bride price requirements, the father could tell the representatives on the groom's side to give a certain amount from the total amount he has asked and then keep the rest to give him when he might be in sickness or even fir his burial when he has died, in that case it is also called 'Anleteh 'but this time around for the father.

Nges Alvin, 14/03/22

This informant makes us to understand that there is yet another way if payment whereby the groom is asked to bring a portion of the total amount that he has been asked but to keep the rest or hide the rest and bring when the father of the bride might fall sick or even die. This part too is usually just respected according to the negotiation of both families and then given in due time according to the instructions of the father to the bride.

Trying to get more information on how Bride price payment is done in Kom, a married woman briefly shares her experience on how her own Bride price was paid. Weh Christabella is a 28-year-old lady who got married recently and gives her brief experience on how the payment process went;

I got married to a man who is not from Kom and so when he went to see my parents, my father requested two tins of oil and a cash amount of a hundred thousand francs. My mum requested for a plastic bucket of meat, four and a half tins of oil with another ten liters by the side, firewood and the loins I was to wrap with my maids. So, when they came with those requirements, they gave my dad's own and some of the women from my suitor's side gave the requirements asked by my mum. With the amount in cash, when me to be husband's people brought it, my dad asked me to collect and count if it was enough, I did and then handed over the cash to him. That was literally all because after that some words of blessings and wise talks was given by my dad and the traditional marriage continued in celebration of eating and other things. But concerning the payment that's what I can say about my experience.

Diangha Grace, 14/05/22

Diangha Grace's experience paints a picture of how Bride price payment is all about in Kom. We see the aspect of the requirements of the father to the bride being brought as well as that of the mother respected whereby both receive and confirm the completion before one can really say he has paid the bride price in Kom. This just says and put emphasis on the fact that payment of Bride price in Kom involves the suitor's people coming to father of the bride, which gives his requirements and the mother who equally states her requirements. The father's part belongs to the father alone and that of the mother goes to her. An informant adds a little information to bring lighter to the requirements of the mother;

The meat requested by the mother of the bride is usually brought in plastic bucket while cooked already, then with another tied in a bundle. It is from this meat in the bucket that the portion going to the father of the bride on the day of traditional marriage is taken from. Then, the one shared to the bride's maids is actually the bundle of meat tied aside.

Bobbe Ngong, 17/05/22

This just gives us lighter on how the requirements especially from the mother's side in terms of the meat brought in buckets and so is being shared. In trying to get more on the how of the payment of Bride price among the Kom people, another informant said this in her words;

On the day they are coming to give Afo a Bowain, they also bring along some items like firewood and the bride's dresses if they are available. This is because you cannot come into a house and just get the father without considering the mother of the house too and when they are coming for the mother, they reserve something little too for the father. That's just it...

Fumbui Aarone ,04/04/22 NjiniKom

This informant is saying that on the day the bride price on the side of the father which is what she refers to in Kom language as Afo a Bowain, some items too are brought to give to the mother and these items are usually firewood and at times the clothing of the bride, so that by the time the representatives on the groom's side are settling the bride price presentation to the father, some female representatives too are with the mum to give her a toast of their coming. This is to say that, among the Kom people on the day when the Afo a Bowain is to be brought, the mother is not completely ignored but also considered. This equally goes same for the father on the day his daughter's people come to settle Bride price on the side of the mother, which means the father too is greeted with some requirements from the mother's side like meat and

some wood too. This is because the Kom people believe that you cannot come into someone's house for whatever purpose and ignore to greet the father no matter what business you had treating with the mother only. That explains why something is brought for both parties on the day that is reserved for either of them. Still in the same aspect, another informant said these in his words;

At times when the father to the woman you intend to marry tells you that as Bride price for his daughter you need to give 5tichues which are equivalent to some tins of palm oil depending on how a tichue is valued, if you bring all at once he would tell you that he is not selling a goat and so that you should give part and then complete the rest much later. This much later the father is talking about could be when he is down financially or in urgent need of money.

Nkwain Alphonsius, 05/05/22

This informant brings it clear that Bride price is not paid all at once in Kom, there is a part that is given and then another completed later. It is believed in Kom that Bride price never gets complete enough. That is why the father requests part of it to be brought much later and this could be when he is on a sick bed or something. At times this remaining part of tichue (Bride price) could stay as long as the father wants. When he notices that he might die any time soon, he would tell his brothers about the number of tichue that each of his son in-laws are still owing such that if he dies, each of these son in-laws will come and give theirs so that it helps in the burial. Another informant says;

When the representatives of the groom come to show their interest in marrying a lady for their son or brother, they go to the mother but the mother will send them to the father saying they should go and see the father of the house. It is when they must have finished with that of the father that they come for the mother's own part.

Yong Isabella, 03/05/22

From the above informant, we see that Bride price payment in Kom begins with the father. It is only after the father's part has been settled that the mother's part too follows. This means that order and respect is manifested even in the context of payment recognizing the head of the family which is of so much importance to the Kom man. This is to say that payment of

Bride price in Kom is first of all done on the side of the father before done on the side of the mother.

When a man intends to get married, he dies with his family to the lady's compound and while they, he sees the mother who will in turn send them to the father. The father will state his requirements. He will ask for an amount that he gave to his own father in-law, he will request some tins of oil still depending on how he did during his time. On the side of the mother, she had her own requirements too, which could be two, three, five or more tins of oil. Meat, firewood. The oil is put in something called "avii a fukah". Some of these avii a fukah can contain two, three, five tons of oil, it is according to size. The father requests for his own part of the payment and the mother requests her own part of the payment. The two do it mix up. The cash is received by the father while most of the items go to the mother.

Ndah james, 08/505/22

The above informant explains how the payment of Bride price is done in Kom and says that the father states his own requirements while the mother does same. The part of the bride price in money goes to the father with a few items while the part which consists mostly of the items that will be used in the traditional marriage goes to the mother. The two are not demanded simultaneously but at different times.

Another informant says that "The payment of Bride price in Kom is valued or measured in terms of tichue. Tichue here is the content of Bride price that the father demands. If during the time this father was about to get married, he gave for example five tichue to his father in-law, he will ask for the same five tichue from his daughter's suitor, and each tichue can represent one, two, three or any number of tins of oil as well as it can represent a particular amount of money depending on the family.

This informant says that the payment of Bride price is done depending on how the father of the lady did pay his own and so if he gave a certain number of tichue, it is that same number that he should request from his daughter's suitor. This means that according to the Kom people the payment can be described as a give and take kind of a thing. That is what the father gave during his own time is what he eventually can request for on his daughter today.

4.19. What determines the nature of payment in Kom?

What determines the nature of Bride price in Kom varies according to families. The determinants are therefore heterogeneous. In a family, the father can base on what he himself gave on behalf of his wife, in another, they may base themselves on the educational level of their daughter, the position of the daughter in the family and even the status and of how much help she is to the family in terms of financial assistance. In Kom, quantities are not necessarily prescribed by tradition and so, most fathers of the bride do not ask for more than what they gave for their own wife. However other determinants as listed above may come into play including changing times, value of items. All these rests on the shoulders of the father to the bride to determine for his daughter. In trying to get more on this, an informant said;

In my family for instance it is Five Tichue on both sides, that is the side of the mother and father.

Fumbui Aarone on the 04/04/22 in Tinifoinbi

This father tells us that in his family it is 15 tins of oil on both sides, which means on the side of the father as well as the mother. It should be recalled here that Bride price in Kom is actually termed as 'tichue' and each tichue represents 3 tins of oil. The above informant's information makes it clear that, Bride price itself varies according to family. You will not find a general or specific amount prescribed in the entire Kom culture as Bride price but rather it is determined by each family based on specific criteria.

Another informant says; In Kom we don't focus on quantities if whatsoever when it comes to Bride price because it is a continuous thing right?.

Ndah James on the 08/05/22 at Tinifoinb

This actually says that the payment of Bride price in Kom is not a fixed once and for all kind of a thing but a continuous process. The groom is still expected to take care of his family in-law and chip in something to take care and so it continues. That is why in Kom you would hardly find a suitor being rejected because a particular amount was not given or a certain degree of items did not reach up to expectation because they are interested in good living with their daughter and since you the groom is to become part of the family, you are welcomed and being scared away with high prices of Bride price

In Kom, it is a tradition that every father goes to pay his first son's Bride price for his son to get a wife. He is the one by right who has to go and negotiate Bride price in order to get a wife for his son. In trying to understand more on this, an informant said:

Actually, in Kom the father is the one who pays his first son's Bride price. This is a tradition among the Kom people, so if he is a polygamist, he will certainly negotiate Bride price for his two first sons.

