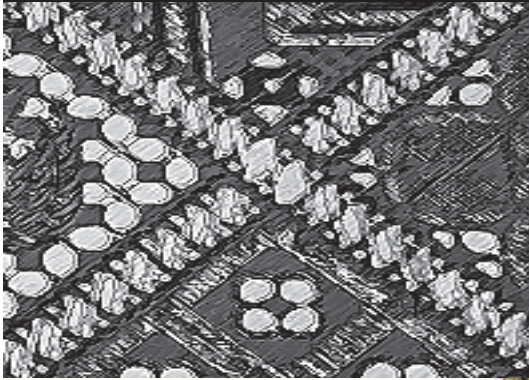


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International Marriage Customs:
Japan, Scotland, and the Philippines



July 28 through Sept. 30 2008

International Marriage Customs

This exhibit is the direct result of an ongoing collaborative relationship between the Salem Multicultural Institute and the citizens of this community. In it we hope to highlight some of the more common traditions in each culture, but in no way is it a complete, in-depth look. Rather, this exhibit features marriage customs from the largest groups in these three countries. For example, the fact that the Philippines is an archipelago, a series of islands, has meant the development of many regional traditions. This exhibit features marriage customs from the Roman Catholic tradition, but other groups in that country are Muslim, Protestant, or animist and their customs differ. We hope to give you a feel for each of these cultures and to spark your interest in learning more. Thank you for visiting.

--SMI Staff and Community Partners

The Clothing

Japan

The traditional Japanese bride wears a white silk damask kimono (kakeshita) beneath an elaborate white, richly patterned silk brocade robe (uchikake).

This entirely white ensemble is referred to as “shiomuku.”

Her hair is arranged in a bunkin-takashi-





mada a traditional style with many ornaments; in modern times she wears a wig in this style. Over this she wears a white hood (wata boshi), or a white head covering (tsuno kakushi) that allows some of the hair and all of the ornaments to be seen. The large headdress, tsunokakushi, is intended to hide from the groom the horns of a jealous wife, and to symbolize obedience to her husband. She also may wear special white wedding make-up, similar to the kind used in kabuki performances and by geisha.

Traditional wedding accessories for the bride are the hakoseko (a small purse) tucked into the front of her kimono and the kai-



ken (a small, encased sword) tucked into her wide obi sash. A fan is also tucked into the obi. The kaiken, the small sword tucked into the bride's obi, is a remnant of Japan's feudal past when a wife was expected to be able to protect her samurai husband if necessary. The fan (sensu) symbolizes the hope for an emerging happy life together, like the gradual widening of the fan.

The traditional groom wears a dark silk kimono and a kimono coat called a haori, both showing his mother's family crest on both shoulders, the back of the neck, and both sleeves. He wears a striped hakama (long pleated skirt) over the kimono.

The Japanese bride's white kimono and robe signify purity. The sleeves are very long, almost reaching the floor. This style of flowing sleeve is reserved for unmarried women. A married woman's sleeves are short and much more practical. The bride may change to another wedding kimono set of richly colored, highly patterned kakeshita kimono and uchikake; this will be the last time she can wear such gorgeous clothing, because married women wear much more subdued colors and patterns. The Japanese crane (tsuru), the "Bird of Happiness," is often featured, because cranes mate for life and raise their young together.

Since Victorian times upper-class women in Scotland have chosen white wedding dresses as a statement of wealth. An extravagant white gown was a sign that you could afford to buy a dress that you would never be able to wear again. But blue has been preferred for a wedding dress because it symbolizes both purity and nature. The groom wears the traditional Highland kilt, kilt jacket, and sporran, which is a bag worn around the waist. The tartan plaid pattern of the groom's kilt represents the clan of his The

Scotland





birth. The pinning of the tartan varies depending on whether the bride or the groom was being accepted into the other's clan. If the bride marries into the groom's clan, a member of the groom's family presents her with their clan tartan in the form of a rosette or a sash. It would be fastened with the clan badge to the bride's dress, symbolically accepting her into

the clan. A groom being accepted into the bride's family would get a similar clan badge of acceptance.

The Luckenbooth brooch is a traditional Scottish wedding brooch given to the bride by the groom on their wedding day, and subsequently pinned to the shawl of the first baby to protect it from "evil spirits." According to legend, the Luckenbooth brooch was a symbol of love and devotion that Mary, Queen of Scots, gave to Lord Darnley. It includes the St. Andrew Cross, the Scottish thistles, and entwined hearts.

