



Maras And The Bride Price

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Submitted- 28/Feb/2022	<p>The Maras who inhabited the southern part of Mizoram, India are distinctive tribe who are known for their expensive bride prices. However, the complicated marriage system and expensive bride price holds a great significance in safeguarding the cultural tradition and practices of the Maras. Despite the fact that certain elements of the traditions in respect of marriage have now become obsolete under the influence of the new forces unleashed by Christianity and modernization, the peculiar practice of expensive bride prices continues till today. But, in recent times, a marked difference is noted in terms of the items of the bride prices, the traditional items being replaced substantially by modern items.</p> <p>Keywords: The Maras, Westward migration, Expensive bride's price, payment of the bride prices, cultural significance of the bride price.</p>
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Maras are distinctive ethnic tribe who inhabited the southern part of Mizoram. The whole region inhabited by Mara is known as 'Marara' which means 'The land of the Maras' in their local language.¹ Like many other tribes of North East India and Chin State in Myanmar, the Mara seemed to belong to Mongoloid race of the Tibeto-Burman family, and their original homeland appeared to have been in southern China.² NE Parry in his book *The Lakhers* also classified the Mara as the Mongoloid stock of people.³

There are slightly divergent opinion among different writers as to the time when the Mara migrated from their original homeland and poured into their present place of living in southern Mizoram. Hlychho believed that the Mara migrated from their original homeland somewhere in Malaysia to southern China, crossing the hills of Northern Myanmar and then poured into their present place of living in southern Mizoram in the 15th century AD.⁴ Fachhai believed that after crossing the hills of northwestern Myanmar, the Mara poured into their present habitat in southern Mizoram between the 14th and 15th centuries AD.⁵ In the meantime, M Hlychho asserted that it was in the middle of the 16th century that Mara entered into their present place of living.⁶ Parry suggested a much later date of early 17th century as the time when the Mara arrived at their present Maraland.⁷

Mara were hardly known to the outside world until they encountered with the British in the early part of the 19th century. As the Mara were warlike people, they used to commit raids and plunders upon their neighboring tribes.⁸ By the second half of the 19th century, Mara inroad into the Chittagong Hill Tracts became a regular occurrence. During the seventeen years preceding the second half of the 19th century itself, Maras committed as much as nineteen raids upon their neighboring tribes in Chittagong Hill Tracts in which they killed 107 persons and carried off 186 as war captives.⁹ Mara's traditional belief held that the period

¹ K Zohra, *The Maras: The Indigenous Tradition and Folkculture*, (Guwahati: Scientific Book Centre, 2013), 1.

² Laiu Fachhai, "A brief Introduction to Mara History, Culture and Identity," in *Rediscovering Mara History, Culture and Identity*, ed. Bobby Beingachhi and M Vabeiryureilai (Siaha: Mara Research Society, 2010), 3.

³ N.E. Parry, *The Lakhers* (Calcutta: Firma KLM Pvt. Ltd., 2009), 26.

⁴ J.H. Hlychho, *The Maras: Headhunters to Soulhunters* (Aizawl: Self-published, 2009), 1.

⁵ Laiu Fachhai, *The Maras: From Warriors to Missionaries* (Siaha: ECM Mission, 1994), 2.

⁶ M Hlychho, *Mara History* (Serkawn: Louisa Lorrain Memorial Press, 1972), 7.

⁷ Parry, *The Lakhers*, 3.

⁸ Chawngthu, *Mara Marriage System*, 52.

⁹ Chawngthu, *Mara Marriage System*, 53.

between November and May in a year is an ideal time for undertaking raids and plunders.¹⁰ Although Maraland was not economically stunning to the British, their habits of frequent raids and plunders upon their neighboring tribes had eventually induced the British to conquer this far-off land.¹¹ In an attempt to protect their territories from raids by the hill tribes, the British annexed and brought all villages of Tlosai group under their rule.¹² From 1922, the British undertook annexation of Mara villages on a large scale, and within a short span of two years, the entire Maraland was finally annexed and incorporated into their domain by the British in 1924.¹³