Mispa nain, 28/04/22

From the above informant we realize that the first son's nature of payment differs from the others in the sense that it is a right for their father to go and negotiate the bride price for them to get a wife. Still in the same light, another informant says;

There are some families that will ask Bride price depending on what the father gave as Bride price in order to get his wife. Yet there are others that look at their daughter's level of education.

Ndim paul, 24/04/22

From this informant, we realize that the determinants of Bride price in Kom cannot be generalized into a specific condition as it differs depending on the family involved. This means that each family depending on how they decide, say what they want the bride price payment of their daughter to be, the criteria they use to determine this Bride price is therefore left to them. Another informant says;

Every family has its own way of handling the bride price payment of their daughters. In my case for instance, my father took just exactly what he had paid as bride on my mum's head. He didn't consider or look at how far I have gone in education and all that...

Mispa nain, 28/04/22 Tinifoinbi

This informant is literally saying that the payment of bride price in Kom vary according to family, which means each family has its determinants when it comes to payment of Bride price. There is no general determinant that you will find everywhere and in all families in Kom in terms of Bride price payment. You could go to a certain family and they tell you the payment based on what the father too gave on behalf of his wife who you can go to another and get a payment orientation based on the lady's education level or other factors. Another informant says;

The determinants of Bride price are according to the specific family concerned. My junior sister just got married and my father demanded a

hundred thousand francs with a bundle of zinc that was valued in money, making altogether four hundred thousand francs. Another family will demand a different quantity based on their criteria.

Ngam martin, 26/04/22

We realize that in Kom there is no general amount of Bride price payment that one will pay regardless of the family in which he finds himself but each family determines what payment should be given on behalf of their daughter as is the case with Ndim Genesis whom the father collected four hundred thousand on his sister's head. Still in the process of inquiry as far as what determine Bride price in Kom is concerned, other informants said these;

It varies from family to family my dear. Each family knows what they went through na. You can find yourself in a family that wouldn't consider the status of their daughter and state you their requirements, another will depend on what he gave to his father in-law.

Hilda, 19/04/22

The above informant still adds to the information shared by other informants on the fact that, bride price payment varies according to family and that families decide base on their wish how they will want their daughter's Bride price to be. This means that the determinants could be education, family status or much more but each family has a particular determinant or what guides them in the nature of payment for their daughters Bride price. Another informant says;

What determines the nature of Bride price in Kom is according to families ehln. Each family decides how the payment of their daughters Bride price should go about. In certain families it is only in the case of their first daughter that the father requests for exactly what he himself gave to his father-in-law to marry his wife, the rest of the female siblings are like benefits and the father can ask above or whatsoever he wishes. In other families they will consider from the first daughter and ask for what they wish from their daughter's suitor.

Diangha Grace, 14/05/22 Tinifoinbi

The above informant is saying that the payment of Bride price in Kom is determine by various factors but which vary according to family. The factors or reasons could be based on what the father gave on behalf of his wife, it could be depending on a tradition in that particular

family same as it could be educational or otherwise. So, no matter the factor which determines, it will depend on the family involved.

4.20. Nature of payment for those who are not first sons.

The nature of payment or who goes to represent a man when he goes to get a wife in Kom when he is not the first son is different because in this case, the father is no longer under the obligation to go and negotiate the bride price or get involve in the process of negotiating for his son's bride price. An informant explains this to us better in his own words;

In Kom when you are not the first son of your father, it is not by obligation that he stands to negotiate Bride price for you to get a wife but other representatives are responsible and these representatives involve people from the mother's side because remember we consider family in Kom to be matrilineal and so you maternal uncles or nephews could be those involved in the payment when you are not the first son.

Johnson, 12/03/22

This informant is telling us that in as much as the father is under obligation to go for his first sons' negotiation of Bride price, it is no longer the case for the rest of the sons as he now decides whether or not to go but those who stand represent him in this case are maternal uncles. It is also to be taken note that these maternal uncles could go along with the paternal uncles as your father's brother in Kom is your father equally. So, in as much as the maternal uncle are the ones represent, your paternal uncles could join if they wish.

4.21. Nature of payment for first sons.

In Kom, when you are the first son to your father, by tradition and right your father has to go for the payment or negotiation of Bride price when you intend to marry. This means that your father must be available during the payment to get your wife for you. In inquiring more on this, an informant said;

In Kom it is a tradition that every father goes for his first son or sons' payment of Bride price. His presence during this payment is obliged.

Michael Johnson, 05/04/22

This informant tells us that when it comes to first sons in Kom, their father is under the right to go for the payment of Bride price to get a wife for them. This means that first sons have

their method and obligations attached to it. This obligation is the fact that the father of the man or this first son must be present for the negotiation of the payment of bride price.

Despite the fact that Bride price payment is determined by individual families in Kom, there are still some general determinants such as; education, position of the girl in the family, status of the lady.

4.22. Education as a determinant for Bride price payment

Education is one of the elements that determines Bride price payment among the Kom people. It may sound controversial to say that education being a determinant of Bride price payment in Kom is not still a general determinant. This means that some families don't have education as a base for Bride price payment. The higher the education level of the lady, the higher the bride price in terms of cash. Other items remain I like that, only the cash that is being moved. When a lady is educated according to the Kom man, she is not only a wife but a source of income and a source of pride to the man, which means that he already has a guarantee of financial assistance. In that sense, her Bride price is higher as demanded by the parents. Often when a lady is educated, the Kom man believes that she can be reliable to the family in terms of help, but then when this lady is about to get married, it is indicating that the man in question will automatically have rights over this lady. That is why her Bride price has some difference, given that all of these is taken into consideration. Though Bride price is still viewed as a symbol, education still comes in to determine the kind of person that Bride price is to be paid upon. Trying to get more on this, some informants had this to say;

The bride price payment on a lady that has gone to school is taken with the consciousness that she is a literate. I for instance, my dad had to make my spouse know that my Bride price will be somehow heavy given the fact that I have gone to school.

Emerencia bih, 12/04/22

From the above informant we see that the bride price that was given on her head was paid with the consideration that she has been to school and is literate. So, her parents made the bride price payment to be in such a way that it will respect her level of education. Another informant says;

For instance, you interviewing me who has gone to school to the level of university until you are about to get your masters, you think if a man comes

now that he wants to get married to you your parents won't consider your level of education? They will do. That's to tell you that education determines Bride price in Kom.

Ngam sylvi, 09/04/22

This lady in the course is sharing her idea on education being a determinant of Bride price among the Kom people tends to do that in the form of a question as seen above, to show the place of education in the lives of the Kom people and how it actually determines the nature of Bride price payment. This means that in the absence of an education as a determinant, another thing would still come in showing the heterogeneous nature of what determines the payment of Bride price in Kom.

4.23. Age as a determinant for Bride price payment

The Kom man believes that a Kom woman needs to get married. A lady who grows up and matures should normally get married. The Kom man also believes that a woman who gets married is supposed to reproduce. So, when a lady who is still very in her fruitful age like from 18 to about mid-thirties is getting married, the payment of Bride price tends to be higher than a lady who gets married when she is in her late forties because it is believed that the probability for her to be still very fruitful is very low given that reproduction is the primary awaited good thing from marriage. An informant had this to share on this aspect;

I have a sister who got married at 41years and in her context, my parents were kind of thankful to the person who came for her hand in marriage and so the bride price was not much considered, that the suitor just had to give what he had and my parents received.

Hygiena, 28/03/22

From the above informant's experience, it shows that age actually determines Bride price payment in Kom. The above girl's sister got married at an age that is generally considered not to be a very fruitful one and so her Bride price had to be less than that of her sisters that were much younger and had gotten married. This is to say that age determines the nature of Bride price according to the Kom man.

