The institution of marriage occupies an important place in traditional Mara society. It is the backbone of Mara society and a very necessary part of their social system. Basically, the Mara marriage is a civil social contract with mutual consent between man and woman not only for sexual enjoyment and legalised procreation, but for the establishment of wider
social relationship. Among the Maras, marriage is treated as a permanent nature unless dissolved by divorce. Right from its inception, the Mara marriage is based on “purchase system”. Marriage could not be arranged unless the bride price is paid. Among the Maras, marriage is considered an essential obligation to be fulfilled by both man and woman for fecundity. One was disdained and looked down upon until a marriage vow has been fulfilled.

As discussed earlier, the Mara marriage system, by and large, falls under the so-called subtype of Elementary marital exchange, “generalised exchange” which is known as “Alliance Theory” (Patricia, 1993; p.5). Marriage within certain relatives is prohibited, but marriage with other relatives may be prescribed or preferred. In this system two kinds of cousins are distinguished, marriage being prohibited between those who are children of siblings of the same sex “parallel cousin” while it is prescribed between children of siblings of opposite sex “cross-cousin”.

Among the Maras, marriage within certain relatives like brother and sister is prohibited as the children would not prosper. Children of the same father but by different mothers may not marry, but children of the same mother by different fathers may marry. The children of a brother and sister may and do
marry if the sister’s child is a son, and the brother’s child a daughter. Thus, they prescribed preferential marriage between children of siblings of the opposite sex. The most favourite preferential marriage among the Maras is with the mother’s brother’s daughter, as it keep the maternal avuncular relationship in the same line, but it is not obligatory (Parry; 1932; p.295).

Thus the prescriptive (asymmetrical, martrilateral) cross-cousin marriage has been found among the Maras. The establishment of an affinal relationship, in this way, involves corporate descent groups in a connection that lasts over time, though not indefinitely. In the Mara marriage, the social relations between wife-givers and wife-takers are asymmetrical. Obligations in the relationship between wife-taker and wife-giver are related to inferior and superior positions, respectively. The marriage price is a very costly and complicated affair involving certain specialised categories, like the brides kin group and her mother’s brother, real or classificatory. Not only this, prestations of many kinds are repeatedly due to the men of the wife-giving lineages, not only at recurrent crisis rites, but also on a certain other occasions. Wife-taker also has obligations to provide assistance in the form of rice-beer and food when the wife-giver performs one of the major feasts. Male wife-giver must be addressed in a respectful manner here (Parry, 1932; p.238). Above all, a
woman's family has a lien on her offspring by virtue either of her irrevocable membership in her natal lineage or of the enduring relationship between the lineage established by the marriage (Lehman, 1963; p.124).

There is a deep social gulf between the higher and the lower class. Noble birth is very highly esteemed as the amount of a girl's marriage price theoretically depends on her clan, and thereby the rate of a girl's marriage price belonging to high clan considerably higher than the rate of a girl's marriage price who belong to a lower clan. The great aim of every Mara is, therefore, to raise his status in the society by marrying a girl from a higher clan than his own, as thereby he gains the protection of his wife's relatively powerful and influential relations. Although a man can never change his clan, he can claim a higher marriage price for his daughter than the rate of his own clan, provided that: if his grandmother, his mother or his wife belonged to a higher clan than his own. In this way the marriage price of a girl is of very high and complicated affair (Parry, 1932; p.233). However, the marriage payments are not a simple return for a wife and/or right over the offspring she will bear. Rather they are earnest money (C. F. Dumont, 1957; p. 31) indicative of further payments to come. The payment of bride-wealth, in a sense, is
not for marriage as such but for the right to an alliance with the wife-giver and his agnates. This alliance relationship, however, if it is endure, must be formally and symbolically expressed and reaffirmed from time to time. In this way marriage payments are continuing to run in the same direction.

This alliance is not reciprocal in a simple sense in terms of substantial and other benefits passing between the two parties, but the system of interdependence and corporate relationships does exhibit reciprocity. Women have great value and their children continue one's lineage. Furthermore, a powerful ally is a protector and enhances safety of one's own daughters (Lehman, 1963; p.125).

As a rule, the Mara marriage system involves preferential marriage between groups larger then the conjugal family, and these groups do not exchange with each other directly in pairs, the arrangement is circular. The groups involves in the marriage “ring” or “circle” may be called a lineage cluster maintains cyclical connubial relation over several successive generations. This cluster consists of a small group of minor lineage segments. Its core is a set of segments collaterally related as agnates, but it includes a
number of segments not so related to this core. These segments are not all of
the same major or even maximal lineage.