Maras were known and famous for their complicated marriage system and expensive bride prices. As the institution of marriage occupied an important place in the traditional society of the Mara, it is the backbone of social relationship in the society. Mara considered marriage as an essential obligation, which both man and woman have to fulfil not only for legalized procreation but also for the establishment of wider social relationship.¹⁴ As bride's price and its payment is an essential prerequisite in the traditional marriage system of the Mara, marriage could not be performed unless the bride's price had been settled first.¹⁵ It is because of this reason that Chawngkhuma classified traditional marriage system of the Mara as "purchase system"¹⁶ In traditional period, the Mara were usually tempted to marry higher clan than their own to raise their status in the society.¹⁷ The great aim of every Mara was to raise his status in the society by marrying a girl who belonged to higher clan than his own. This made it difficult for them to find a suitable bride at their reasonable marriageable age, which usually ranged from twenty to twenty-five.¹⁸ Although a man can not change his clan, he can claim a higher bride price for his daughter than the rate of his own clan provided that he himself, his father and grandfather married higher clan than theirs.¹⁹

Expensive bride price and its payment procedure is the most complicated affairs of the Mara marriage system. The bride price of the Mara is composed of several major prices called mato, each of which had a number of subsidiary prices and small dues attached to it.²⁰ The subsidiary prices and small dues were permanently attached to major price mato, and they were inseparable from that of the major price.²¹ The marriage price is very expensive and exhaustive for both parties- the wife-giver and the wife-taker families. Nevertheless, this expensive bride price is attributed to be the main cause of extremely rare occurrence of divorce among the Maras.²² The marriage prices were usually paid in terms of household goods such as gun, gong, brass pot, earthen pot, bead, dao, axe etc. and animals such as mithun, pig, fowl etc.²³ Such material kinds and animals were paid in lieu of various major prices and subsidiary prices of the bride, and they were collectively known as sohra or sodaw.²⁴ As the bride's price is usually high, this makes it necessary for a family to save up for many years before they can afford to buy a wife for their son.²⁵

The payment of the bride's price usually took place at night, and this is known as zatlaso.²⁶ The intermediaries lyuchapa were sent at night to hand over the marriage prices to the girl's parents. The whole proceeding of the zatlaso depended on the consensus between the two parties- the wife-giver and the wife-taker. If the boy's party were not able to pay the entire bride's price at the time of zatlaso, lyuchapa tried hard to convince the girl's parent that they may be allowed to pay the entire balance by installment in due course of time.²⁷ As the bride's price is very high, payment of the bride's price is very exhaustive and costly affairs, and this costly bride's price and its complicated payment procedure is termed as sahrophir, which means 'surrendering of all family possessions'.²⁸ As payment of the bride price entails a lot of expenditure in terms

¹⁰ Laiu Fachhai, *The Maras* (Bangalore: Self-published, 1994), 8.

¹¹ K Robin, "Lakher Society and Colonial Encounter," in *Social, Economic and Political History of the Mizo*, ed. Malsawmliana and Benjamin Ralte (Guwahati: EBH Publishers (India), 2011), 82.

¹² Chawngthu, *Mara Marriage System*, 56.

¹³ Fachhai, *The Maras*, 11.

¹⁴ Chawngthu, *Mara Marriage System*, 131.

¹⁵ Zohra, *The Maras*, 45.

¹⁶ Chawngthu, *Mara Marriage System*, 131.

¹⁷ Parry, *The Lakhers*, 292.

¹⁸ Parry, *The Lakhers*, 292.

¹⁹ HT Phillip, interviewed by scholar, Siaha, October 20, 2022.

²⁰ J Barooah, *Customary Laws of the Maras of Mizoram: With Special Reference to their Landholding System* (Guwahati: Law research Institute, 2011), 16.

²¹ K Zohra, *The Maras: The Indigenous Tradition and Folkculture* (Guwahati: Scientific Book Centre, 2013), 45.

²² M Hniezo, interviewed by scholar, Zyhno, July 17, 2022.

²³ JH Hlychho, *The Maras: Head Hunters to Soul Hunters* (Delhi: ISPCK, 2009), 71.

²⁴ Zohra, 45.

²⁵ N.E. Parry, *The Lakhers* (Calcutta: Firma K.L.M. Pvt. Ltd., 2009), 293.

²⁶ Zohra, *The Maras*, 44.