4.24. Status as a determinant for Bride price payment.

Status here refers to the position the lady occupies in the family, A lady who is already financially independent and takes care of her parents together with her siblings is considered as a pillar of the family to a Kom man, and so coming to get married to this kind of lady will

mean removing this great pillar and of course her Bride price will be much more determined by that status she occupies. A woman of that status in Kom has a high Bride price to that who is not in position of that status. Also, in the case where she is the first daughter in the family, the Kom man considers her as the first and this is a strong position in the family so the bride price payment too will be done taking into consideration this aspect. An informant had this to share in a bit to expatiate more on this fact;

My elder sister is the one who mostly takes care of us including our education, clothing and much more. We are four in number in our family and she happens to be the first amongst us all who are girls. When she was to get married, my dad at first was very reluctant but has to do the needful because she had to go and start forming her own family. So, he will discuss with my mum and be like, your daughter's suitor has to be well grounded or not my daughter won't go anywhere. That was indicating that it wasn't easy to just let my elder sister go if the man was not very capable.

Tim Neng Joyceline, 08/04/22

This gives us a clue of the fact that, the girl's status to an extent determined the nature of Bride price of the girl because not only was she financially independent already but she had all of her siblings under her care and so when time came for her to get married, the parents stated her Bride price payment with the consciousness of her status showing clearly how status determines Bride price in Kom.

Also, the family status of the lady determines the bride price payment in Kom. Family status here refers to the kind of family the lady comes from, for example a lady from the palace is not considered as an ordinary woman out of palace. A lady from a palace is a princess, and her Bride price is much higher than an ordinary one who is not from the palace. A man who comes to marry from such a family should prepare himself as the bride price is determined taking into consideration the fact that she is from the palace. This is to say that the bride price payment of a lady from the palace is different from the one who is not from the palace or from a royal family. The Kom people believe that the royal family is to be honored and respected. It is a privilege to be from a royal family and so a lady from there will be treated with much more honor that is why her Bride price is higher than the ordinary lady from a non-royal family.

It is important to note at the end of this chapter that, the payment of Bride price in Kom is made up of Afo a Bowain and Afo iNawoin. What determines the nature of payment varies according to family except for the case of first sons which is general whereby the father goes

for the negotiation of payment to marry a wife for his son. The location of the payment is at the bride's father's compound while those involved in the payment include the father to the groom, his representatives and then maternal aunts, groom's sister for the lady and the man's side respectively.

**CHAPTER FIVE: DYNAMICS OF BRIDE
PRICE IN KOM**

This chapter is on the changes around the concept, perception and payment of Bride price among the Kom people of the Northwest region of Cameroon. It will cover the history of Bride price in Kom and the various changes that can be observed as far as Bride price is concerned among the Kom people.

5.1. The history of Bride price in Kom

Generally, a Kom man by nature is hospitable. They can sacrifice and welcome a stranger to their home and satisfy the stranger at their own comfort. They place others first and do not ignore one who is in need. Added to that, Kom people are very peaceful set of human beings by nature and will do anything to maintain that peace with everyone. This virtue is observed in the way they cherish family so much that they do all to be at peace with them. This peaceful nature of a Kom man can be traced back to their migration. History holds that the Kom people have lived among many ethnic groups before settling where they are today. These ethnic groups are about seven in number. They lived among these groups before having to settle where they are today. In all of these places the Kom man lived peacefully and has always tried to maintain a peaceful relationship with these people till date. Relationship is a great virtue to the Kom people. A Kom man does all to maintain relationship with different ethnic groups for many reasons such as; security, economic and social reasons.

Also, power being a social production that has the possibility to determine capacities, actions and beliefs is very important to the Kom man. This explains why the hospitable nature and being very peaceful leads them to exercise power so as to achieve the belief systems they desire as a people. The Kom people love power and to achieve that power, they create allies that is relationships so as to have it. It is generally said in African that power is people or population makes power. According to the above reasons then, marriage to a Kom man was for a little or more Bride price. Before, just a friendship between families could establish a strong ground for one family giving their daughter in marriage to another family. The hospitable nature of the Kom people exposed above is what made marriage in the times past to be do much of an exchange without any form of money or great items involved.

The wish of Kom people was always that peace be promoted or extended to others and this was manifested through giving their daughters at times in marriage out of an act of hospitality from the suitor. Once the family was observed to be a peaceful one that was also hospitable in nature marriage happened with much ease. This continued progressively, that some suitors would come with the little they had in order to exchange as a symbol to get a wife.

Hunters at times would reserve their best hunt and present to their bride's fathers. Others yet will yet would decide to render services and out of their hospitable service, would be given a wife as a form of appreciation. The main concern was always around hospitality and peace. Once the relationship with another promoted peace, marriage took place without any constraint and this was manifested through giving their daughters at times in marriage out of an act of hospitality from the suitor. Once the family was observed to be a peaceful one that was also hospitable in nature.

This continued and progressively some suitors would come with the little they had in order to exchange as a symbol to get a wife. Hunters at times would reserve their best hunt and present to their bride's fathers as a token of the love they had for their daughter. Some who were farmers would cultivate and harvest the best to take to their brides' fathers, others yet would decide to render services to the lady's family and out of their service would be given a wife. The main concern was always around hospitality and peace. Once the relationship with another promoted peace marriage was not a big deal especially in the sense of worrying about what to bring to be father in-law. It was observed that as time went on, productivity increased due to working tools expansion and so people could bring out more from their activities of which the main was farming. Naturally when one thinks of getting married the parents would consider for instance the harvest from the suitor's farm or any other token from his activity just so that it can stand as a symbol to show that marriage has taken place. In as much as all of these were being done, the Kom man was conscious of the fact that, a Kom lady was not an object and so had to come up with something that will stand as a symbol of agreement when marriage takes place.

The Fon of Kom together with his sub chiefs had to hold a meeting on how to make this agreement in marriage a symbolic thing. This of course had to include something that will stand in exchange of the bride before marriage is sealed in Kom. To implement this idea, a couple of items in specific quantities were arrived at to stand as Bride price in the context of marriage. This was done in order to make the agreement done by the two families a symbolic one. The idea of bringing what you had was agreed upon that any suitor who intends to get married, should give what he has a md can for his bride's family and that could stand as Bride price or represent Bride price for marriage to eventually happen.

In trying to find more on the history of Bride price in Kom, informants had this to say;

In the beginning palm oil never existed in Kom and so Kom people used to eat egussi. This egussi was been cooked and that is what they depended on as palm oil. As time went on, some Kom people started moving out to other areas like Nigeria for buying and selling that was when they discovered palm oil, bought it and brought it back to the Kom land. Before then, it used to be certain prescribed number of tichue. A family could ask for three, seven or more tichue's and each tichue represented a stick with five Bush Rats inserted in it. That is what was taken as Bride price. Also, a man could just enter a compound assist in doing some chores like fetching of firewood and out of his good service he will be given a wife and then ask him to bring a demanded number of tichue, that's Bush rats inserted in a stick. As time went on, the people who travelled out and discovered oil came back and proposed to the Fon of Kom to introduce palm oil as a requirement for Bride price but the Fon was reluctant due to the scarcity of Palm oil in the Kom land but ended up accepting the oil to replace the Bush Rats inserted in a stick, so from then, each tichue now represented a tin of oil.

Ninin, 22/04/22

The above informant narrates that before the coming of palm oil into the Kom land, the Kom people used to live on egussi which used to come from the Nigerian land. This egussi was the main ingredient they used in the preparation of their meals during occasions. It was not until when some of the Kom people travelled out for buying and selling that they discovered palm oil in Nigeria, bought some and brought back to their land. It was then that they could move from demanding a certain number of tichues which used to be represented in sticks of Bush rats to palm oil. That is, Bride price was now valued in terms of palm oil. The number of tichues that was asked was to be represented in tins of oil. For instance, if you were asked to bring 3 tichues as Bride price, it therefore meant three tins of Oil. This shows that in the beginning or ancient times, the Kom people never had access to palm oil and so dwelt on Bush rats as a requirement for Bride price but later on, palm oil came in. Still in the history of Bride price in Kom, another informant had this to say;

In the times past, Bride price was not palm oil or any of the items we find today. A man was given a wife based on his strength, his abilities. When a family saw a man to be very hardworking, one who could fetch firewood, work a farm and work very hard, he would be given a wife. A hunter for

instance who could hunt well and was very dynamic in his hunting skills would hunt and bring the output, then a wife given to him. At times a man could owe someone an amount of money which he is unable to pay and give his daughter as a wife in exchange for the debt. Some compounds are recognized in Kom as one with humus, others are recognized with "Njang Fubom" that is, funeral songs. A man could find himself in any of these compounds and maybe out of his dancing skills be compensated with a wife. These abilities displayed by the man then used to stand as Bride price whereby acts of service and abilities would qualify a man to have a wife.

