Polygyny and Bridewealth

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Motivation

• Transfers of resources at marriage (marriage payments) are/were a universal element of societies at present and in the past.
• There is no elaborated theory on the causes of particular forms of marriage payments.
• There is only a small number of comparative, quantitative studies on marriage payments.
• Focus on marriage systems and marriage payments
  ‣ Polygyny – bridewealth, monogamy – dowry
Different forms of bridewealth

Kongo

Thailand

Papua New Guinea
Commerzilization of bridewealth
The down side of bridewealth

End this pain and suffering

Culture is good but bride price can force girls into marriage so that their brothers can get cows for marriage. Girls can end up as co-wives married to much older men because boys their age can not raise bride price. Boys have to marry late because they can not raise bride price. Read on.

VIOLANCE
Nabucha Betty, 20, S6 Bumbo SS, Manafwa strongly says something is wrong when men abuse their women in the name of bride price.

Kyasimire Evaline, Ruhaama SS, Ntungamo, says: "Some men think they have a licence to treat women as slaves because of bride price. Parents encourage their daughters as young as 10 years old to get married instead of going to school."

"Recently, in the news a woman in Pallisa was forced by the husband to breast feed puppies. He claimed he had paid cows which used to give milk for his dogs as her bride price," says Nareeza Kab, Equatorial College, Ibanda.

EARLY MARRIAGES
Solomon, Vurra SS, Arua, adds: "Bride price has turned into a money-making business. Many parents look at their daughters as a source of quick money. This has increased early and forced marriages thus girls school drop-out.

Muto Mushabe, St Francis Voc SS, Bushenyi, says: "In our village a little girl whose parents did not want to educate was forced to get married to an old man who paid the bride price immediately. A year later she died while giving birth."

Anayo Loyce, Pingiri SS, Soroti, says: "A friend who lost both parents was forced by her grandparents to marry an old man who gave a few goats and cows as bride price. She got HIV in marriage."

Early and forced marriages are against the law. Such marriages deny people their right to choose a marriage partner.

"I am a Pokot from Karamoja. In our culture a girl cannot get married without bride price. It is a source of wealth. I knew of a girl who was forced to marry at 14. The man was very old but paid 20 heads of cattle," Amuge Rhoda, Tororo Girls Sch.

According to MIFUMI, an NGO based in Tororo, many Ugandan girls are married off before the age of 18 because parents want bride wealth. Such girls are denied the chance to education and to marry when they are adults.

DECISION MAKING COMPROMISED
Wanyama Crispus, S5, Buusa SS says that bride price compromises a girl’s freedom and decision-making in her own home.

A good marriage or relationship is built on good communication between two parties.

If a woman fails to express her views freely with her partner, who shouts her because he paid bride price, it fails family development to its fullest.

Auma Winfred, Busia Girls adds: "Bride price is meant to make a woman powerless. It is a shame."

OBSERVATIONS

OBJECTS OF TRADE
Wawiso Titus, Comprehensive College Kitetikka, Wakiso, says: "Compulsory bride price means men and women are not equal as human beings. It devalues girls and reduces them to objects of trade."

Tumvesige Prossy, S6, Trinity College Nabbongo, Wakiso, says: "Bride price makes a woman the property of her father to be sold to another man. She then becomes a ‘servant’ of the buyer, bearing children, providing sex, and performing household work."

No, no. No human being should be an object of trade.

FAILURE TO MARRY
Akullo MD, 19, Gulu HS, says: "Bride price still exists in Acholi where I was born. Unfortunately a lot of poor boys can’t get married because they can’t afford."

Theft
"There is a boy who loved a certain girl so much. One day he decided to steal two goats to pay the bride price. After a few months the owner of the goats found them with the girl’s parents. The poor boy was arrested and embarrassed. Now he does not want to marry."