²⁷ Zohra, *The Maras*, 44.

²⁸ Zohra, *The Maras*, 44.

of animals or material kinds, his close relations and clansmen collectively assisted the bridegroom in payment of the bride price.

Various major prices of the bride were distributed among the relatives of the bride who were legitimately entitled to claim and receive the actual bride prices.²⁹ Distribution of the bride prices among relatives not only widened kinship ties but also strengthened kinship relationship between the two contracting parties. The customary law demanded that each claimant of the bride price had to kill a mithun or a pig, and give it to the boy's parents to receive the bride price.³⁰ Without killing a mithun or a pig, the claimant of the bride price could not receive the bride price. There is no limit to the number of the pigs that had been killed, and the more of the pigs killed, the bigger the feast. The bridegroom had to reciprocate by killing certain number of pigs. If the bride's party killed three pigs, the bridegroom must kill one in return. If they killed five, the bridegroom must kill at least two.

The major or principal price of the bride is of two types- azila and makthotho.³¹ Close relatives of the bride on her father's side such as father, father's son, father's brother, father's nephew, bride's brother and clansmen are entitled to get the azila. Women have no customary right to claim any azila.³² The main prices that fall under the category of azila are okia, chawchyu, seipihra, seicheihra, mahra, rarohra, meitheihra, syuhra, seipawchyu etc. Bride's relatives on her mother's side such as mother's sister, mother's brother or bride's maternal uncle, girl's grandparents and female relatives of the bride on her father's side such as father's sister are entitled to receive makthotho. The principle prices that are classified under makthotho are puma, nochyu, norihra, nochyu, mochyu, tinie, keima etc. Each of these major prices had several subsidiary prices and other small dues which were permanently attached to it. These subsidiary prices and other dues could not be claimed independently without the major price.³³

Okia is the most important major price of the bride. Okia being the most important of the main prices, the rate of it governs the rate of all other prices and secondary prices.³⁴ The higher the Okia, the higher the other prices.³⁵ The clan affiliation of the bride significantly determines the rate of Okia. It is significant to note that a man usually claims a higher Okia for his daughter than his own clan usually do provided that he himself, his father and grandfather married into higher clans.³⁶ This is the reason why the Mara usually try to marry into a higher clan than their own.

The rate of the Okia price varies from clan to clan. It usually varies from a large gong or a mithun to a small brass gong called dawchhy.³⁷ Okia of the bride belonging to the chiefly clan, abeipho is customarily higher than that of the commoners, machhie clan. Okia of the chiefly clan abeipho usually consists of a she-mithun and its calf, sano-saw as the main price, amapi. Okia of a bride belonging to a high clan phoso consists of full grown mithun sapi or its equivalent as a main price, amapi. Okia of commoners' clan machhie consists of full grown cow sataw or a pig or its equivalent as the main price amapi.³⁸ The lowest clan in the society were known as dawchhy who were naturally slaves or war captives. When a person born of dawchhy married, her Okia could not be charged higher than the value of a pair of small gong or its equivalent. With the incorporation of Maraland into the British Indian empire in 1924 and subsequent abolition of slavery, dawchhy clan gradually disappeared in the Mara society.³⁹

Okia of different clans may be indicated as follows:

1	Ruling clan (abeipho)	She mithun and its calf sano saw	Rs 100.00
2	High Clan (phoso)	Full grown mithun sapi	Rs 60.00
3	Plebeian clan (machhie)	Full grown cow sataw or a pig	Rs 40.00
4	Low clan (dawchhy)	A pair of small gong	Rs 20.00

Okia is payable to the father of the bride. If the father was no more, the elder brother of the bride, the bride's father's brother, or any male close relation of the bride's father is entitled to get this price. But, the case is different in Savang village where father does not take his daughter's Okia.⁴⁰ Instead, his eldest son takes the

²⁹ Zohra, *The Maras*, 45.

³⁰ Melvil Pereira et al., *Continuity and Change: The Maras of Mizoram* (Guwahati: North Eastern Social Research Centre, 2019), 135.

³¹ Zohra, *The Maras*, 46.

³² HT Phillip, interviewed by scholar, Siaha, February 15, 2022.

³³ Zohra, *The Maras*, 46.