Michael Johnson, 05/04/22

The above informant gives his own narrations that the things that used to stand as Bride price in Kom rested on the man's natural abilities, his hardworking nature and acts of service. This means that, it is used to suffice that a man be naturally hardworking in the sense of being able to work a farm, fetch firewood. Also, through a man's ability he could be given a wife. For instance, hunting, dancing or any other ability were potential ways to get a wife. Another informant had this to share about the history of Bride price in Kom;

Kom started without knowing the concept of Bride price. They used to look at families and identify one that has as values respect, love, hardworking, good character. Some parents or fathers who had started building their houses and left to maybe roof it, would propose to the man if he can roof it. Once he is capable of roofing the house, the father would hand over his daughter or one of his daughters to the man as his wife. The Kom man believed that a good behaved man would only give birth to another good behaved, so they were moved by that and gave their daughters in marriage on the basis of the man's character. At times a father would eat someone's thing and when the time to refund comes and he has nothing, he gives out his daughter.

Yuh Lambert, 18/03/22

This informant says that the concept of Bride price did not exist in Kom before parents were moved by good behavior, hardworking and in a way to recover their debt before giving out their daughter in marriage. This means that what stood as Bride price if we must say so were good character, well behaved family and hard work. Any of these virtues could gain a wife

for a man in Kom without having to give something extra. Another informant shares about the history of Bride price in Kom. This other informant had this to add;

I know that in times past, a woman used to be given free of charge in palaces during some celebrations whereby many will be invited and in the course of that, the best dancer would be motivated with a wife upon his dancing skills. Also, a Fon could get any woman of his choice because of his position as a Fon, so nothing was given in terms of money but just the ability and position could make one get a wife without extra payments in terms of Bride price.

Tohnain, 17/03/22

This informant adds that, a man through his natural ability could have a wife not because of anything he presented to the parents of his wife but his abilities would do that. Still to discover more on the history of Bride price, another informant yet had this to say;

If you grow up and find a pattern of doing things, you will align right. We grew up to see that Bride price did not use to be a great deal as it is today. This means that a family used to state its tichue but the value of a tichue was not as it is today. A father could state his tichue to be represented as a few logs of firewood and that was it, you take your wife and go. Also growing up my grandparents use to tell me that ladies were given to men in marriage during annual festivals in Kom whereby through a man's talent of dancing or anything he is compensated with a lady to take as his wife.

Ntoh Emerencia, 23/03/22

This informant yet adds that Bride price used to stand as skills observed from a man, or even a few items like firewood demanded and the issue of bride price is settled. All of these informants' stories of the history of Bride price in Kom show that Bride price in Kom used to be more of what was available at the time. For example, the egussi that was mentioned, the Bush rats and many more. Emphasis was also laid on the family background of the man, his skills and talents, hardworking spirit and marriage could happen. This is to say that the Kom people in the times past did not lay emphasis on money per say, the much quantity of items we find today and required tins of oil demanded today, meaning that a hardworking man with no money could get a wife, a man well behaved could as well get a wife, a man from a good

behaved family and the issue of debts refunding were all elements that could promote marriage without necessarily having specific demands in the name of bride price.

5.2. Changes in the representation of Bride price in Kom

The representation of Bride price in Kom has experienced some changes especially in the aspect of payment. The how and the where of the payment. bride price is no longer given according to the Kom culture which demands that a father should not receive more than what he gave as bride price to his own father in-law, but today fathers place the amounts they desire as bride price taking into consideration a lot of factors like; education, status, position which usually results in amounts greater than what the father to the bride gave to have his own wife. With the coming of evolution, the Kom people embraced education for the girl child and so this has influenced the nature of bride price in the sense that it now determines what a suitor should bring as Bride price in Kom. Also, the payment of bride price which is to be done at the bride's father's compound now mostly happens in strange areas as agreed by the family due to ongoing crisis. Trying to get more on the changes around Bride price among the Kom people, informants had this to say;

In the times past Camwood used to be applied on the whole body of the woman about to get married but today it is done on the arms and legs only with about six maids each having a loin to wrap when in those day, two or three maids only would have something to tie.

Bobe Ngong 17/05/22, Yaoundé

Bobe Ngong brings put the area of change he has observed from the Kom traditional marriage and points out the aspect of Camwood which used to be applied on the whole body but says today it is being done on the arms and legs only. He equally points out the aspect of maids having loins and says that in those days in the Kom land, you could have as many maids but mostly just two of them will have loins to wrap but it has become entirely different today whereby all the maids have loins.

5.3. Modernization, change of practice or commercialization?

A review of the current bride price practices and other actions there in reveals that with modernization and modernity setting in, the bride price practices of the Kom people have dramatically changed to the extent that the original meaning which was just to symbolize marriage has changed to something that is hard to explain even by the elders. Definitely, it is expected that once society modernizes even traditional characteristics change including bride

price practices. But the problematic issue with this change in bride price is that it has turned to a showy affair full of expensive and extravagant elements that have scared many young men off marriage. It has got riddled with Capitalistic tendencies that put financial gain at the fore front especially among the educated. Most respondents interviewed contended that much and said it has changed meaning to an expensive merry making affair. It is this element of 'show of modernity' that has made it very attractive among the young generation. Some informants had this to say in view of that;

At first this issue of education was not taken into consideration in the course of giving out a daughter in marriage among the Kom people. It is today that it is seen being put as a spring board to charge high bride price.

Ndah James on 08/05/22

The informant above states the current experiences around the practice of bride price in Kom and lays emphasis on the fact that education is now like a basis for the amount families demand as bride price for their daughters. This is to point out the dynamics happening around the practice of bride price as of today among the Kom people. Another informant, Ngam Kenneth adds that he himself prepared so well financially when he knew that the lady he wanted to get married to, had gone higher in education;

I know that today you cannot marry a Kom girl who has gone to school to a certain higher level without being financially responsible. That is why I prepared myself and behold it was not easy with the family demands.

Ngam Kenneth, 11/04/22

We see from the informant's experience that he didn't find it easy with the family if the lady he was to get married to and that was mainly because the lady was educated. This experience tells us that to marry from Kom today especially a lady who has a sound educational experience is not to be taken lightly. Something which of course was not a big deal in the times past. Another informant adds this to support the fact that indeed bride price practices and traditions are changing in Kom with the coming of education;

“There are very few compounds in Kom today who still respect the Kom tradition which held that a man is not to request more than the amount he himself gave for his wife when his daughter's suitor come for marriage.

Doris, Yaoundé on 24/03/22

The above informant affirms that the concept of bride price and its practices among the Kom people has changed in the sense that families now allow the level of the lady's education to determine the nature of bride price and not based on the tradition which holds that you request for only that which you as a father gave out to your own father-in-law and not more. Another informant yet says;

(Laughs...) Even I as a father will not request for fifty thousand francs on my daughter even though that's what I gave my wife's bride price. I sent my daughter to school and I am ready to sponsor her to the highest level.

Toh sam on 20/04/22 Yaoundé

This informant confidently talks on how he is going to handle the issue of his lady's bride price considering the fact that she has gone to school and he the father is ready to sponsor her to whatsoever level. Showing how education is influencing the practices and representation of bride price.

5.4. From local items to modern gifts

A discussion with some elders of the Kom community revealed that in the past, Bride price involved exchanging small symbolic items for the sake of bonding of the two families. Even just bush meat and some acts of service would be exchanged and the function would be complete. It was not a common thing to find families exchanging cash as bride price. But currently the nature and number of gifts have drastically increased. In addition to the hefty amounts of cash and meat, other items like zinc, lands, houses are exchanged. Those so-called modern items have made the practice expensive and hard for the less wealthy to afford and because of the copying effect and peer pressure, many couples would love to organize or deliver property that is similar to what their colleagues paid. Those who feel that they cannot afford what their peers paid out to ignore bride price and marriage altogether till when they can raise a lot of property. In trying to find out more on this, informants had this to say;

I got married to my wife thanks to the skill of hunting I possess. I caught favor in the eyes of my father-in-law due to my hunting skills. One day he jokingly said I would marry one of his daughters so that he can benefit from the Bush meats. It became a reality when after one great hunt, I brought to him a gigantic Bush rat.

