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## **TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE OF THE IGBO'S AND IT'S SIGNIFICANCE IN CULTURAL IDENTITY AND INTERACTION**

***Annotation:** if you are looking for an ideal marriage for the world to emulate, that has value and significance in our today's culture, then grab a cup of coffee and relax because this article portrays the stages and significance of Traditional Marriage in Igboland located in eastern part of Nigeria.*

***Keywords:** Igboland, the visit and informal introduction, traditional wedding, traditional dress code, brides outfit, grooms outfit, traditional marriage items, bride's appearance.*

The Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria are an enterprising ethnic group, and are noted for their rich culture and traditions.

When the man decides to take an Igbo woman as his wife several stages of consent must be strictly adhered to, the process although lengthy is never devoid of drama excitement, rich cultural establishments, fun and laughter. Unlike western cultures a man and a woman can walk into a registry and within five minutes become husband and wife, the taking of a bride in most African cultures can be a complex affair. In Igbo land though each region has its own practices, the mechanics is still the same. Taking a wife in Igbo land is a family affair every member of the two families and the villagers are involved in the process.

When a man sees a good woman he intends to marry, he pays the bride's family a visit. **The first contact** between both families is *the knocking on the door* referred to as *ikwu aka* and in our opinion the most important stage of the three stage processes.

Parent explains the intentions of their son which is a proposal for marriage to the daughter. At this stage the bride's father invites the daughter who has the right to accept or reject a proposal. If she rejects the proposal there would be no marriage but if she accepts the man then the next stage would commence.

**The second introduction** is more extensive because the groom would be accompanied by some relations, father and some elders from his household; they formally introduce themselves restating their intentions. Items like expensive wrapper such as lace, hollandaise material, George material, wine, kola nuts, goat, chicken and other small items. A list is given to the family of the groom and a bride price settlement which should be fully adheres to on the day of the traditional Igbo marriage ceremony.

The traditional marriage ceremony is placed higher than contemporary weddings like church or registry weddings. In most cases the couple after going through the traditional marriage might decide to follow through with a church wedding or a government registry wedding. A large number of easterners are catholic so having a catholic wedding after the traditional marriage is very important.

**The traditional wedding** called the *Igba Nkwu* is hosted in the compound or venue hired by the bride's family. The list of gifts consists of items for the maidens of the house, village elders, extended family and parents of the bride. Igbo traditional marriage can be pricey because items listed are sacrosanct and incontestable any deviation from the list could jeopardize the union so adequate preparation on the part of the groom's family is important.

The theme of the traditional marriage (*Igba Nkwu*), the bride and groom usually chooses the same fabric which is usually combined with heavy embroidery, beads and bangles.

**The brides outfit** complements the grooms because they are sown from the same material; they complement each other and signify the union of two people who become one. The fabric favored for such occasions could be a Ghana wax fabric,

Ankara, Abada, hollandaise which is sown into a top blouse and a large wrapper referred to as Akwete.

The brides outfit can be worn in two ways she could decide wearing a Nigerian wax fabric tank top, matching skirt, bold wrist bangle, large necklaces and beads around the waist beads-jigida, leg beads and hair wearing an elegant bead crown. The second outfit could be a blouse and wrappers ensemble complete with similar adornments around the neck, waist, ankles and wrists.

**The grooms outfit** could be brocade material, top quality lace, a fabric called jacquard or silk, it should complement the fabric chosen by his bride, and the groom usually has on large shirts which could be sown having elaborate embroidery and animal symbolism.

The trousers could follow the same theme or not, if he's a titled chief he wears a head's hat that identifies him as a chief, he can wear beads around his neck if he so chooses.

**Traditional marriage items. Young maiden's gift.** The presentation of items allocated to the daughters or young maidens in the bride's family could include some items such as gold plated jewelry, gold earrings, various head ties, and wrappers of hollandaise, wax fabric, bangles, rings and leather handbags.

The extensive list include beverage drinks such cartoons of mineral water, malt drinks, beverages, food items, toiletries such as bathing soaps, body creams, shampoos, detergents and the *Ogwe ego* which is a cash gift. Wine, one or two goats, packets of cigarette, assorted drinks and several cartoons of beer and cash gifts of an agree lump sum in cash placed in an envelope.

**The bride's appearance.** Once all presentation have been done as custom demands the bride makes an entrance led by her maidens, she approaches her father who gives her a symbolic wooden cup filled with palm wine, the purpose is for the

bride to seek out her suitor among the teeming crowd.

The groom might choose to seat at the back with friends or within the crowd, she seeks him out and offers him the wine which he drinks expressing his love, affection and agreement with the bonding, they then present themselves to their individual parents and the gathering.

The festivity now becomes a full fledge party with lovely native drums and music which could be through age group songs, a live band playing ethnic music, native drums and scintillating dances performed by young unmarried ladies.

Lots of food and drinks are consumed even extending it to members of the community and villagers.

Igbo traditional wedding although a little pricey plays a significant role in rich representation of a people's cultural traditions, music, ethnic fashion, native meals, communal love and unity.

Family is important in many African countries especially pertaining to marriage, the bonding of two individual means the bonding of the entire families and extended families.

Cultures in Nigeria although slightly different have great respect and acceptance for traditional marriage rites. In some areas if the woman gets married without going through the tradition ceremony then the people regard her as unmarried and God forbid she dies, the fake husband might have to jump through some rites before the spouse gets buried.

Traditional marriage is a serious business in most African cultures.

### **Reference**

1. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZq\\_T6n2fVY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uZq_T6n2fVY)
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