³⁴ Parry, *The Lakhers*, 312.

³⁵ Chawngkhuma Chawngthu, "Mara Marriage System", *Historical Journal Mizoram* VII, (November 2006)

³⁶ Parry, *The Lakhers*, 312.

³⁷ Zohra, *The Maras*, 47.

³⁸ Zohra, *A Study of the Mara Customary Law and Justice in the Mara Autonomous District of Mizoram*, 212.

³⁹ Zohra, *A Study of the Mara Customary Law and Justice in the Mara Autonomous District of Mizoram*, 214.

⁴⁰ Parry, *The Lakhers*, 312.

Okia of his eldest daughter, and the youngest son taking the Okia of the youngest daughter. It is only if a man does not have a son that he takes the Okia of his daughter.⁴¹

Seipihra is another major price, which is customarily given to the bride's father or the bride's paternal uncle or the bride's brother or any male relation of the bride on her father's side.⁴² Seipihra consists of the main price amapi and other secondary prices like abawna, keima, etc. and smaller dues such as abei machahla or abeihla, macha bierei or machahla, chapaw-tyukhai, chano-tyukhai, sawhla, chotlapa, u-hla etc. The rate of Seipihra is smaller than that of Okia in terms of quality and quantity. Besides, the subsidiary prices like thuaso, sisazi, chakie etc. can not be claimed in Seipihra.⁴³ A She mithun or its equivalent is usually taken as main item of Seipihra. It is considered disgraceful for the claimant of Seipihra to claim the bride price which is more or less equivalent with that of Okia, and the Mara hardly do so.⁴⁴ Killing of either a mithun or a pig and presenting them to the wife-taker's party is mandatory for the claimant of Seipihra to realize the subsidiary prices and other small dues known as hlasiba.

Chawchyu is another major price, and it is payable to the bride's eldest brother or any male relation of the bride's father. The composition and procedure of Chawchyu is more or less the same with that of Okia. Like Okia, Chawchyu consists of the main price amapi and other secondary prices like abawna, keima, etc. and smaller dues. But, the amount of amapi and abawna of Chawchyu is smaller than that of Okia in terms of both quantity and quality. The claimant of Chawchyu had to kill a mithun or a pig to realize the prices. If he does not kill either a mithun or a pig, he cannot claim subsidiary prices and other dues attached to it. A mithun or a pig which had been killed to claim the bride's price should be given to the wife-taker's party. Such a pig given to the wife-taker's party is known as awrua. The wife-taker also kills a pig, which is given to the claimant of the bride's price.

Seicheihra is another major price, which is customarily taken by the bride's father or bride's father's brother or any male relations of the bride on her father's side. Seicheihra also consists of the main price amapi and other secondary prices like like abawna, keima, etc and smaller dues. The rate of Seicheihra is exactly the same with that of Chawchyu and Seipihra. The claimant must kill a mithun or a pig, which is given to the wife-giver's party to realize the price. If he does not kill a mithun or a pig, the subsidiary prices such as abawna and other small dues which are attached to Seicheihra can not be claimed by him. The items which are paid in lieu of subsidiary prices and other dues consisted of brass pot, broom, cane mat, cloth, comb, dao, necklace, piglet, pumtek bead, raw cotton, skirt etc.⁴⁵

Seihra is another major price which is usually claimed independently by the bride's father. However, the practice of claiming Seihra primarily confined to the chiefly clan or wealthy family who owned slaves.⁴⁶ In early days, it was a customary practice that the bride's father could claim one slave whether male or female as the main price of Seihra from the wife-taker. If the latter had no slave, he must pay a mithun in lieu of slave to the claimant. A full grown mithun is considered equivalent to one slave. But, this customary practice of claiming slave Sei or Seihra withered away with the advent of Christianity in the Maraland.⁴⁷

Seipawchyu is one of the major bride's prices of the Mara. The Seipawchyu literally means 'special share for the most favorite slave'. It was a bride's price which was generally claimed by one of the most favorite male slaves of the wife-giver.⁴⁸ So, this practice of Seipawchyu mainly confined to the chiefly clan or well to do family who could have slave. The claimant of Seipawchyu must kill a pig and give it to the wife-taker to get the price. This practice of claiming Seipawchyu price was also gradually abolished as a result of the new forces unleashed by the new faith of Christianity in Maraland.