Two such clusters may be thought of as maintaining connubial
relation over a number of successive generations, as respectively wife-givers
and wife-takers to one another in a marriage cycle. Two or more segments
belonging to a single cluster in one such cycle may be quite differently assorted
in some other cycle. Any given lineage or segment is involved in several cycles
simultaneously, because women are not necessarily available in any given
lineage at any given moment. For any given cycle, lineage cluster are related in
such a way that cluster A gives women to cluster B and so on through C ... to N
and back to A again. Any two clusters are so related that, in generation 1, some
but not all segments in A contract marriage in B. In generation 2, a different set
in A, which may overlap with the first, contracts marriage in B, and so on.
Over several generations in A, any given segments of a and its direct successors
successively marry women from one or another of the segments in lineage
cluster B. A segment b in B in the previous generation has given women
successively to one or another segment in the same lineage cluster as a, though
not necessarily to a itself, within this scheme, over a period spanning from one
to three or four generations something very like substantively closed marriage
cycle of the sort specified earlier can be derived from actual marriage, proceeding through a fairly small number of steps. The steps correspond partly to lineage clusters. Some segments will drop out of a cluster from time to time and some will be added, owing to shifting alliance preferences, status mobility, and devolution of rank, and owing also to other accidental variations. On the whole their continuity of membership is considerable (Lehman, 1963; p. 137).

Although the marriage price of a girl is of very costly and complicated affair among the Maras, clans-men and near relations are helping each other by contributing towards the payment of marriage prices. The payments are always paid on instalment basis. It can be extended throughout the whole life time of the husband if the husband could not pay the whole amount during his life time, the eldest son would take the debts, and if the eldest son could not pay during his generation, it falls on his grand-son and so on (Lorrain, 1912; p.151).

In the traditional period, man usually marriages between the ages of twenty and twenty five and woman after twenty. This reasonable marriage age is due large to the fact that Maras always want to marry into higher clan if possible; so that it is by no means easy to find a suitable bride, and partly to the
high rate of marriage price which render it necessary for man’s relative to save up years before they can afford to bring him a wife (Parry, 1932; p.239).

II

Traditionally, the Maras are monogamous. The prevalent form of marriage among them is monogamy (T.H. Lewin, 1870; p.150). As a rule man of Mara have one legitimate wife known as Nobei. Although Chiefs and wealthy men always have concubine known as Notho, the status of a concubine in the society is much lower than the status of a legitimate wife. According to the custom, the concubine’s son is not entitled to inherit the father’s property if the father have legitimate heir (Parry, 1932; p.250). In all cases, where more than one wife is kept, they always live in a separate huts, each being visited in turn from time to time (Lorrain, 1912; p.154).

On the basis of its nature, the traditional Mara marriage system may be divided into two types, namely, arranged marriage and elopement.

Arranged Marriage

This type of marriage is socially and customarily recognised among the Maras. In this type, the marriage between man and woman takes
place with the mutual consent of both the two parents concerned. The selection of partner has been done by the parents and the marriage are customarily arranged in accordance with the traditional customary rules and procedures.

Besides these, all the necessary arrangements relating to marriage are properly done by the parents through intermediary known as lyuchapa. This type of marriage is popularly practised by the common people. Usually this marriage takes place with usual pomp and grand-our among the Maras as it keeps the customary rules and procedures intact (Source, Chiko of Tisi with whom the Researcher had interview on 07.05. 1998).

**Elopement**

This marriage is socially and customarily unrecognised among the Maras. In this type, the marriage between man and woman takes place without the mutual consent of both the two parents concerned. The selection of partner has been the main business of the new couple. If a young man elopes with a girl, the couple flees to another village hiding from the girl’s parents. However, according to the custom the man must pay the atonement price known as Hmiatla to the girl’s parents, which varies from 10 to 30 rupees. This sum is not payable if the girl afterwards leaves her husband. When the Hmiatla has
been paid, the marriage is regularised under the custom. After that the usual
ceremony is performed and customary price is also paid. Marriage by
elopement is not common among the Maras (Source, Laizei of Mawhro with
whom the Researcher had interview on 17.05. 1998).

On the basis of its social rank, the traditional Mara marriage
system may be classified into five classes, namely, the Chief marriage, the
Child marriage, the Ordinary marriage, the widow remarriage and the slave
marriage.

The Chief Marriage

As the chief occupies highest social status in Mara society, the
chief marriage is highly esteemed by the people. It is the highest class of
marriage system among the Maras.