17/03/22, Tohnain Julius Tinifoinbi

The above informant says how he got a wife in the times with an exchange of bush meat and of course that was due to his excellent hunting skills. This is showing the change from local products to modern ones today like lands, money and even houses which are being used today in bride price practices among the Kom people. To say that there is a change today from local products that used to be exchanged in bride price to modern ones.

Another informant yet says;

In times past, we didn't have things like money or cars in the exchange of bride price, things like palm oil, bushmeat, logs of firewood were the common things when bride price was concerned. 21/04/22, Judith

From this informant, we see the change that has happened in terms of products exchanged in marriage among the Kom people. That is to say there have changes that can be observed in terms of the products as they move from local to modern ones like lands and others in the practice of bride price.

5.5. 'Modern' bride price ceremonies and experiences

In the past, Bride price carried a small function attended by only close family members from both sides. No mega parties used to be organized but presently, the ceremony involves a fully-fledged mega party either conducted at home or in hotels involving modern items, modern activities, modern dressing and even food. Practices in the ceremonies of bride price in Kom has experienced some changes equally in the aspect of presenting the bride after she has been dressed up. At first any amount of five hundred francs or one thousand francs made a lot of sense to seal the presentation of the bride but today the presence of MC known as the 'Gwedeng' according to the Kom people has turned it to something else whereby money is collected from invitees in the name of acknowledging the presentation of the bride.



Picture 4: Picture of the modern bride

Source : Web

The marriage ceremony I attended testifies to this trend. For example, in Rita's marriage ceremony there were 11 tents full of guests, the groom's team consisted of 35 members unlike in the past where they barely crossed 5 in number. There were hired musicians, traditional dancing groups. All these make the ceremony expensive even if you leave alone the actual property exchanged.

As a procedure, before the bride comes out to be unveiled to the guests, groups of ladies first come out in groups of four or five and in most cases, these are like 2 to 3 groups in Kom. But today even when the bride has been unveiled, the ladies keep coming back and every time they come with new sorts of dresses and shoes, with new hair designs, which means a standby hairdresser has to be paid to keep working on them. All these actions are new in the practice and are showy but they are what the young generation of Kom refers to be modern and die for.

It has to be noted that at face value all the above modifications and items in the ceremonies have no problem and they make the function colorful and attractive which increases happiness for the couple and friends. But without corresponding incomes to cater for these

items, many people who cannot afford those expenses have shied away from the practice and are forced to stay on cohabiting relationship or postpone marriage instead of paying little and organizing small ceremonies that may make them feel ashamed. Most informants agreed that this has become problematic in current times. The forces of modernization have influenced the perceptions and procedures of Bride price among the Kom people. This influence has been affected in the way the major ceremonies are organized. An informant confirmed this by telling us about a friend's traditional marriage she attended in Kom and cemented the fact that it was more of a gigantic ceremony making her scared of her suitor's potential to organize such. These were her words;

Hilda's traditional marriage was like heaven on earth, I wonder whether it was three people's marriage put altogether or just hers. The dressing, the decorations, the maids multi changing of dresses, all that made me feel uncomfortable about my suitor who was preparing to come for my hand in marriage, like I thought he was too poor to produce the level I saw at Hilda's traditional marriage.

Hilda on 19/04/22, Yaoundé

The above experience confirms the fact that the practices and nature of ceremonies around bride price are changing along with time, people making their ceremonies more pronounced and focused on fancy, expensive dressing, meals and a lot more.

Changes have occurred around bride price and the ceremonies attached to its payment in Kom. Before, particular bags called Bo chi that represented the Kom tradition were used in the context of bride price payment. But today we find bags made of batch that are sewed and are being used. We also had at the level of decorating the bride, beads that represented the Kom people called 'I fuo ilah' but we find people using borrowed beads which are being inserted on the head, wrist, waist originating from the Nigerian culture. During the traditional marriage in Kom the time to present the bride was marked by one of her groom's brother's wives who would come with a note of 2000frs or 5000frs depending on what she has and then place on the feet of the bride as a way of honoring her exposure to the invitees. Today the master of the ceremony who is termed 'Gwedeng' according to the Kom people would rather call on invitees to come up each with various amounts that they have in order to wrist, waist insert on the bride which is already out of the Kom cultural demands. This money is inserted by the invitees either on the beads in her head or waist or wherever the beads are found. Thus, sort of commercializing the

occasion of traditional marriage in Kom. Concerning the payment, change has been observed in the sense that parents now take a lot of consideration on the investment they have made so far on their daughters in terms of education especially before determining the amount to receive as bride price for their daughters. This means that they no longer request just the amount they themselves gave to get their own wives but go beyond that on the basis of their investment in their daughters. Lam Gilbert shares the experience they had just if recent when his sister's daughter was to get married and talks on how the father who is the husband to his sister requested for an amount extremely more than that which he himself gave to get his wife. He said;

When my sister was to give her daughter out in marriage, her husband demanded a huge amount than what he had given on my sister's head. This was serious that the suitor had to go and prepare himself again before coming after a lot of resistance.

Ndim paul on 24/04/22

The above informant narrates how because of money, his niece's suitor had to go and prepare himself again before coming back to finalize marriage procedures. Something that was strange to get among the Kom people in the times past showing the changes that are affecting the practices of bride price in Kom.

5.6. Time of the occasion

Ceremonies concerning bride price and traditional marriages in Kom used to be done during the night but today the 'kwifoyn' denied that these ceremonies or celebrations should be held at night and shifted it during the day time. In the course of finding out more on this an informant had this to say;

The kwifoyn declared that any ceremony concerning bride price and traditional marriage in Kom should be held during the day, as from 3pm and by 6pm things are done.

Ngam kenneth on 11/04/22

The present nature of bride price celebration and traditional marriages in Kom is now done during the day as opposed to before when it used to be done in the night. This informant affirms that, by giving the time that the kwifoyn prescribed to show how serious and practical that has become among the lives of the Kom people as of today. Another informant yet adds this;

Bride price practices in Kom that is traditional marriage is no longer done during the night but in the day.

Ndah James, Yaoundé on 30/04/23

The above informant just comes to add that *ceremonies as regards bride price in Kom are no longer done in the night the way it used to be done before but it has been shifted to be done during the day time. He went further to explain that it used to be done during the night so as to keep the unveiling of the bride to be secret but at the same brought some inconveniences. That is why the kwifoyn had to declare that anything that has to do with ceremonies as concern bride price should be done only during the day so as to avoid the inconveniences and dangers of the night.*

5.7. Decoration and dressing of the bride.

In those days, simple loin was enough with a few beads in order to dress and they decorate the bride for traditional marriage. The bridesmaids were to each bring along their various loins to use for the traditional marriage but today it has become a variety whereby huge numbers of loins are required by the bride from her husband to be. This scares those who do not have enough to shy away and feel tempted that if it is not done that way with numerous loins then it will not be worth it. All of these new loins' demands did not exist in the past and are not from the Kom tradition. An informant testified on this saying;

A friend of mine complained to me his marriage arrangements ended with the lady he was to get married to because the lady emphasized on huge numbers of loins and an idea of a traditional marriage Ceremony that he could not afford.

Tim Doris, 24/03/22 Yaounde

The above informant talks about a friend of hers who laid a complain to her about her fiance being in conflict with him due to the fact that she observed her own friend's traditional marriage ceremony and wanted hers to fit the same idea whereas the man was not capable.



Picture 5: Typical Kom bride



Picture 6: Modern Kom bride

Source : From the field 2022

The picture shows a typical Kom bride in those days and how the dressing was as compared today.

5.8. Meal preparation during traditional marriage

Marriage in Kom used to be the coming together of two closed families coming from Kom. Meaning that no stranger was included as it was strictly a family affair. That is why the meal that was cooked for the occasion was fufu and mbas (vegetable) with Agassi. Everyone present would eat and be satisfied but today Kom has been a lot more exposed to many other cultures that bride price occasion is no longer a family affair but an inclusion of strangers given that Kom men and women now marry outside the Kom culture and so this leads to the variety of meals we find today during bride price occasions among the Kom people. Meals like Eru, Ndolè, Achu and lot more are now part of the choice one has to make in such occasions. An informant testified to this fact in her words;

My sister got married just of recent and there was abundant of meals from different cultures.