In addition to the above major prices that fall under the category of Azila, there are other major prices that are usually claimed independently by the relatives of the bride on her father's side. Such major prices are being placed under the category of Makhotho. Male or female relations of the bride on her mother's side could claim upon such major prices of Makhotho. Puma is a major bride's price payable to the bride's maternal uncle who is called Pupa. If the bride's mother has several brothers, Puma goes to the eldest brother. If the bride's mother has no brother, or her brother was already dead before marriage, Puma would automatically go to the Pupa's son or his male relations.⁴⁹ Puma price consists of the main price pumapi and other several subsidiary prices like loakhyu, keima, phavaw, machabierei or machahla, chapaw-tyukhai,

⁴¹ Parry, *The Lakhers*, 312.

⁴² Pereira et al., *Continuity and Change*, 135.

⁴³ Zohra, *The Maras*, 49.

⁴⁴ K Chilei, interviewed by scholar, Amobyu, August 3, 2022.

⁴⁵ Zohra, *A Study of the Mara Customary Law and Justice in the Mara Autonomous District of Mizoram*, 216.

⁴⁶ Zohra, *The Maras*, 51.

⁴⁷ K Robin, "The Lakher in Mizoram: The impact of Christianity and Colonial Administration," in *Mizoram: Dimensions and Perspectives*, ed. Jagadish K. Patnaik (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, 2006), 322.

⁴⁸ S Mokia, *Mara Ra Awnanopa Thati*, (Serkawr: LLM Press, 1981), 69.

⁴⁹ Zohra, *The Maras*, 52.

chano-tyukhai, u-hla, sawhla, chawtlapa, etc.⁵⁰ The rate of Puma depends upon the rate of Okia, and it is practically equivalent to the rate of Okia. Pupa has to kill a pig of the size at least six fists to claim his niece's puma. Pupa can claim the price on the weeding day. However, he usually waits till the couple have fully settled down as husband and wife.⁵¹ When puma was paid, Pupa usually gives an embroided skirt and a white cloth to the bride. Such a gift is called Ngiaty.⁵² If the pupa fails to claim puma price during the lifetime of his niece and her husband, he can claim from his niece's son a gong of six spans or equivalent, and such payment is known as chhochhitya. The pupa does not need to kill a pig to claim such payment from his niece's son.

Nochyu is another major price payable to the mother's sister. If the bride's mother's sister was already dead before marriage, any one of her sons must take the price. If the bride's mother has no sister, any one of her maternal relative sisters must take the price. The Nochyu is never transferred to any male relation.⁵³ But, if the bride's parents have divorced and the mother separated from her husband, this price will go to the mother.⁵⁴ The claimant of Nochyu must kill a pig and give it to the wife-taker's party to realize the main price amapi and other subsidiary prices macha bierei or machahla, chano-tyukhai, u-hla, sawhla, chotlapa etc. If she does not kill a pig, those subsidiary prices and smaller dues attached to Nochyu can not be claimed by her.

Norihra is one of the major prices, which is customarily payable to the youngest married sister of the bride's mother. If the bride's mother has only one sister who has already taken such price once or more, then the price must be transferred to one of the female relations on the mother's side. In case the bride's mother has several sisters, and the youngest sister has already taken such price once or more, the price must go to one of her sisters, as she likes.⁵⁵ If the rightful claimant of Norihra is already dead before marriage, the price is usually taken by one of her son who looks after her till her death. The claimant of Norihra must kill a pig which should be given to the wife-taker's party to claim the main price amapi and other smaller dues. If she does not kill a pig, she can not claim abawna price, subsidiary prices and other smaller dues attached to Norihra.