As a custom, there are slight variation in the procedures of the
chief marriage from the procedures followed in other marriages. The marriage
price of a girl belonging to chiefly clans is comparatively higher and more
complicated than those of the lower clans. The chiefs prefer to take their wives
from village other than their own as thereby they acquire influence in another
village and so indirectly improve their position of influence. When a chief asks for a hand of another chief’s daughter for his son, he employs a Macha or Elder as intermediary known as Lyuchapa. When making a marriage proposal, the chiefs used a Gong as a present known as Thuaso which has been given as gift to the girl’s house as a sign of marriage proposal. If the marriage is agreed upon, the Okia (main price) is paid at one before the usual ceremonies called Ahmakia have been performed. Then the bride’s parents kill a mithun or pig, and the bridegroom’s parents must pay the amount of Okia whatever amount it may be. This is called Okiasani (Source: L. Pakhai of Siaha with whom the researcher had interviewed on 12.08.1998).

When a chief marriage a girl from another village, the girl’s parents often erect a pyramid of stones called Longthang to commemorate the event. The memorial pyramid thereafter known by the name of the bride, for example, Nonghei Longthang if the girl’s name is Nonghei (Parry, 1932; p. 342). All the other usual ceremonies are performed thereafter as it is in the case of ordinary marriages.
Child Marriage

One of the distinctive features of the traditional Mara marriage system is the adoption of child marriage (Shakespear, 1988; p. 214). The child marriage is usually practised by the high class people. There are two main reasons for which child marriage has been practised –

(1) For parents of a boy it is to ensure a girl of good clan for their son at a tender age.

(2) The girl is less likely to be deflowered by some one another than her husband before she gets married (Parry, 1932; p. 307).

The child marriages has been practised in three different ways – (1) between a boy and a girl below the age of puberty, (2) between a boy child and a girl who reached puberty and (3) between a girl child and a young man who have reached puberty. Of the above three ways, the marriage between the two children of about the same age is commonly practised among the Maras.

When such a child marriage takes place, as a custom, the boy’s parents take the initiative by sending a female relation to the girl’s parents to
propose the marriage with their daughter. If the proposal is accepted by the girl’s parents, the boy’s parents sent a male envoy to the girl’s house with a present of *Pumtek* bead which is to be worn by the girl as an earring. After that the boy’s parents sent an intermediary known as *Lyuchapa* to the girl’s parents with another present of *Doa* known as *Thuaso*. If the girl’s parents have lucky dreams, the match is settled down and the price is fixed. After settling down the marriage price, the girl-child and the boy-child are treated as *betrothed*. The two families thus wait until the boy and the girl attained puberty. If the boy afterwards breaks of the engagement, he must pay the main price (*Okia*) to the girl’s parents, and if the girl refused to sleep with her husband, the whole price paid must be returned to the boy’s parents and she is considered to have divorced her husband (arry, 1932; p. 308).

**Ordinary Marriage**

Ordinary marriage is the most common form of marriage. This marriage involves courtship, selection of partner, marriage proposal and marriage negotiation.
Courtship

The first step in the ordinary marriage is courtship. As the Mara society is permissive society, it is tolerant of free mixing of young boys and girls. No penalties are inflicted when young men and girls are sleeping together under the same roof. According to the Mara custom, young men known as Satlia used to sleep in the girl’s house as a part of courtship (Lorrain, 1912; p. 154). This custom is known as Laipho. A young man who is courting a girl goes off about 6 or 7 p.m. at night to the girl’s house and sometimes a young man plays Jew’s Harp, made of bamboo and sting, and serenades the girls (S. Mothy of Siaha, with whom the researcher had interviewed on 05.07.1998). The suitor always spends his day with the girl helping each other in their works and exchange tobacco and nicotine water, and at night the suitor sleeps on the floor of the girl’s house (Lorrain, 1912; p. 154). In this way the man is diligently courting the girl and making advances to her, and the girl also had an opportunity of judging if her suitor is likely to make her a good husband or not. The Maras are, however, secretive about their love affairs and never say a word whatsoever (S. Mothy of Siaha, with whom the researcher had interviewed on 05.07.1998).
Selection of Partner

In the traditional period, the selection of partner, as a rule, has been made by the parents. In selecting the partner for their children, the parents are very careful and fastidious. The main consideration in the process of selection is on health ground and physical deformity. Another important criteria in the process of selection is the social status and background of the potential candidate. Thus family background is a significant factor in the selection of partner. In the olden days, partners are almost always chosen within the endogamous kin group excluding certain categories of very close kin members. As such, inter-marriage with another tribes has been less common among them (Chiko of Tisi with whom the Researcher had interview on 12.5.98).

