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Muslim bride 'tricked' into marriage as Family Court rules it void

Article from: **Daily Telegraph**

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March 01, 2009 11:00pm

A MUSLIM woman tricked into an arranged marriage presided over by her local imam has had it annulled by the Family Court of Australia.

She thought she was signing paperwork in preparation for the ceremony but, because her culture does not allow her to talk to men other than her family, she couldn't ask questions.

Her brother said he thought things were not right but the family's strict Muslim culture meant their father and the imam could not be wrong.

He said he was asked to be a witness and told he was signing an engagement certificate - although the document was headed certificate of marriage.

"We are a traditional patriarchal family and it would not be appropriate for me to question my father or the imam," the brother told the court.

The names of the couple and the imam have been suppressed by the Family Court. It is not the first Muslim "marriage" ruled void by the court.

Justice Nahum Mushin said there had been previous similar cases, including one in which the couple became married when all they thought they were doing was becoming engaged.

In the present case, the 27-year-old "bride" is a public servant from a traditional Islamic family.

She told the court that in May 2007 her family and the family of a 39-year-old Muslim in Canada began discussing an arranged marriage.

She said arrangements were made between the man, a divorced financial planner, and her father "because in our culture it is not acceptable that women speak to men not in their family".

She first met the man at the airport and three days later the local imam attended the family's home with a "bundle of papers".

She was told by her father to dress "appropriately" and waited outside the room until called in, when she signed the documents where she was told.