



BONNY ISLAND FOUNDATION
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THE BONNY TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE

-By Mrs. Ibie Green



The Bonny Groom



The Bonny Bride

The Bonny traditional marriage is one of the customs that has withstood the test of time; it is still performed in Bonny today as it was in the Bonny of yore. Naturally, certain aspects of this tradition have changed with the influence of religion and education but one thing remains unchanged, it is the most acceptable form of marriage in Bonny today.

There are three types of Bonny Traditional Marriage known as the Yaa marriage, the Igwa marriage and Concubinage.

- The Yaa form of the traditional marriage is the most complete and expensive one, because the bride price is usually paid in full and all the

marriage rites, performed. The benefits of this marriage form include full rights for the woman in her husband's house and her children will have full inheritance of their father's property.

- The Igwa Marriage, is known as the incomplete marriage because here, the marriage rites have not been completed due to partial payment of the bride price or dowry. Sometimes, this is due to financial difficulties.
- Lastly, The Concubinage form is a different kind of union, more like the common law marriage. The woman engaged in this kind of affair has limited rights in her partner's house. When she dies, she will not be buried



in his home. Suffice it to say that the man and woman will have no in-laws in this kind of arrangement because no marriage rites have been performed.

The Yaa form of the Bonny Traditional Marriage is done in three stages.

In the first stage known as the 'Knocking on the Door' , the suitor goes with his father to the parents of the would- be- bride to ask for her hand in marriage. The parents of the girl gives them an appointed time while they verify from their daughter if this is her Mr. Right.

After verifying and researching the potential groom's background, if found suitable, he is invited back to return with his parents . According to the custom, the suitor , his parents and some relatives will return with drinks to present to their potential In-laws .

At the second stage, the Bride Price is named and a list of things to present to the parents of the girl is handed over to the groom and his father.

"The List" varies according to the different families and this normally would include gifts for the parents of the girl. The types of gifts that are normally requested on the List are the bowler hat, Jumper, walking stick and george wrapper for the man. For the woman, it would be a george wrapper

or wrappers, blouse and head tie. After this stage, the Groom and his parents can confidently announce the upcoming marriage to their relatives and friends!

The last stage is the marriage proper, where the Chief and elders of the community are seated on the high table to witness the union in the presence of the parents, relatives, and guests. During the marriage ceremony, the groom and his bride are required to dress up in the appropriate Bonny traditional attires.

Marriage in the Bonny tradition is simple and beautiful, here the In-laws play important roles like negotiating the bride price. While noting that there is no amount of money that can compensate the parents of the bride for raising a daughter, the "Bride Price" is very necessary as it symbolizes her importance in her paternal home and secures her place in her marital home.



BY MRS. IBIE GREEN.