Marriage Proposal

One of the distinctive features of Mara marriage system is the practice of marriage proposal. It is very important as it opens the way for negotiation and settlement. As a rule, the boy’s parents initiate marriage proposal. When initiating the proposal, the boy’s parents sent a female relations as emissary to the girl’s parents to convey the marriage proposal. If the proposal is welcomed, the boy’s parents appoint an intermediary known as
lyuchapa, who will bring a gift in the form of a dao to the girl’s parents. This gift is known as thuaso performing the function of an engagement ring (Lorrain, 1912; p.150). The boy and the girl are then treated as ‘betrothed’. Then the girl’s parents would have a lucky dream to accept such a marriage proposal. The lucky dreams are: Gun, Doa, Clear Water, Necklace etc and if the dream are not lucky, the girl’s parents should turn down the marriage proposal. The unlucky dreams are: about wild animal that had been short or killed by a Tiger, a dead Snake or any kind of stealing of Pig, Fowl etc. (Parry, 1932; p. 297).

Marriage Negotiation

It is the final round in the process of marriage. As a rule, marriage negotiation is done in the girl’s parents ‘house. After accepting the marriage proposal, the girl’s parents would kill a pig and prepare a simple feast as a token of acceptance of the marriage proposal. Then, the girl’s parents invited the suitor and lyuchapa to have a discussion on the marriage negotiation. The main discussion on the negotiation is on the amount and type of bride price. As soon as they come to certain definite agreement, the wedding day is fixed according to the convenience of both the two parties’ concerned.
The proper marriage ritual is thus finalised by the payment of the Okia (main price) (Parry, 1932; p.297).

**WIDOW REMARRIAGE**

The Mara custom permits Widow remarriage. The Widow is called Nohmei and she could marry after the death of her husband. However, the Widow, as a rule, would remain in her late husband’s house till the memorial stone of her husband has been erected. After erecting the memorial stone, the Widow would sacrifice a fowl in memory of her late husband and she is therefore, free to marry again. One of the brothers of the deceased husband as a rule marries the Widow. This custom of marrying the Widow within the family ensures the security of the Widow and the children as well as the family’s property. But the Widow is also allowed to marry outside the family. A widow who has children usually remain in her late husband’s house till she marries again, and her children generally go with her to her new husband, but if the children prefer to go to their father’s relations or to Pupa (Maternal Uncle), they are at liberty to do so. The price of a Widow who marries is comparatively less than that of a girl who had not married before. A woman who has been thrice married where all the husbands have died is called a Malusong, and the Maras are very shy of marrying Malusong, as they believed that if a woman has
outlived three husbands she is likely to outlive a fourth husband (Parry, 1932; p.295).

**SLAVE MARRIAGE**

In the traditional period, slavery is commonly practised among the Maras. Slaves are not treated badly by the Maras. The slaves had a considerable privileges of their own and they could keep their own property such as, animals, crops as well as wives. As the slaves are a part of the Chief’s family, the Chief had to buy wives for his male slaves. When a Chief bought a wife for one of his male slaves, the woman did not herself become slave, but her children were all slaves. If a male slave marry the Chief’s female slave, no money is to be paid as both belonged to the Chief. As a rule, female slaves are not allowed to marry any one except a male slave. If a female slave married a free man who paid her full price to the Chief, her offspring were free, and the Chief had no claim on them. Slave girls were free to have love affairs with any man as the off-springs of that illicit union become slaves, and the owner is profited by it (Parry, 1992; p.225).
III

MARRIAGE RITES & CEREMONIES

The traditional Mara marriage system is associated with certain rites and ceremonies. These rites and ceremonies have been performed in accordance with traditional customary rules and procedures. In the traditional period, the Mara marriage rituals were very complicated and were linked with sacrificial offerings to both the evil and good spirits. They also used to celebrate marriage ceremony with a special feast by killing a large number of pigs, and the feast has always been arranged on ‘gift-exchange’ system. The marriage ceremony was celebrated by consuming a large quantity of alcoholic drinks (rice-beer). They usually observed three days for celebrating the marriage ceremony.

On the first day, invited guests, friends and relatives have gathered to the house of both and bridegroom and started the celebration of marriage by drinking rice-beer. The whole day is spent as happy as possible with drinking, singing and dancing. On this day, a large number of pigs had to be killed by both the bride’s people and the bridegroom’s people for preparing marriage feast. There is no limit to the number of pigs that may be killed on
this day, and the more pigs that were killed enhanced the social status of the feast-giver. If the bride's people kill three pigs, the bridegroom's people must kill one in return, if they kill five pigs, the bridegroom's people must kill two. The largest pig killed is called *Okiavo*, which should measure six fists across the body. When the pigs have been killed, they are cut in half, and the half with the head is sent to the bridegroom raw, the half with the tail is cooked with rice and ready to be sent to the bridegroom.

