



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

Nigeria - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 21 April 2011.

Information on bride prices/dowries in the Igbo tradition/customs?

A Response to an Information Request published by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada states:

"Under customary law, a bride price, or dowry, is paid to the bride's family by the groom (Bamgbose July 2002, 5; Asylum Aid May 2003, 20). In order for a woman to leave the marriage and "regain her freedom," repayment of the bride price is required (Bamgbose July 2002, 5). If the bride price is not repaid, the marriage is considered to still be valid, and any child to whom the woman gives birth is considered the child of her estranged husband (ibid)." (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (3 March 2006) *Nigeria: Forced marriage among the Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa-Fulani; prevalence, consequences for a woman or minor who refuses to participate in the marriage; availability of state protection (February 2006), NGA101044.E*)

A document regarding the town, Oraifite, in Eastern Nigeria states under the heading 'Bride Price - traditionally known as Ime ego nwanyi':

"Bride price shall be in strict conformity with the provisions of Limitation of Dowry Law, Cap. 76, Laws of Eastern Nigeria, 1963, so however that the maximum bride price payable shall not exceed the sum of #60.00 (Sixty Naira)." (Oraifite.com (undated) *Igbo Marriage Ceremony Of Oraifite Nigeria with Bride Prices*)

A document by the University of Manitoba states:

"Among the Igbo, the bride price is more narrowly thought of as a payment to acquire rights in the children of the marriage and must be returned if a woman is barren or leaves the marriage before producing children." (University of Manitoba (undated) *Bride Wealth*)

Igboguide.org states:

"Then the bride's price settlement (Ika-Akalika) starts with the groom accompanied by his father and elders visiting the bride's compound on another evening. They bring wine and kola nuts with them, which are presented to the bride's father. After they have been served with a meal, the bride's price is being negotiated between the fathers. In most cases there is only a symbolic price to be paid for the bride but in addition other prerequisites (kola nuts, goats, chicken, wine, etc.) are listed as well. Usually it takes more than one evening before the final bride's price is settled, offering guests from both sides a glamorous feast." (Igboguide.org (undated) *Traditional Family Ceremonies*)

The Igbo People of Nigeria website states:

"Bride wealth or bride price is practiced in Igbo land instead of a dowry. Bride price is a token of appreciation for the loss of a daughter. This token gift is given to the

bride's father or relatives before the elders of both the bride's and bridegroom's communities. It is not a purchasing of a wife, but a part of a contract between two couples. Bride price plays a very important role in social, legal and economic customs. The bride wealth seals the two couples and also regulates the rate of divorce cases, if any. The marriage is solidified with the birth of a child, particularly a male child who will in the future inherit the land." (Igbo People of Nigeria (30 July 2009) *Igbo Marriage*)

An article by Daily Trust states:

"An Igbo business man, 29, resident in Maiduguri, has been arraigned in court for allegedly abducting a Kanuri man's 21-year-old daughter to a village in Imo state.

Mr. Victor Ude denied the abduction allegation but told the court that he only gave the girl, Rabi Muhammed, money to travel to Imo state and meet her late mother's (an igbo woman) relations because the girl's father had breached customs and traditions.

Ude said that the girl's father did not pay any bride price on his "supposed" wife, the late Igbo woman that gave birth to the girl, and as such tradition demands that the Kanuri man travels to Igbo land to pay a bride price on the late woman and perform some traditions, failing which the daughter remains under the custody of her mother's relations." (Daily Trust (27 April 2008) *Nigeria; Man in Abduction Drama Over Bride Price*)

References

Daily Trust (27 April 2008) *Nigeria; Man in Abduction Drama Over Bride Price*

<http://www.lexisnexis.com/uk/>

(Accessed 21 April 2011)

This is a subscription database.

Igbo People of Nigeria (30 July 2009) *Igbo Marriage*

<http://ibopeople.com/igbo-tradition/igbo-marriage>

(Accessed 21 April 2011)

Igboguide.org (undated) *Traditional Family Ceremonies*

<http://www.igboguide.org/index.php?l=chapter11>

(Accessed 21 April 2011)

Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (3 March 2006) *Nigeria: Forced marriage among the Yoruba, Igbo, and Hausa-Fulani; prevalence, consequences for a woman or minor who refuses to participate in the marriage; availability of state protection (February 2006), NGA101044.E*

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/45f1478a11.html>

(Accessed 21 April 2011)

Oraifite.com (undated) *Igbo Marriage Ceremony Of Oraifite Nigeria with Bride Prices*

<http://www.oraifite.com/culture-and-traditions/igbo-marriage.php>

(Accessed 21 April 2011)

University of Manitoba (undated) *Bride Wealth*

http://umanitoba.ca/faculties/arts/anthropology/tutor/marriage/bride_wealth.html
(Accessed 21 April 2011)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

Sources consulted

European Country of Origin Information Network
Google
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada
Lexis Nexis
Refugee Documentation Centre Databases
UNHCR Refworld
United Kingdom Home Office
United States Department of State