Nayah Loveline, 02/04/22 Tinifoinbi

5.9. Presence of the bride and the groom

In those days, most of the bride and the groom would be present during the traditional marriage day but today it is very easy with the coming of modernization to have traditional

marriages where both parties are absent but have people to represent them. Diangha Grace testifies of the experience she had with one of her traditional marriages went on successfully in her absence but with the presence of her representatives. She said this in her words;

My niece's traditional marriage amazed me because I never imagined that could happen. She wasn't there physically but her marriage proceeded successfully.

Diangha Grace, 14/05/22

This informant recounts her experience with a niece of hers who got married traditionally but only her representative was there physically.

5.10. Packaging for palm oil

The Kom people had particular containers called 'ankuf' where the oil requested for bride price was poured inside. This 'Ankuf' was typically traditional and authentic to the Kom culture. Today these traditional containers are rare to find. Rather we see modern containers of 10 to 20 liters.



Picture 7: picture of nkuf miviil

Source : Kom Community Group (whatsapp)

The above picture is an old one showing the traditional container that the oil requested in the context of bride price was brought inside. The men are literally carrying the 'Ankufs' to the bride's father's compound.

5.11. Bride price and Conflict in Kom

When we talk about bride price in Kom and its practices, it will be untruthful to say they are never without conflicts whether little or more. The conflicts arise in different ways and for various reasons like jealousy, irresponsibility of the bride's father, religious beliefs, and disagreement amongst uncles or aunts of the bride both paternal and maternal respectively. It is to be recalled that the people who determine and state the requirements of bride price on the father's side are the paternal uncles of the bride. On the mother's side they are the maternal aunts. There might be situations or cases whereby the father stands at the forefront but that depends on whether the father in question has no representative brothers or not. In that case, he fully takes the responsibility to state the bride price requirements for his daughter.

Conflicts might arise when the father is not in accord with his brothers on the requirements stated or requested by them. An informant recount;

When my niece was getting married, there was a great conflict on the father's side because the father estimated that what his brothers requested was nothing compared to what he said to have invested in his daughter.

Nangeh Rebekah, 31/03/22 Yaoundé

From what this informant recounts, it shows that conflict arise during bride price practice in Kom when there is lack of understanding and agreement between the father of the bride and his brothers.

Another area of conflict arises when at the time of payment, the mother feels a level of jealousy in terms of amount that will be received by the father of the bride when she has been the one solely responsible for the upbringing and education of the mother's heart which pushes her to be reluctant and wanting to intervene into what is not her business and lure the groom into giving a lesser amount which she thinks the father deserves. A woman testified that; she was very angry when one of her daughter's whom the father had always rejected showed up during bride price only to receive together with his brothers an amount of five hundred thousand francs. She says she could not contend it. So, it pushed her to cause conflict on the day asking him to give just two hundred thousand francs. In her words she said;

Having to control myself on the day of bride price payment was difficult considering the irresponsible nature of the father.

Ngam sylvi, 09/04/22

In addition, what was discovered to bring about conflict in the context of bride price payment among the Kom people is religion. The Kom people have their way of doing things and at times a groom could disagree on the basis of his religion saying his faith or belief does not permit him to do so. Trying to inquire more on what this is really all about an informant had this to say;

My father is someone who grew up and spent most of his time in the shrine, my mum too had been initiated into that and so when time came for me to be married, my dad insisted that both of us would be done some incantations at the shrine which my husband to be refused due to his faith which didn't permit him. That caused a lot of conflict. Emerencia bih, 12/04/22 Tinifoinbi

The above informant's experience shows how religion caused conflict in bride price practices among the Kom people.

Conflicts usually arise too when the mothers who are to decide on the requirements of bride price on their own side find it difficult to come to an agreement. A woman informant said;

“When my daughter was to get married, one of my sisters insisted that the same requirements that were asked from her daughter's suitor should be done equally for my daughter. Forgetting that they had different financial status. That brought a lot of quarrels and conflict.

Ntoh Emerencia 23/03/22, Tinifoinbi

This woman recounts that one of her sisters was insisting that the same requirements that were requested from her daughter's suitor as bride price should be asked from the women too. This raised a lot of quarreling due to the failure to understand that, the suitor to this daughter's woman was not as financially elevated as that of her sister's.

5.12. Bride price and Gender in Kom

In the Kom tradition, women possess authority and are given a lot of importance and value in the sense that, they are the ones who give a go ahead in terms of bride price practices. This means that, a suitor could come for a girl's hand in marriage in Kom but if the mothers (Maternal aunts of the girl) reject him, the bride price cannot be accepted talk less of marriage going on. Same as the paternal uncles can accept but if the mothers do not agree, nothing can

continue in terms of bride price arrangements or whatsoever. This indicates the position of the female gender when it comes to bride price and marriage in Kom. The Male gender has a role to play but are not in position of authority because without the validation of the female, the Male will not have something to expect as bride price payment.

It is to be noted at the end of this chapter which covered the history of bride price among the Kom people, the Dynamics in its practices and of course its relationship with conflict and gender. Bride price in Kom did not start with money but specific items that were available and valuable at that time. Acts of services and good character made men to get wives without having to go through the process we find today. The changes observed today fall under the payment itself, the nature of the bride price ceremony, the dressing and practices attached to bride price such as applying of Camwood and more. Finally, the chapter ended with the areas in which bride price brings about conflict among the Kom people and of course reasons like; disagreement, jealousy, religious beliefs and irresponsibility were given by Kom people to explain the cause and nature of conflicts which arise in the context of bride price payment and how bride price is related to gender.

CONCLUSION

Having reached the end of this research titled: “The Dynamics of Bride price among the Kom people in the Northwest region of Cameroon ,a Cultural Anthropological research “. We had as guide for this research ,a main question which was elaborated with the secondary questions. The main research question was: How do notions of modernity/modernization influence the perception of Kom people about Bride price? The three secondary questions were: What is the representation if Bride price in the Kom community? How do the Kom people go about the payment of Bride price? What are the changes in the perceptions of Kom people as concerned Bride price?

Tentative answers were proposed to the above questions. The main research hypothesis justifies that the Kom man perceives Bride price to be a symbol and tool of negotiation in exchange for a wife but modernity has come with a lot like education, urban influence and social media that has deviated these thoughts to something different which is that of commercializing. As regards the three secondary hypothesis, The Kom people see Bride price to be a symbol not a payment which buys over their daughters. The Kom Bride price payment consists of two independent parts and could be paid at different times. The father will state his requirements and the mother will do same . As concern how modernity has influenced their perceptions, Before the first contact with the Europeans, brideprice was valued in dowries and education not considered but today it is done in FCFA with the consideration in education. This is often represented in what they call “tichue”.

The objectives of this research work included: The main objective sought to produce a deeper understanding and knowledge about Bride price and its changes among the Kom people which could be as a foundation for further research in Kom culture and for use by academicians and policy makers in their debates about the practice. The secondary objectives were structured as follows; The first objective was to know the representation of Bride price among the Kom people. The second was to show how the Kom people go about the payment of Bride price and the last secondary objective was to identify how modernity has changed the perceptions and practices of the Kom people as far as Bride price is concerned. As concern methodology, we used qualitative method. This method was used to collect and analyze data from the field. This method comprised of research design and sampling. Research techniques that were used are; indepth interviews, direct observation and life experiences. We also use tools like: Interview guide, tape recorder, digital camera ,pen and book for data collection the field. To have a comprehensive study of the work , the theory of functionalism and cultural interpretative theory for data interpretation and through these theories the perceptions, concepts and beliefs of the Kom people as regards to Bride price were brought out.

From our findings, Bride price is a symbol for marriage in Kom. This can be seen in the sense that they never reject a suitor who comes for marriage but always make sure they come to an understanding with their negotiations. None has ever been rejected in Kom for marriage because of money. The suitor can always pay in installments provided there is an understanding between the two families. Our findings also revealed that there are two forms of Bride price in Kom; The one that is directed to the father called Afo a Bowain and that directed to the mother called Afo a Nawain. The part that goes to the father includes some requested amount of cash and some quantity of palm oil with other items like firewood, kolanuts, blankets which are optional. The part that goes to the mother are mostly items that are to be used for traditional marriage like loins, firewood, palm oil, meat, mother's dressing in some cases. We also have the location of the Bride price payment which is done at the father's compound. Beside it was also discovered that the nature of payment of Bride price in Kom depends on the position of the first son, then by tradition his father by right has to marry a wife for him. This means that if the father is polygamous, he will according to Kom tradition marry wives for his first two sons from both wives. Aside from this, any other thing that might determine the nature of Bride price payment will vary according to family.