In return to the bride's pigs, the bridegroom cut their pigs in half, and the half with the head is sent raw and the half with the tail is cooked with rice and sent to the bride's parents. This exchange-gifts in the form of pig is known as *Awruabawna*. To enable the bride's parents to partake this pork, the bridegroom must pay the following prices to the bride’s parents, namely (1) the price of *Awruabawna*, which consists of beer pot (*Racha*). (2) the price *Sisazi* which consists of three *pumtek* beads. Unless these prices have been paid, the pork could not be eaten and the ceremony could not proceed. After paying the prices of *Awruabawna* and *Sisazi*, the pork has been eaten by both the members of the bride’s and bridegroom’s families. Besides the above mentioned prices, the bridegroom must pay *Lokheu* to the bride maternal uncle (Pupa). This due is a large earthenware pot called *Racha*. When paying this due, the
bridegroom must kill a fowl and gives it to the bride’s Pupa (Parry, 1932; p.299).

After the satisfactory completion of all the preliminaries, the marriage procession known as Amakia takes place. The Amakia is usually headed by the old man known as Sahmophopa who caries a pot of rice beer. As soon as it is dark, the marriage procession consisting of the bride, friends, relatives and the bride’s paternal aunt, starts off from the bride’s house. When the bride’s party reaches the bride’s groom’s house, they stand outside and asked the bridegroom to give the following presents: (1) a doa to cut the road known as lavana (2) a skein of cotton thread for climbing up the ladder to the bridegroom’s house known as kahmiakiana. After giving these presents, the whole bride’s party climb up the ladder on the varandah and demands the price of crossing the threshold known as Chakeichakana which consists of a puggree. After having been paid these dues, the bride and her party entered the bridegroom’s house. As soon as the bride enters the bridegroom’s house, the bridegroom places mats and cloths for the bride and her party to sit on; then the young men bring a basket called Tini baikhai to put the present in, and the bride’s aunt demands her dues, which is called Tini (aunt’s prices). This ceremony is called Tinitheuna. The Tini consists of a large number of small
dues, which vary from village to village. These presents go to the bride’s paternal aunt.

As soon as the aunt has finished claiming the *Tini*, the bride and groom are placed on seats near *Sahmo* pot (pot of rice beer), and the actual ceremony takes place. The *Lyuchapa* takes a cup of rice beer, dips his brass hairpin in it, gives some beer from the hairpin to the bride and groom to drink, and wishes them many children, long life and prosperity. This ceremony is called *Tipani* and it must be performed before the first cock crows, and until it has been performed, the bride must not drink beer nor smoke in her husband’s house.

After this the bride and groom drink rice beer together, and then spend the rest of the night with the assembled company, drinking and singing, and finally the bride returns to her parents’ house.

On the next day, the bride’s parents, the bride and few selected friends go to the groom’s house with a pot of rice beer, and the rest of the day is spent in feasting and drinking. Then the bride’s parents ask the
bridegroom to give presents called *Ahlas* to the friends who have accompanied them such as:

(1) the Chief, the Elder or Macha who came with the party

(2) the woman sitting next to the bride’s mother, who is called *Chanongto-khai*

(3) the man sitting next to the bride’s father, who is called *Chapawtokhai*

(4) the bride’s friends called *Mocheu*

(5) the cooks called *Chongtlapa* who carried the pork to the bride’s house

(6) the old man who carries a pot of rice beer who is called *Sahmophopa*: all received small presents the actual form of which may vary in different villages. After the presents have been distributed, the bride and her party return to her parents’ house.

The third day is the final round of marriage procession, as the bride finally moves over to her husband’s house. After the house has been
thoroughly cleaned and purified, the husband sacrifices a white cock on a stone in front of the house, and as soon as the cock has been killed the stone on which the cock was killed is turned up side down. Then the bride and bridegroom and the bridegroom’s parents eat the cock together. This sacrifice is called Miapali, and is to ensure that the couple shall get good crops and shall not cut themselves accidentally while cutting the jhums. This ceremony is supposed to cast out all evil that might affect the crops of the newly married pair, and to ensure that the jhums, at the time of clearing, shall burn well and that their paddy shall be germinated well (Parry, 1932; p.303).

Hence-forth the bride remains in her husband’s house, but it is not considered proper for a husband and wife to sleep together till at least a month has elapsed and sometimes they may wait for as much as a year.

IV

THE MARRIAGE PRICE

The Mara marriage price is a most complicated affairs, and consists of several parts, each part in turn having a number of subsidiary prices attached to it.
The rates of the bride prices were fixed in terms of animals or household goods such as, cow mithun, bull mithun, fowl, gun, gong, brass pot, earthen pot, bead, doa etc. Different items of household goods and animals are given as bride price and series of gift-giving by the bridegroom to the various relations of the bride, both on the paternal and maternal side. The normal bride-price consists of the following items such as, the Okia, the Lokhyu, the Chawchyu, the Nochyu, the Nohchyu the Puma and a number of subsidiary prices.