OR, Ojigo SS, Nebbi

Think before speaking
Things come and go
## Marriage payments

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<th>Beneficiary</th>
<th>Donor</th>
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<td>Bride’s family</td>
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Marriage payments: bridewealth

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- Transfer of substantive amounts of resources to the bride‘s parents.
- Motivations
  - Rights on female fertility and domestic/agricultural abilities, legitimation of marriage
  - Economic exchange
  - Social exchange
  - Rotating fund enabling marriages of sons
## Marriage payments: dowry

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<tr>
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<th>Bride’s family</th>
<th>Groom’s family</th>
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<td>Bride</td>
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<td>Dowry</td>
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<td>Groom</td>
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- Wealth, items, jewelry, often no income-generating properties
- Brides have different rights of ownership and utilization
- **Motivations:**
  - Pre-mortem inheritance
  - Maintenance of bride’s social status, attracting wealthy grooms
  - Pooling of resources in neolocal households
**Marriage payments: groomprice**

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- Transfer of substantive amounts of resources to the groom and/or his parents.
- Motivations:
  - Shortage of marriageable men
  - Maintenance of bride’s social status, attracting wealthy grooms from higher strata
  - Increasing value of men’s work (income), decreasing value of women’s work
# Marriage payments: dower

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<td>Bride</td>
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<td>Groom</td>
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<td>Dower</td>
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### Motivations:
- Direct support of son’s family
- Wife’s insurance in the case of divorce or husband’s death
Marriage payments: brideservice, groomservice

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</table>

- Groom/bride works for the bride’s/groom’s parents over a longer period.
- Motivations:
  - Compensation for the loss of a son’s or a daughter’s work
  - Screening of marriage candidate
  - Signaling by marriage candidate
Polygyny and bridewealth

- Higher reproductive success of men
- Higher inclusive fitness
- Biological
- Polygyny

Parent's investments into sons, value of women's labor, scarcity of women, inheritance to sons, marriage market, inequality.
Polygyny and bridewealth

- Biological
  - Higher reproductive success of men
  - Higher inclusive fitness

Polygyny

- Scarcity of women
- Marriage market

Bridewealth
Polygyny and bridewealth

- Biological
  - higher reproductive success of men
  - higher inclusive fitness

- Polygyny
  - scarcity of women
  - marriage market
  - parents' investments into sons
  - inheritance to sons
  - intergenerational transfers

- Bridewealth
Polygyny and bridewealth

- Biological:
  - Higher reproductive success of men
  - Higher inclusive fitness

- Social:
  - Patrilinal descent
  - Keeping resources in the lineage
  - Continuation of lineage
  - Parents' investments into sons
  - Scarcity of women
  - Marriage market
  - Bridewealth
  - Inheritance to sons
  - Intergenerational transfers
Polygyny and bridewealth

**Biological**
- Higher reproductive success of men
- Higher inclusive fitness

**Social**
- Patrilinal descent
- Keeping resources in the lineage
- Continuation of lineage

**Polygyny**
- Parents' investments into sons
- Scarcity of women
- Marriage market

**Bridewealth**
- Inheritance to sons
- Intergenerational transfers

**Subsistence economy**
- Hunter and gatherer, horticulturalist, pastoralist, extensive agriculture
- Value of women's labor

**Notes**
- Hunter and gatherer: horticulturalist, pastoralist, extensive agriculture
- Value of women's labor
Polygyny and bridewealth

**Biological**
- Higher reproductive success of men
  - Higher inclusive fitness

**Social**
- Patrilineal descent
  - Keeping resources in the lineage
  - Continuation of lineage

**Polygyny**
- Inequality
- Scarcity of women
- Marriage market

**Bridewealth**
- Inheritance to sons

**Subsistence economy**
- Hunter and gatherer horticulturalist, pastoralist, extensive agriculture
- Divisible resources
- Value of women's labor
- Intergenerational transfers

**Parents' investments into sons**
Data

- Ethnographic Atlas
  - Ethnological information from 1,267 societies (kinship-structure, settlement pattern, marriage systems, subsistence economy, kind of stratification, etc.)
  - Data were published in Ethnology between 1962 and 1967 and afterwards extended and corrected particularly by Murdock (1967) and (Gray 1999).
  - Data are from different ethnographic sources (publications, reports, original documents).
  - Oldest source: 800 BC; youngest source: 2000 AD.
  - Societies are only considered if they are adequately described.
Variables

**Biological**
- Higher reproductive success of men
- Higher inclusive fitness

**Social**
- Patrilinal descent
  - Keeping resources in the lineage
  - Continuation of lineage

**Polygyny**
- Inequality
- Scracity of women
- Marriage market
- Bridewealth
  - Inheritance to sons
  - Intergenerational transfers

**Subsistence economy**
- Hunter and gatherer
- Horticulturalist, pastoralist, extensive agriculture
- Divisible resources
- Value of women's labor

**Parents' investments into sons**
Geographical distribution of marriage payments

Bride-price or bride-wealth, i.e., transfer of a substantial consideration in the form of livestock, goods, or money from the groom or his relatives to the kinsmen of the bride.