Another findings reveal that, a father according to the Kom tradition is supposed to request from his daughter's suitor only that which he himself gave his father inlaw before getting married to his wife. This means that if his father inlaw received a hundred thousand francs from him for instance, should not request for more than a hundred thousand francs from his daughter's suitor.

Furthermore the Kom man believes that Bride price never ends. It is continuous. That is why some Kom fathers would choose to collect only a part of the Bride price he requested from his daughter's suitor with the reason that he could request for it anytime in future in the case of death or anything that could raise the need for money.

In addition, the content of Bride price in Kom is actually valued in what they call "tichue". Each tichue here can represent a tin of oil, two or more as well as it can represent a specified amount of money depending on the family involved. You might go to a certain family and the father says he requests for five tichues and each tichue may be equal to twenty thousand francs, that means he is literally requesting for a hundred thousand francs. Another could say the same thing but in their case each tichue represents three tins of oil. In that case he demands fifteen tins of oil which in turn could still be converted to money depending on how much a tin of palm oil costs.

Still from our findings, tichue according to Kom people is never in even numbers but in odd numbers 3,7,9,11... each family has a prescribed number of tichue that they ask their potential suitor. It can be valued in terms of money so that it goes to the father and also it can be valued in terms of palm oil so that it goes to the mother.

Other findings also reveal that Bride price according to a Kom man is a token, meaning that it is not a price that one gives to purchase a wife but a sort of negotiation whereby the groom brings along what he has and upon presentation to the bride's father is never that rejected. This is also because Kom people place much value on character than on money. They believe that marriage is the coming together of the two families involved and only peace together with harmony can maintain the bondage and nothing else. Still in this line, we also discovered that in as much as the father welcomes whatever the suitor brings, it does not cancel the fact that the father could ask him to go and look for more. In some cases where the little is taken, traditional marriage is allowed to take place with the father's permission while the suitor looks on how to complete the payment later.

Moreover our findings also reveal that Bride price in Kom greatly determines paternity right. This means that Bride price guarantees the state of being someone's father in the Kom cultural sphere. It does not matter the number of children you as a Kom man has had with a lady from Kom Once you have not paid her Bride price, you have no possession or right over the children.

To add to this, some other findings revealed that the payment of Bride price in Kom is largely a symbolic act. There is no set or fixed amount nor fixed quantity of items but this payment varies according to families. The payment may continue over the span of the marriage or to the future generations as financial or material compensation is always expected from the groom's family in situations of death and traditional rituals. Also, in the payment of Bride price in Kom, that of the father which is Afo a Bowain is given first before the mother's part of the payment follows.

Moreover, our findings also revealed that the location for the payment of Bride price in Kom is in the compound of the potential father of the bride. Emphasis on the word potential because in Kom, it is believed that your father's brother is your father, your father's nephew is your father equally and so saying potential father here means the payment could take place in the compound of any of your potential fathers who raised you up in case your biological father is not more. Again, the payment is done in a very structured and organized way. The items of payment and any required amount of money are presented by the groom's representatives to the bride's family during the appropriate event. On the day the father's part is brought, something

like an item is brought for the mother and on the day the mother's own party is to be brought, something is equally brought for the dad. This is literally because a Kom man believes that you cannot enter a house and ignore the father of the house even if you mean business with the mother only and you cannot ignore your mother even if you mean business with the father only.

Our findings equally revealed that, Bride price and its practices have experienced some changes at the level of the payment and that of the traditional marriage ceremonies. Payment of bride price is much likely determined by the lady's level of education among the Kom people today.

Also, traditional marriage practices such as the applying of Camwood on the bride's body is now done partially, that is, on specific parts of the bride's body which are; the legs and arms. The presentation of the bride used to be crowned by one of the 'Klum's with a certain amount of money depending on her. Today, a lot of invitees now come and offer whatever they want and some take it as opportunity to harvest money.

Again, we have the nature of dressing during traditional marriage in Kom that has changed to a strange one copied from outside whereby we see strange beads and decorative stuffs that are not authentic to the Kom tradition. Not forgetting the traditional bags in which items of bride price used to be put inside by the groom, the bag is called in the Kom language, 'bo chi' but today it has been replaced with modern ones commonly known as 'shasha' bags.

In summary, having passed through the filter of our hypothesis, no human work can boast of perfection. We estimate that our moderate work without doubt has left unexplored areas in the domain of bride price and its dynamics among the Kom people in the Northwest region of Cameroon. The problem posed in the course of this present work could find answers thanks to subsequent works in order to eventually contribute in enriching the wealth of knowledge on this particular theme and bring to the limelight other truths that have not been recognized. Further research could be carried out on the consequences of changes in the bride price practices among the Kom people so as to better target the solutions.

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<i>No</i>	<i>Names</i>	<i>Sex</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Village</i>	<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Profession</i>	<i>Date of interview</i>
01	Johnson	M	38	Abuh	S	Driver	12/03/22
02	Nges Alvin	M	31	Tikfuni	S	Technician	14/03/22
03	Tohnain	M	27	Anyajua	S	Teacher	17/03/22
04	Yuh Lambert	M	48	Baingoh	M	Bike rider	18/03/22
05	Promise mbu	F	43	Mbingo	M	Teacher	22/03/22
06	Ntoh Emerencia	F	67	Bojue	M	Accountant	23/03/22
07	Doris	F	33	Mbom	M	Teacher	24/03/22
08	Hygiena	F	35	Miloin	M	Farmer	28/03/22
10	Nkwan Evodia	F	29	Balikumato	S	Seamstress	29/03/22
11	Rebekah	M	38	Isou	S	Nurse	31/03/22

12	<i>Nayah loveline</i>	<i>F</i>	37	<i>Tshuo</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Food seller</i>	<i>02/04/22</i>
13	<i>Fumbui Aarone</i>	<i>F</i>	71	<i>Yang</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Business lady</i>	<i>04/04/22</i>
14	<i>Michael Johnson</i>	<i>M</i>	54	<i>Antu-iloh</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>05/04/22</i>
15	<i>Tim Neng Joyceline</i>	<i>F</i>	39	<i>Tinifoinbi</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>08/04/22</i>
16	<i>Ngam sylvi</i>	<i>F</i>	73	<i>Balikumato</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Housewife</i>	<i>09/04/22</i>
17	<i>Ngam kenneth</i>	<i>M</i>	28	<i>Mbom</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Brick layer</i>	<i>11/04/22</i>
18	<i>Emerencia bih</i>	<i>F</i>	70	<i>Mbingo</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Computer Engineer</i>	<i>12/04/22</i>
19	<i>Ernest njung</i>	<i>F</i>	43	<i>Bobong</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Housewife</i>	<i>14/04/22</i>
20	<i>Ndim Genesis</i>	<i>F</i>	32	<i>Tinifoinbi</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>Business lady</i>	<i>16/04/22</i>
20	<i>Ephisian</i>	<i>F</i>	72	<i>Meigheff</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Housewife</i>	<i>18/04/22</i>
20	<i>Hilda</i>	<i>F</i>	29	<i>Anjin</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Food seller</i>	<i>19/04/22</i>
21	<i>Toh Sam</i>	<i>M</i>	33	<i>Idombong</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>20/04/22</i>
22	<i>Judith</i>	<i>F</i>	31	<i>Mutteff</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>Secretary</i>	<i>21/04/22</i>
23	<i>Ninin</i>	<i>F</i>	75	<i>Mungo,oh</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>Housewife</i>	<i>22/04/22</i>
24	<i>Ndim paul</i>	<i>M</i>	31	<i>Ngwah</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Cocoa farmer</i>	<i>24/04/22</i>
25	<i>Ngam martin</i>	<i>M</i>	76	<i>Tinifoinbi</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Mechanic</i>	<i>26/04/22</i>
26	<i>Fumbui loveline</i>	<i>F</i>	35	<i>Alim</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Bike rider</i>	<i>27/04/22</i>
27	<i>Mispa nain</i>	<i>F</i>	30	<i>Tinifoinbi</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>Nurse</i>	<i>28/04/22</i>
28	<i>Ndah james</i>	<i>M</i>	32	<i>Acha'h</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Nurse</i>	<i>30/04/22</i>
29	<i>Yong Isabella</i>	<i>F</i>	66	<i>Fungom</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Civil Engineer</i>	<i>03/05/22</i>
30	<i>Nkwain Alphonsius</i>	<i>M</i>	68	<i>Fujua</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>Works at transport agency</i>	<i>05/05/22</i>
31	<i>Ndah James</i>	<i>M</i>	27	<i>Ngwainkuma</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Teacher</i>	<i>08/05/22</i>

32	<i>Ndah Matin</i>	<i>M</i>	36	<i>Baingeh</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Farmer</i>	<i>12/05/22</i>
33	<i>Diangha Grace</i>	<i>F</i>	21	<i>Tinifoinbi</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>Seamstress</i>	<i>14/05/22</i>
34	<i>Bobe Ngong</i>	<i>M</i>	68	<i>Baingeh</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Bike rider</i>	<i>17/05/22</i>

ANNEXES

1. Annexe 1 : Interview guide

Topic: Dynamics of Bride price among the Kom people of the Northwest region of Cameroon.