The Philippines

is paid for by the groom. A popular style for the gown is the terno, a blouse and long skirt made of matching fabric, joined at the narrow waist, with the skirt flaring below; the sleeves are elbow-length and flat against the shoulders, but widely

Today, most Filipino brides wear a white or ivory gown and veil; the bridal gown

puffed, commonly known as “butterfly” sleeves. Another traditional style is the Maria Clara, which has softer, fuller, bell-shaped sleeves. For either, the neckline is low but covered by a *panuelo*, a V-necked, scarf-like collar worn over the shoulders.



The groom wears a *Barong Tagalog*, a long, loose shirt with long sleeves, worn over trousers, and made of sheer, stiff, and semi-transparent fabric. Less traditional grooms will wear a tuxedo or other formal wear.

Establishing a Household

Japan

The purpose of marriage in Japan is to perpetuate the family. Although it is an arrangement between families, it is not an alliance of the families. In times past, the bride joined her husband's family and was “lost” to her own family. However, in modern Japan, she maintains a strong connection with her own family. If a family has no sons, a son-in-law might be adopted into it, taking his wife's family name and becoming part of that family rather than his birth family; he becomes a “*muko*.”





Scotland

To set up her own home, a bride in a prosperous Scottish community was traditionally expected to bring a chest of drawers, a chest for storing meal, a featherbed (duvet), four pairs of white blankets, two bolsters, four pillows, sheets, a dozen towels, a tablecloth, kitchen hardware, and wooden milking buckets and tubs. (Girls began collecting these items when they were very young.) The groom provided furniture and fishing gear for the new household. Their friends supplemented these items with gifts. One old custom, known as “thrigging,” allowed a couple to go to each house in the community and choose one piece of furniture or household item for their new home.

The Philippines

In Traditional Filipino weddings the bride’s family provides a large dowry; the groom’s parents pay for gifts, wedding clothes, and the wedding itself. Relatives, mentors, Godparents, and prominent members of the community are invited to be sponsors. They participate in the wedding and make financial gifts to help a young couple start their life together. At the reception, a Tagalog couple builds a nest egg with the help of a female sponsor, soliciting cash gifts to help in their new start; Visayan couples are showered with coins as they dance at the reception.

Part of the Larger Community

Japanese wedding ceremonies (usually at a Shinto shrine) are

small and private, attended by only the immediate family and close friends.

Japan

The reception is more elaborate, held at a hotel or wedding hall, and more friends and co-workers are invited. Guests are expected to give a cash gift. The amount depends on the relationship to the couple. It is not unusual for the gift to be the equivalent of \$300; this is given in a special envelope called shugi-bukuro. In return, the families give generous gifts called hikidemono to all who attend.

Scotland

In the past, guests at a Scottish Penny Wedding took part

in the feasting, drinking, and dancing at their own expense. They brought food and beverages that were blessed by the priest after the wedding mass, then shared. Wedding celebrations started on the eve of the wedding with singing, drinking, toasting to health, and a ceremonial “feet washing.” The bride placed her feet in a tub of hot water, and everyone crowded around to help wash her feet. A happily married woman’s ring was placed in the tub before the ceremony. The first person to find the ring while washing the bride’s feet was believed to be the next to be married.

On the wedding day, the entire wedding procession started out for the church. The first person to be met by the bride on her way to the wedding was given a coin, and a drink of whisky. That person, called the first foot, had to join the procession for about a mile before continuing on his or her own business. After the church ceremony, the wedding procession went back to a relative’s house to celebrate. As the bride and groom de-





parted, the groom and groomsmen tossed handfuls of coins to the surrounding people. At the celebration, pipers played merry tunes, and the Ceilidh (outdoor dance) could last the entire night. The newly married couple led off the dancing with a traditional reel, and then the bride danced a second time with the person of the highest rank amongst the celebrants. After that, the other guests joined in.

The Philippines

The marriage of a Filipino couple is not just the union of two individuals, but a union of

two families. The huge procession includes principal and secondary sponsors, who are close family members, friends, and associates who take responsibility for specific parts of the wedding, as well as the bridal party of bridesmaids, ushers, flower girl, and coin bearer. The families and friends also take part by helping prepare foods and entertaining visiting relatives for the wedding.

Making the Decision to Marry

Although love matches have been more common in Japan since World War II, many marriages are arranged by a nakodo (matchmaker) chosen by the family based on his or her reputation. Computer-based match-making agencies are also becoming more common. The nakodo researches the family background of potential candidates and identifies someone

Japan

who seems to be an ideal match, according to their social, political, and economic rank. Blood type can also play an important role in the decision. If the couple likes what they see, the families meet and negotiations begin. If either family or the man or woman feels the match is unfavorable, negotiations end. A young person who rejects several potential candidates suffers a bad reputation, and it becomes harder for them to meet anyone new.