Nochyu literally means aunt's price. As its name suggests, Nochyu is customarily taken by the bride's eldest paternal aunt, nono.⁵⁶ If the bride's aunt was dead before marriage, any of her sons should take the price. In case the bride's father has no sister at all, the price should go his nearest relative sister. Whosoever is the claimant of this price, the aunt or her son, he/she must kill a pig and give it to a wife-taker party to claim the main price amapi and other several subsidiary prices such as macha bierei or machahla, chano-tyukhai, u-hla, sawhla, chotlapa etc. The composition and procedure of the Nochyu price is more or less the same with that of Norihra except that the claimant of Nochyu can realize several other dues known as tinie. Such additional dues tinie may consist items such as axe, basket, belt, bracelet, brass pot, broom, cane-band, cane-mat, cloth, comb, dao, hairpin, necklace, piglet, pumtek, raw-cotton, skirt etc.⁵⁷ These subsidiary prices are usually demanded by Nono when she and the marriage party entered the bridegroom's house.⁵⁸

Mao is a special price which is customarily claimed by one or two friends of the bride independently. Mao is a very small price, and there is no any subsidiary or additional due attached to it.⁵⁹ If the bride has no friend, the price may not be claimed.

Mochyu is a special minor price which is payable to the bride's grandparents on her father's side. In some village, it is payable to the bride's grandparents on her mother's side. As Mochyu is a minor price, it does not have any extra or additional dues attached to it. If the bride's grandparents are no more, the price cannot be claimed.⁶⁰

In addition to the above-mentioned prices, there are minor dues which are payable to the chief, the elders, the cooks, beer makers, water carriers etc. and these are known as Ahlas. The practice governing payment of Ahlas varies from place to place. In some places, in case the bride and bridegroom belong to the same village, no Ahlas of any sort are paid.

Ah-ma is another minor price, which is claimed by the bride's father or brother. If the bride's father kills ten pigs for the wedding feast on the wedding day, it is known as vaothaw-a, and he is supposed to perform ah ceremony in honour of his daughter, and then, he can claim Ah-ma price.⁶¹

⁵⁰ Parry, *The Lakhers*, 314.

⁵¹ Chawngkhuma Chawngthu, *Mara Marriage System*, (Aizawl: Lengchhawn Press, 2021), 153.

⁵² Chawngthu, *Mara Marriage System*, 153.

⁵³ Zohra, *The Maras*, 53.

⁵⁴ Chawngthu, *Mara Marriage System*, 153.

⁵⁵ Zohra, *The Maras*, 54.

⁵⁶ Zohra, *The Maras*, 55.

⁵⁷ Zohra, *The Maras*, 53.

⁵⁸ K Zohra, "The Marriage Customs of the Maras before the Advent of the British in Maraland" in *Studies on the Minorities Nationalities- The Mizos* (Aizawl: Muka Printing Press, 1992), 102.

⁵⁹ Zohra, *The Maras*, 56.

⁶⁰ Zohra, *The Maras*, 56.

⁶¹ Zakhu Hlychho, *The Hundred Years of Maraland* (Aizawl: 2006), 132.

Payment of the bride's price was the most important part of marriage proceedings among the Maras, and without payment of bride's prices, marriage ceremony and other rituals could not be performed. The bride's prices were usually paid on the wedding day. But, in some places, they were paid on the eve of the wedding day. As the bride's price was very expensive, payment of it could also be made in instalments and could also be passed on the eldest son after the demise of his father. If the eldest son could not complete payment of the balance during his lifetime, it would fall on the grandson and so on.⁶²

On the wedding day, friends and relatives gathered at the houses of the bride and bridegroom, and started the proceeding by drinking rice beer, which were profusely available. Persons who were entitled to the bride price had to kill pigs, cows and mithuns.⁶³ Each party prepared a grand wedding feast by killing large number of animals, and they invited their respective friends and relations to partake in the feast. This first day of the wedding feast is awraubawna day. The bride's parents ought to kill three to five pigs to enable them to claim various major bride's prices which they are entitled to claim.⁶⁴ The bridegroom's parents reciprocate by killing certain number of pigs. If the bride's people kill three pigs, the bridegroom's people must kill one in return, and if they kill five, the bridegroom's people must kill at least two in return. There was no limit to the number of pigs that may have been killed on the wedding day. The more of the pigs killed, the greater the wedding and the bigger the feast.⁶⁵