The Okia

The Okia is the main price. It is the basis of all other prices. Where the Okia is high, the other prices are proportionately high, and if the Okia is low the other prices are proportionately low. It is payable to the bride’s father and if the father is dead it is payable to the bride’s eldest brother. The rate of Okia varies from village to village. The price of Okia is to be paid on the marriage day.

Laokhyu

Laokhyu is the share of bride’s Pupa. It is payable to the bride’s maternal uncle (Pupa) and it should be paid on the marriage day.
Chawchyu

This means the brother’s price. *Chawchyu* is the share of bride’s eldest brother. It is payable to the bride’s brother and is to be paid on the marriage day.

Nochyu

This means the mother’s price. It is payable to the bride’s mother’s living sister. However, if the parents have divorced and the mother separated from her husband, this price will go to the mother. If the bride’s mother sister was dead, it is payable to her son. This price is to be paid on the marriage day.

Nohchyu

The *Nohchyu* means the aunt’s price, and is payable to the bride’s eldest paternal aunt. This is also to be paid on the marriage day.

Puma

Puma is the price payable to the bride Pupa, who is her maternal uncle. The rate at which Puma is payable depends on the rate of *Okia*, and if the *Okia* is 60 rupees the rate of Pumapi is also 60 rupees.
However, the Pupa does not as a rule claim the Puma on the marriage day, but he usually waits till the couples have settled down as man and wife.

When the Puma has been paid, the Pupa must give the bride an embroidered skirt and a white cloth. This gift is called Ngiateu.

It is, however, obligatory on the part of those who receive the above bride-prices distribution, as a custom to offer a pig for the marriage feast. No bride price may be paid unless such customary obligation is fulfilled.

Subsidiary Prices

The subsidiary prices are of many natures and may be distributed by the bride’s parents to the various relations of both paternal and maternal sides as a guarantee for the bride’s future help. The subsidiary prices are as follows:

1. **Seipihra** which is a portion of price given in lieu of Cow-Mithun.

2. **Seicheihra** which is a portion of price given in lieu of Bull-Mithun.
3. **Rahohra** it is a price which is payable in lieu of brass Basin.

4. **Meitheihra** which is a price payable in lieu of a Gun.

5. **Dawkhohra** it is a price payable in lieu of Gong.

6. **Chiamie** which is a price payable in lieu of Trumpet.

7. **Dawhra** which is a price payable in lieu of brass pot.

8. **Keima** it is the price payable to the male friend of the man who received the **Okia**.

9. **Sawhla** this means the child’s share, and is payable to the child of the person who gets the **Seiphira**.

10. **Seihra** it is a price payable in lieu of Slave.

11. **Raipihra** it is a price payable in lieu of Beer pot.
Besides the above marriage prices, there are still another minor marriage prices among the Maras, namely, the *Ahlas* and *Tini*.

The *Ahlas* consists of several minor prices which are payable to the Chief, Elder, the Cooks, Beer-makers, Water-carriers etc. who have participated in the marriage ceremonial function.

The *Tini* consists of several minor prices which are payable to the bride’s paternal aunt on the marriage day.

The Mara custom, in relation to the bride price, subsidiary prices, the *ahlas* and *tini*, however, varies from village to village. No hard and fast rules have been imposed upon to the items of bride price, subsidiary prices etc. and in most cases, it depends on the capability and status of the concerned persons—bride and bridegroom.

The ordinary marriage price among the ruling clans, and common’s clans including the Puma are shown in Tables X-XIII.
Table X

The bride price among the ruling clans in terms of animals or household goods and its cash equivalence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of Price</th>
<th>Name of Animals/Household Goods</th>
<th>Amount (Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Okia (main price)</td>
<td>Two mithuns and one slave</td>
<td>150.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nochyu</td>
<td>Cow-mithun or gun</td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nohchyu</td>
<td>One mithun or gun</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chaw-chyu</td>
<td>One mithun</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Seiphira</td>
<td>Cow mithun</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Seicheihera</td>
<td>Bull mithun</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Nohla</td>
<td>Beer pot (racha)</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sawhla</td>
<td>Brass pot (4 spans)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kaima</td>
<td>Beer pot (racha)</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lao-khyu</td>
<td>Beer pot (racha)</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Raipihra</td>
<td>Beer pot (racha)</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Awruabawna</td>
<td>One mithun or gun</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Sisazi</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(a) Au-thei-pa</td>
<td>A ‘sisa’ bead</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(b) A lai-pa</td>
<td>A ‘sisa’ bead</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(c) A sinhapi</td>
<td>Beer pot (racha)</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>517.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Thus the actual value of bride-price among the ruling clans in term of current monetary value may come to about Rs. 50000 because of the
fact that the actual price of one mithun or Gun in the Market is not less than Rs. 7000.