Bride-service, i.e., a substantial material consideration in which the principal element consists of labor or other services rendered by the groom to the bride’s kinsmen.

Token bride-price, i.e., a small or symbolic payment only.

Gift exchange, i.e., reciprocal exchange of gifts of substantial value between the relatives of the bride and groom, or a continuing exchange of goods and services in approximately equal amounts between the groom or his kinsmen and the bride’s relatives.

Exchange, i.e., transfer of a sister or other female relative of the groom in exchange for the bride.

Absence of any significant consideration, or bridal gifts only.

Dowry, i.e., transfer of a substantial amount of property from the bride’s relatives to the bride, the groom, or the kinsmen of the latter.

Missing data.

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Descriptive results:
Marriage systems and marriage payments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marriage system</th>
<th>Monogamy (n = 185)</th>
<th>Polygyny (n = 1,032)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marriage payments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Dowry</td>
<td>No 43.2</td>
<td>No 18.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exchange of women</td>
<td>Yes 56.8</td>
<td>Yes 81.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reciprocal gift exchange</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Symbolic bride-wealth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Groom-service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bride-wealth</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Descriptive results:
Marriage systems and marriage payments

Marriage system:
- Monogamy (n = 185)
- Polygyny (n = 1,032)

Marriage payments:
- Yes: 56.8%
- No: 43.2%

Kind of marriage payment:
- Dowry: 41.9%
- Exchange of women: 22.9%
- Reciprocal gift exchange: 8.6%
- Symbolic bride-wealth: 8.6%
- Groom-service: 6.8%
- Bride-wealth: 69.6%

Marriage system:
Multivariate logit analysis I

- Multivariate logit analysis I
- patrilineal desc.
- complex, classes
- nobility, elite
- wealth
- men and women
- no prop. rights
- int. agriculture
- ext. agriculture
- animal husbandry
- fishing
- polygyny

Average change of probability

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inheritance</th>
<th>Real property</th>
<th>Movable property</th>
<th>Stratification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>no prop. rights</td>
<td>men and women</td>
<td>no prop. rights</td>
<td>wealth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>only men</td>
<td>only men</td>
<td>no stratification</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ref.:
- hunting or gathering
- only men

LL = –273.874
Chi² = 112.54
Pseudo R² = 0.219
N = 549
Multivariate logit analysis II

Agricultural work

- women only
- men and women eq.

Average change of probability

Ref.: Men only

LL = –184.381
Chi² = 75.55
Pseudo R² = 0.212
N = 376
Conclusions

• Q. E. D.: Positive associations between bridewealth and …
  ‣ … polygyny
  ‣ … animal husbandry, extensive agriculture
  ‣ … inheritance of real property to men
  ‣ … simple but fixed stratification by wealth
  ‣ … patrilineal descent
• Positive associations to be explained:
  ‣ Intensive agriculture
  ‣ Inheritance of movable property to women
• Further steps
  ‣ Consideration of arranged marriages
  ‣ Application of a more general theory of social institutions
  ‣ Multilevel analyses (societies are clustered in cultures, language families)
  ‣ Structural equation model
  ‣ Analysis of dowry and groomservice
THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION WILL NOT ALLOW THOSE PROMOTING A "GAY AGENDA" TO SUBVERT THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE--TO CHANGE ITS TRADITIONAL DEFINITION.

THAT'S WHY WE INTRODUCED THE DEFENSE OF TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE ACT

§2.01. The Parents shall arrange for the Bride, no younger than 12 years of age, to become the possession of the Groom, with a Dowry of no less than three livestock animals.

§2.02. Marriage by abduction is legally proscribed, although if the Groom later pays a Bride-Price, it will be recognized.

§2.03. Among Nobility, Marriages may be arranged between Reigning Families for the purpose of reinforcing geo-political alliances.

THIS IS HOW MARRIAGE STARTED CENTURIES AGO... AND THIS IS HOW WE'RE KEEPIN' IT!

DO YOU ACCEPT PAYPAL?

HERE YA GO, PRINCE! SHE'S A KEEPER!

THANK YOU, VICE PRESIDENT CHENEY!

Uh, dad...