

Marriage Customs on the Koss

R. Stewart to Beynon, 19489 06.

Arrangements were made while the couple were still children

The matches most sought were with first cousins (tgu t' x a' >') to retain the wealth of two closely related ~~families~~ ^{families}, eg. brother and sister.

A woman was declared eligible for marriage when she had her first menses and it was announced she was now a woman.

The first overtures were made by the suitor's uncle to the girl's parents to whom he gave gifts. The girl's father would then reply that actually the girl's maternal uncles and aunts were the ones to be consulted. The same overtures were then made to the latter. Then before an answer was expected the mother of the suitor would go through the same routine. Her gifts were termed mes'a'os (red ochre - in old times red ochre was of great value and was actually used for three gifts). The mother would wait a reasonable time, and if there was no reply and the gifts were retained by the girl's family, she would go again with more red ochre.

If she went three times without receiving a reply she knew that the suit was unacceptable and expected the gifts to be returned.

If the reply is to be favourable, the girl's uncles gather presents and give these to the house of the suitor. This is termed lugi'in (to feed). It is the bride's dowry, and all of the suitor's clan are called in and partake of the lugi'in presents. Then his clans distribute gifts, (his dowry), to all the girl's uncles. These

are the final presents given by the man's side.

Then the woman's maternal aunts gave gifts (x q, ye't - non returnable gifts) to all of the suitor's clan. Everything is now ready for the marriage. (The man's dowry gift was not returnable but the bride's lug'in gift to the man was returnable)

The next procedure is for the man's groom's clan to fetch the bride to his home. If she was of high rank then her own clan would put up a show of resistance, even to the point of stoning the visitors. The bride sat on a mat, and the groom and his companions advanced as if to take her by force. As soon as he touched her the resistance would cease and she went with him to his home.

If she left her husband, and they wanted her back, the uncles of the husband went to her uncles with gifts termed w-o-m-s (to invite)

Example: wise'ks, q'isp. chief of git'wan k'sitka completed all the procedures to marry a lax q, bu' woman at q, lax t'e'mks. Together with his nephews and tribesmen he went upriver to fetch his bride. The party was met by the lax q, bu who stoned them, injuring some and preventing them from landing, but no one took offense. Finally the young men rushed the lax q, bu house and surrounded the woman, and the sham struggle stopped. Both principals were of advanced age, and their high rank was shown in this manner. The lax q, bu were not going to let their chief woman leave them without a struggle.