Table XI

The Puma Among the Ruling Clans

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of Price</th>
<th>Name of Animals/Household Goods</th>
<th>Amount (Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pumapi</td>
<td>Two mithuns and one slave</td>
<td>150.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Awruabawna</td>
<td>Cow-mithun or gun</td>
<td>50.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nohla</td>
<td>Beer pot (racha)</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sawhla</td>
<td>Brass pot (4 spans)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kaima</td>
<td>Beer pot (racha)</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Laokhyu</td>
<td>Beer pot (racha)</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Phavawna</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a)</td>
<td>Au-thei-pa</td>
<td>A ‘sisa’ bead</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>A liapa</td>
<td>A ‘sisa’ bead</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c)</td>
<td>A seihnaipa</td>
<td>Beer pot (racha)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ru (death dues)</td>
<td>One mithun (large)</td>
<td>80.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>334.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As noted earlier, the actual value of Puma among the ruling clans in terms of rupees may be Rs. 20000.00.
Table XII

The bride price among the common people in terms of animals or household goods and its cash equivalence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of Price</th>
<th>Name of Animals/Household Goods</th>
<th>Amount (Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Okia (main price)</td>
<td>Gong (7 spans) or gun</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Nochyu</td>
<td>Gun or gong</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nohchyu</td>
<td>Gun or gong</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chawchyu</td>
<td>Gong (7 spans) or gun</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Seipihra</td>
<td>Gong (7 spans)</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Seiheihra</td>
<td>Gong (7 spans) or gun</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Nohla</td>
<td>Brass pot (4 spans)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sawhla</td>
<td>Full grown hen</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kaima</td>
<td>Brass pot (4 spans)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lao-khyu</td>
<td>Brass pot (4 spans)</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Raipihra</td>
<td>Brass pot (4 spans)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Raipihra</td>
<td>Brass pot (4 spans)</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Sisazi</td>
<td>Brass pot (5 spans)</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(d) a lia-pa</td>
<td>A ‘sisa’ bead</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(e) au-thei-pa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(f) a seihnae-pa</td>
<td>Beer pot (4 spans)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>154.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Lorrain, 1951, p. 63.
The actual amount of bride-price among the common people in terms of rupees may thus be Rs. 40000, because of the fact that one the actual price of one gong in the market is about Rs. 7000.00

Table XIII

The Puma among the common people in terms of animals or household goods and its cash equivalence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Name of Price</th>
<th>Name of Animals/Household Goods</th>
<th>Amount (Rs.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pumapi</td>
<td>Gong (7 spans)</td>
<td>20.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Awruabawna</td>
<td>Beer pot (racha)</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nohla</td>
<td>Brass pot (4 spans)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sawhla</td>
<td>Full grown hen</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Kaima</td>
<td>Brass pot (4 spans)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Laokhyu</td>
<td>Brass pot (4 spans)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Phavawna</td>
<td>A ‘sisa’ bead</td>
<td>7.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(d) Au-thei-pa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(e) A liapa</td>
<td>Brass pot (4 spans)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(f) A seihnaipa</td>
<td>A large fowl</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Ru (death dues)</td>
<td>Gong</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>52.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Lorrain, 1951, p. 63.

Thus the actual value of Puma among the common people in terms of rupees may be about Rs. 10000.
It must be remembered that though the prices are shown in the Table in terms of rupees, the bulk of the marriage price is always paid in kind, cash forming only a small portion of payments made: however, each article used for payment of marriage price has a fixed formal value. Marriage prices are practically never paid in full at the time of wedding, for the simple reason that nobody has enough material goods-animals, household goods and cash to pay at the time of marriage. Primary amount will be paid on the wedding day and the balance is to be paid in easy instalments and twenty years or more may elapse before a marriage price is paid in full.

DOWRY

According to the custom, a girl is always given a few items of properties as a dowry when she marries. If a girl has any private property, she may take it with her and this has no effect on her price whatsoever. A girl usually goes to her husband’s house with only her possessions like cloths, skirt, necklace etc. Her daughter inherits any property owned by a woman when she dies. If she has no daughters her husband can keep it.
V

INHERITANCE

Basically, the Mara system of both inheritance and succession were primogeniture. As a rule, the eldest son is entitled to inherit the family’s property when the father dies. The eldest son can shares the property with the youngest brother. No property will go to a daughter, middle son or widow. If the eldest son fails to inherit, the youngest brother is entitled for it. If both the eldest and youngest brother fail their obligations, the father’s property will go to the deceased’s brother or first cousin. If a man dies leaving minor children, his wife may act as caretaker of his estate on behalf of his eldest son, provided she did not marry again. If a widow in these circumstances marries again, the property and children go to her late husband’s brother.