I am a masters 2 student in Anthropology in the University of Yaoundé 1 and I am carrying out a study on the dynamics of Bride price among the Kom people in the Northwest region of Cameroon. Below is an interview guide that will permit me collect necessary information from informants during interviews.

1- Demographic information

Name.....

Age.....

Sex.....

Marital status.....

Quarter/ place.....

2- Representation of Bride price in Kom

- What is Bride price according to you?
- What does Bride price represent in your community, that's Kom community?
- What is the name given to Bride price in your community?
- How is one regarded in your community after a Bride price has been paid upon?

3- Payment of Bride price in Kom

- What does the payment of Bride price consist of in Kom?
- Who are those involved in the payment of Bride price in Kom?
- What determines the nature of payment for Bride price in Kom?
- Where is the payment of Bride price done in Kom?
- Why is payment of Bride price done according to the Kom people?

4- Dynamics of Bride price in Kom

- In your opinion, what can you say about Bride price before and the one of today in the Kom cultural sphere?
- What can you say about the history of Bride price in Kom?
- Who are those that are involved as far as Bride price is concerned?

II. Annexe 2 : Informed concern

THE UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE I

 POST GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR THE
 SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCE

 DOCTORAL RESEARCH UNIT FOR THE
 SOCIAL SCIENCES

 DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY



UNIVERSITE DE YAOUNDE I

 CENTRE DE RECHERCHE ET DE
 FORMATION DOCTORALE EN SCIENCES
 HUMAINES, SOCIALES ET EDUCATIVES

 UNITE DE RECHERCHE ET DE
 FORMATION DOCTORALE EN SCIENCES HUMAINES
 ET SOCIALES

 DEPARTEMENT D'ANTHROPOLOGIE

Informed consent form for Kom community informants.

This informed consent form is for Kom community informants and who we are inviting to participate in the research titled , “ **The dynamics of Bride price among the Kom people in the Northwest region of Cameroon** “.

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR : CHAH PRUDENCE ABUAH

NAME OF INSTITUTIONS: UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE 1

SPONSOR: FAMILY

RESEARCH TITLE: THE DYNAMICS OF BRIDE PRICE AMONG THE KOM PEOPLE IN THE NORTHWEST REGION OF CAMEROON.

Introduction

I am a masters 2 student in Anthropology. I am doing a research on the dynamics of Bride price among the Kom people in the Northwest region of Cameroon. I am going to give you information and invite you to be part of this research. You do not have to decide today whether or not you will participate in the research. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with about this research. This consent form may contain words that you

dont understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take my time to explain. If you have questions later, you can ask them of me.

Purpose of the research

Bride price is practiced in your community and us gradually losing its value. We want to have a deeper understanding and knowledge of Bride price in the Kom community. We believe that you can help us by telling us what you know about Bride price in Kom. We want to learn about the representation of Bride price in Kom. We want to learn how the Kom people go about the payment of Bride price . We also want to know about the changes that have occurred as far as Bride price is concerned in Kom.

Participant selection

You are being invited to take part in this research because we feel that your knowledge as a responsible member of this community can contribute to our understanding and knowledge on dynamics of Bride price.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary . It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you choose not to participate, all the services you receive in relation to these activities will continue and nothing will change.

Procedures

We are asking you to help us learn more about Bride price in your community. We are inviting you to take part in this research. If you accept, you will participate in an interview with myself. During the interview, I will down with you in a comfortable place if it's better for you, the interview can take place in your home. If you do not wish to answer any of the questions during the interview, you may say so and I will move to the next question. No one else but myself will be present unless you would like someone else to be there. The information recorded is confidential and no one else except Pr. Paschal Kum Awah who is my supervisor. The entire interview will be tape recorded but no one will be identified by name. The tape will be stored by me alone and after transcribing it will be deleted. The information recorded is confidential and no one else except Paschal Kum Awah will have access to the tapes. The tapes will be deleted after two weeks when transcription must have been done.

Duration

The research takes place over a month. During that time, we will visit you two times for interviewing you at a week interval. Each interview will last for about an hour each.

Risks

There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information by chance, or that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. However, we do not wish for this to happen. You do not have to answer any question or take part in the interview if it makes you uncomfortable

Benefits

There might be no direct benefits to you but your participation is likely to help us find out more on the dynamics of Bride price among the Kom people.

Reimbursements

You will not be provided any incentive to take part in the research . However, we will give you a reasonable amount that actually will pay for your transport.

Confidentiality

The research being done in the community may draw attention and if you participate you may be asked questions by other people in the community. We will not be sharing information about you to anyone outside of the research team. The information that we collect from this research will be kept private. Any information you give will have a number on it instead of your name. Only the researchers will know what the number is and we will lock that information up with a lock and a key. It will not be shared with or given to anyone except with my supervisor and the department of Anthropology

Sharing the results

Nothing that you tell us today will be shared with anybody outside the research team and nothing will be attributed to you by name. The knowledge that we get from this research will be shared to you and your community before it is widely made known to the public.

Right to refuse or withdraw

You do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so and so choosing to participate will not affect your status or reputation. You may stop participating in the

interview at any time that you wish without your job being affected. I will give you an opportunity at the end of the interview to review your remarks and you can ask to modify in case I didn't get you correctly.

Who to contact

If you have any questions , you can ask them now or later. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact any of the following; Paschal Kum Awah, 6/paschalawah@yahoo.fr. Or Chah Prudence Abuah, prudencechah81@gmail.com

CERTIFICATE OF CONSENT

I have read the foregoing information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions. I have been answered to my satisfaction and I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Name of participant

Signature

Date

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had the opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the individual has given consent freely.

Name of witness

Signature of witness

Date

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and to the best of my knowledge made sure that the participant understands that the following will be done:

(Literate witness will sign)

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my

ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this informed consent form has been provided to the participant.

Name of person taking the consent: _____

Signature of person taking the consent: _____

Date: _____

III. Annexe 3 : Research Autorisation

UNIVERSITÉ DE YAOUNDÉ I
THE UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE I

FACULTE DES ARTS, LETTRES ET
SCIENCES HUMAINES



FACULTY OF ARTS, LETTERS
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

DEPARTEMENT D'ANTHROPOLOGIE

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

Yaoundé, le 16 MARS 2022

AUTORISATION DE RECHERCHE

Je soussigné, Professeur **Paschal KUM AWAH**, Chef du Département d'Anthropologie de la Faculté des Arts, Lettres et Sciences Humaine de l'Université de Yaoundé I, atteste que l'étudiante **CHAH Prudence ABUAH**, Matricule 17H286, est inscrite en Master II dans ledit département. Elle mène ses travaux universitaires sur le thème : «**Dynamics of bridewealth among the Kom people of the north-West region of Cameroon**», sous la direction du Professeur Paschal KUM AWAH.

A cet effet, je vous saurais gré des dispositions que vous voudriez bien prendre afin de fournir à l'intéressée toute information nécessaire à mesure de l'aider dans le bon déroulement de sa recherche.

En foi de quoi la présente autorisation de recherche lui est délivrée pour servir et valoir ce que de droit./-

Le Chef de Département



P. Paschal Kum Awah

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