With the passage of time, the traditional marriage system of Mara had undergone a lot of change. While some of the traditions have been retained even today, a number of traditional marriage practices, rituals and customs had become obsolete in the contemporary marriage practice of the Mara. Of the different traditional practices, the practice of expensive bride price is best retained in the contemporary marriage system of the Mara. As indicated in the Table 3.2 below, an overwhelming majority of the respondents expressed that of the different traditional practices in respect of marriage, the practice of expensive bride price has been best retained by the younger generation of the Mara. While 62 (88.57%) of the male respondents expressed that tradition is best followed in respect of the practice of expensive bride price by present generation, 63 (90%) of the female respondents have expressed the same opinion in this regard. While there are 3 (4.28%) male respondents who opined that tradition is best followed in divorce system, there are 2 (2.85%) female respondents who are of the same opinion in this regard. There are 5 (7.14%) each of both male and female respondents who expressed that tradition is best retained in respect of selection of partners.

Table 3.2: Tradition best followed till today

What tradition is best followed in the contemporary marriage system of the Mara?	Male	Female	Total
Expensive bride price	62	63	125
Selection of partners	5	5	10
Divorce System	3	2	5

Keeping in view of the significance of distribution of bride prices in strengthening the bond of kinship relationship, it is not amazing to see that expensive bride price has been the crucial component of marriage system of the Mara till today. Even today, bride prices are systematically distributed in line with the traditions, and recipients of the bride strictly adhere to their duties and responsibilities in taking care of the bride.⁶⁶ Till now, kinship structures play a crucial role in the distribution of the bride's prices.⁶⁷

Further question is asked on how far the practice of expensive bride prices play a role in maintaining cultural identity of the Mara. The responses, given in the Table 3.3, show that the practice of expensive bride prices is essential for maintaining cultural identity of the Mara to a great extent. Absolute majority of both 62 (88.57%) male respondents and 60 (85.71%) female respondents noted that the practice of expensive bride prices is essential for maintaining cultural identity of the Mara to a great extent. While there are 14 male and female respondents (10%) who claimed that practice of expensive bride prices is essential for maintaining cultural identity of the Mara to some extent, there are only 4 (2.85%) respondents who opined that practice of expensive bride prices does not hold any significance in maintaining cultural identity of the Mara.

Table 3.3: Significance of expensive bride prices for maintaining cultural identity

Do you think that the practice of expensive bride price is essential for maintaining cultural identity of the Mara?	Sex of the respondents		Total
	Male	Female	

⁶² Pereira et al., *Continuity and Change*, 136.

⁶³ K Zohra, "The Marriage Customs of the Maras before the Advent of the British in the Maraland," in *History and Ethnic Identity Formation in North-East India*, ed. J.V.Hluna (New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company Pvt. Ltd., 2013), 281.

⁶⁴ Parry, *The Lakhers*, 297.

⁶⁵ Parry, *The Lakhers*, 297.

⁶⁶ TT Pawla, interviewed by scholar, Zyhno, August 3, 2022.

⁶⁷ K Zohra, interviewed by scholar, Siaha, May 2, 2022.

Yes, to a great extent	62	60	122
Yes, to some extent	4	10	14
No, not at all	4		4

Further opinion is sought on whether the younger generations are still appreciating the practice of expensive bride price or not. While 52 (74.28%) male respondents expressed that younger generations are appreciating the expensive bride price, 44 (62.85%) female respondents have the same opinion in this regard. Meanwhile, 16 (22.85%) male respondents and 22 (31.42%) female respondents are of the opinion that younger generations are no longer supportive of the expensive bride price. 2 (2.85%) male and 4 (5.71%) female respondent express no concern in this regard. As the number of respondents who have divergent opinion on the issue are comparatively less, this may be taken as indicative of the fact that the practice of expensive bride price may continue to be retained in future.

Table 3.4: Whether expensive bride price appreciated or not

Do you think that younger generation of the Mara still appreciate the practice of expensive bride price?	Sex of the respondents		Total
	Male	Female	
Yes	52	44	96
No	16	22	38
Uncertain	2	4	6

Even today, expensive bride price continues to be the main issue of the marriage system of the Mara. Animals and household materials continue to be the items of the bride price. In the meantime, modern household items like blanket, plastic drawer, plastic sintex water tank, sewing machine, dinner set etc. have now replaced traditional household items like gong, gun, necklaces, brass hairpin, brass pot, earthen pot, bead, dao etc.

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