

**Illustrate and explain the economic importance of 'marriage', with at least two examples from different parts of the world.**

Marriage is not simply the union between two individuals but more the joining of tribes, clans and kin. There are strong connotations that marriage may bring about economic and political reasons behind it, even though these might never be discussed or shown light upon. Marriage is a union between a man and a woman such that children born to the woman are recognised legitimate offspring of both partners. It should not be regarded as a single phenomenon but as a 'bundle of rights'. (Edmund Leach.) In this essay I am going to explain the economic importance of marriage regarding the Nuer from Southern Sudan and the Malays, visualizing marriage as a form of organizing society.

All theories of how society arose depend on the idea that humans once existed without society. It is much more likely that some form of society evolved together with humanity; given especially that our closest primate relatives are also socially organized. Marriage is such a way of organizing society, although marriage cannot be defined universally. (Kinship, An Introduction to the basic concepts.) However in the great majority of societies it can be regarded as involving some cultural restriction on human sexual relations, restricting access for each individual to a limited number of other individuals.

It is the exchange of women that draw groups together to form a society, as incest can be punished or badly frowned upon in many communities. A marriage can be a recognized relationship between two individuals or an axis of an alliance between families. There is a complex network of kinship found amongst the Nuer, where marriages must occur with people from outside one's kin and therefore mainly with persons belonging to many different local communities. With each marriage these links running from one community to another are increased and there results a complex network of kinship ties between other clans and tribes of the same territory. (Marriage among the Nuer.) This type of alliance can form strong political strength within a territory, which in turn might propagate economic issues. If a territory is politically close-knit and there is trust, barter of goods and economic growth may begin more easily.

However the most important economic importance of marriage is when it is accompanied by property transfers. These can be in the form of brideprice which is less satisfactory as the bride is being bought and sold as a commodity. In the other hand, bridewealth is a payment made for the bride by the groom's family and wealth is re-circulated back and forth even in years to come and forms a bond between groups. The Nuer undergo the payment of bridewealth together with three public marriage ceremonial rites. The rites cannot take place without the transfer of cattle same as the transfer of cattle cannot take place without the ceremonies. Each enforces and reinforces the other, to such extent that the bride's people by holding the rites, increase pressure on the groom's people. Conversely the groom's people can, by withholding cattle induce the girl's family and kin to advance ceremonies. This is an assuring way to make sure, up until the final moment, that the chosen bride or groom is the correct one. Men who claim distant cognatic kinship with the bride may ask for gifts, it is these kin who are so distant that they do not receive a portion of the bridewealth. However they are entitled to gifts from the groom, and this shows the economic importance of marriage as a large number of the bride's kin can benefit from the marriage.

For the Malays, there is no clear distinction of marriage as in general it occurs at a late stage in life, after the bride or the groom have had various lovers and relationships. If the bride has illegitimate children, her new husband will be the person from whom they will inherit wealth and land. It is the women in this society however who have more power. In the sense that they believe that blood is central to vitality itself and to connections between kin. Blood comes from the cooked rice and breastfeeding milk comes from blood circulating in the body. (The Heat of the Hearth.) The mother's milk is the connection to the ancestors. Therefore the maternal contributions are of great importance as the child's descent comes from its maternal ancestors because the child comes from their contents. The father is from where the inheritance rights derive, and these are of a more economic nature, and in this paper what is of concern. However there is no mention on what type of inheritance occurs, I will presume it is the transfer of land and grazing animals.

Marriage prestations might be paid over a very long period in the form of labour, uxori-local residence ( wife's house) although this is mainly for the poor who cannot afford bridewealth so instead they work for the future. This happens amongst the Malays to a certain extent because it is the man who marries the woman, and it is him who does the work and who brings food and goods home. The wife merely cooks, and for them eating is the central part of uniting people together. It is to such an extent that people who have eaten food cooked on the same hearth are regarded as kin. This alliance is easier to achieve than through marriage, and it gives the same economical outcomes, if not more. There is increased trust if the same food has been eaten by individuals, and kinship is created even if a child is breast fed by another woman who is not his biological mother. In this sense kinship may be created, as the milk is made from the blood which has the ancestral side to it.

Marriage is about property: property in houses, in land, in boats, in animals, in slaves, in 'valuables' of all kinds including titles and women. (Social Anthropology of Marriage and Mating.) The Nuer tend to transact in imperishable property such as livestock and women, whereas the Malays generally centre their transactions in more perishable items such as jewellery and clothing. The handing over of items of property are handed down from generation to generation, for the Malay's it comes from the father and his side of the family and for the Nuer it does so too.

There is also the issue of how the ownership of the property is come about, as this has strong economic implications. Where the bundle of rights (as the ownership of property may be called) is property of a single individual, he or she carries the right to destroy what is owned, whereas if property is distributed the decision of destroying should come from all, so each individual has less power. The wife is said to be distributed, she is kin, and therefore belongs to all. When a wife joins a Nuer family, she has to give her adornments away to her side of the family and then she comes in to her new kin 'naked' and it is their responsibility to adorn her appropriately. She is now of their property, not only of her husband's property but belonging to her husband's kin.

An important economic issue of marriage is an aspect of security, and the need to produce heirs. They provide security in old age, when the individual cannot support himself from personal savings and capital. There is the question of the family estate

and the continuity of one's name and one's memory. It is of importance to the Malay's and for the Nuer too. There is a delicate relationship between land, dowry and strategy of heirship. If there are problems with the under production of heirs, heirs might be added directly by simply having more children or indirectly by adding wives. But if the indirect way of making heirs is chosen, there might be a problem arising where diverging devolution is used, which is a form of vertical inheritance. A way to decrease the economical importance of some children is to treat second marriages with a distinct category to the first. In this way, wealth is saved and the father may choose his preferred son to whom most of the wealth will be delivered. It is a mechanism of discontinuity, as a lesser marriage deliberately excludes the child of the offspring of the union from inheriting the position of the father.

For the Malays divorce or temporary or more permanent separation, lend an enormous force to the idea that living and eating together is one way of coming to have substance in common. Feeding is one way in which strangers and outsiders can become incorporated into a village community, although marriage is a stronger way of incorporation. The Nuer require the marriage ceremony and the bridewealth in order to establish this connection, and it even goes further to say that the husband may not eat in his wife's parents home until a baby has been born.

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