Inheritance is traditionally institutionalised. No one have any right to make any will regarding the disposal of his property after his death. The line of inheritance is clearly determined by custom and it could not be changed. Along with inheritance goes the obligation to discharge the debts and obligations of the person from whom he had inherited. A person inheriting certain property had to pay the death dues of the deceased known as Ru (Parry, 1932; p.282).
DIVORCE

According to customary convention, divorce is very simple and easy among the Maras. One could divorce the spouse at will. However, certain rules and procedures have been prescribed in regard to divorce. The main issues in relation to divorce are full payment of the unpaid bride prices. There are five forms of divorce such as: Lapinongma, Sawngpakua, Khuthi, Hrupathlei and Aphei.

Lapinongma

This is the form of divorce used by man when he divorces his wife. In this form of divorce the husband must pay any balance of the bride prices for which pigs have been killed. But the wife’s relation would not claim any part of the bride for which pigs have no been killed. In this form, the father decides the responsibilities of bringing up children after divorce.

Sawngpakua

This is the form of divorce used by woman. When a woman divorces her husband, the entire bride price would have to be returned to the husband. If she had children, she was entitled to retain the Okia portion of the bride, if the children will remain to stay with their father. As a rule, the
husband prefers to keep his children and the woman’s relation keep the Okia. If the husband does not want his children, the whole of the price must be refunded, and the children become the Pupa-Saw, i.e., the children become the children of the woman’s brother for all practical purposes.

Khuthi

(Impotence) In this form of divorce, a wife can claim divorce if her husband is impotent and is unable to make sexual union with her. According to the custom, if a husband becomes impotent, he is allowed to sacrifice for a period of one year in order to recover his lost powers. And if the man is unable to recover his conjugal duties during the period of that one-year, the woman is entitled to divorce her husband. If the woman divorces her husband in this way, she is entitled to keep all the prices that have been received, but she could not claim any unpaid balance of the price. However, if a woman divorced her husband during the one-year period for performing sacrifices, she is treated as adultery.

Hrupathlei

This is the form of divorce on account of madness. When the wife goes mad, the husband must perform sacrifices for a period of one year,
and if there is no improvement, the husband is entitled to send back his wife to her parents. In this case, the prices already paid would not be refunded. If a man goes mad, his brother must perform sacrifices for him for a period of one year, and his wife must remain during this period. If a man is not cured at the end of the stipulated period, the wife is entitled to leave her husband. In this case the price paid will be retained by the wife’s parents but they can not claim any balance.

Aphei (Adultery)

The Aphei is considered very disgraceful thing among the Maras. If a married woman commits adultery, the husband would at once turn out the adulterous wife. In this case the whole price must be refunded to the husband. As a rule, a male partner of the woman in adultery must be fined the following items.

1. A mithun or 60 rupees.

2. A pumtek bead known as Sisakuchaki.

3. A cloth known as Panglukhu which is to be given to the injured husband.
4. A *vopia* (female/pig) which is to be given to the villagers for preparing feast.

If the adultery has children, she is allowed to keep the *Okia* only as the price of her children, but the children will go the husband. Adultery is considered a very disgraceful thing because of the belief that the spirit of the husband is supposed to be followed by such a disgraceful thing even to the next world. When the husband’s spirit arrives in *Athikhi* (the abode of dead) it feels great shame, and so the male partner of the woman has to provide the cloth known as *Panglukhu* to cover the head of the injured husband’s spirit.

On the other hand, a person winning the favour of another man’s wife was treated as a hero. On his death, his head will be adorned with the white tail feather of cock, which will be put on the memorial post after he was buried. The inmates of the other world in appreciation will adorn his spirit.

Although several forms of divorce have been observed in the traditional Mara society, divorce in actual practice is a rare case.
We may thus conclude our discussion of Mara traditional marriage system by quoting the words of RA Lorrain who had been with them for a long time as a missionary:

“This custom does not lean towards virtue, both man and women sleeping side by side on the floor of the hut, yet with all this it is surprising to find the high moral tone of the Maras at large, the greater number of their maidens remaining virtuous, and it is surprising to find, when considering the condition of life, how few infants are born out of wedlock and even when this is so, a marriage as a rule takes place” (Lorrain, 1912; p.154).