Handfasting is a pre-Christian form of betrothal that remained legally binding in Scotland until 1939. It was

Scotland

a “temporary” marriage that lasted for a year and a day, or 13 moon cycles. The groom’s family might pay the bride’s family a bride price or the bride’s family would announce the promise of a dowry, and at that point binding vows were exchanged. These temporary marriages were performed because many



small villages did not have a local clergyman to perform a marriage ceremony and because proof of a bride’s fertility was important to the clans. Handfasting legally bound the couple until someone of the clergy could perform a ceremony. If the marriage lasted over this period then the vows would be renewed for a lifetime or “for as long as love shall last.” The





word handfasting derives from the custom of tying the bride and groom's wrists together, as a symbol of their decision to be bound together in family living.

The Philippines

The use of a go-between to arrange a marriage for the bride is native to Filipino culture, starting well before Christian or Muslim influence. Today, the parents of both the bride and groom meet for the formal proposal and gifts, which is called the pamamanhikan. Among traditional families, the groom's family still pays a bride price, and the groom will serve in the bride's family for a time. Today, the groom's payment of a bride-price or dowry is mostly symbolic of the agreement to marry and the bride's move from her birth family to his. In the northern Philippines, the Ifugao expect couples to be from the same social class, and the decisions are made by the parents, usually while the couple are still children. Among the Kalinga, marriages are negotiated with two messengers from the groom who bring gifts to the bride's house at night. The bride's family makes rice and butchers a pig, and everyone shares wine, rice, and meat. The messengers carry the extra meat to the groom's father.



Foods to Celebrate a Marriage

Japan

When the modern Japanese couple cuts the wedding cake at the reception, the bride's hand is over the groom's as a symbol of their first act together as husband and wife. A paper umbrella over their heads shows they are married.

Each dish at the traditional wedding banquet is a symbolic wish for happiness, long life, prosperity, and many children.

Konbu (seaweed) is included because the word sounds like the last half of the word of "joy": yorokobu. Tai (red sea bream) is served with its tail and head curved upward from the serving platter, indicating a circle, or eternity. The word tai is also part of the word "medetai," meaning "congratulations."

Clams, usually in a clear soup, are served with both shells together, symbolizing the couple. Lobster is often served for its deep red color, which is the color for luck. The number of courses will never be four, because the word for four, "shi," sounds like the word for "death."





Scotland

quaich is a traditional Scottish drinking vessel used to offer a guest a cup of welcome or a farewell drink. From this two-handled loving cup, a bride and groom take their first communion together as a married couple and their first toast together. Historically, the leaders of two families or clans would drink from a quaich to celebrate a bond. The bottom was sometimes made of glass, so that the drinker could keep watch on his companions (or recent enemies). Usually whisky or brandy is served in the quaich.

Toward the end of the celebrations, the entire assemblage sees the young couple to their new home. Before the bride enters her new home, the groom's mother breaks an oatcake or bannocks (biscuit made of barley and oat flour) over the bride's head. The reception means feasting and dancing on a lavish scale. The luncheon or dinner is followed by a rich dark wedding fruitcake, covered with hard icing decorated with silver bells and flowers. The top layer is saved for the christening of the first child, and friends who are unable to attend are mailed pieces of cake.



The Philippines

Communal feasting has always been a part of Filipino marriage. For today's weddings, menus may be traditional Filipino, European, or anything else. Traditional Filipino fare includes *lechon* (whole roast suckling pig), *morcon* (stuffed beef

roll), *relleno* (deboned and stuffed chicken or milkfish), and *estofado* (stewed meat cooked with tomato sauce and vinegar). A three-layered cake is customary.

In the north, pigs are sacrificed for marriages, either as part of the negotiation or as part of the celebration. The actual wedding involves several days of dancing and feasting, at the end of which a priest performs the rites.



The Ceremony

Japan

In Japan, the traditional Shinto ceremony honors the kami, the spirits inherent in the natural world. The priest performs a purification ceremony for the couple using a sakaki (Eurya) branch called a harai-gushi and calls on the gods to bless the couple. The couple themselves speak no words. The short ceremony ends with the couple ritually sharing nine sips of sake, referred to as sansan-kudo, using three flat lacquered sake cups in graduated sizes stacked on top of one another.

San-san-kudo means “Three sets of three sips equals nine.” Typically, the groom leads, taking three sips from the smallest cup then the bride takes three sips from the same cup. They





become husband and wife after the first sip. They move on to the second cup and repeat the three sips each, and then repeat with the third cup. After this ritual, members of both families drink sake to signify the union of the two families.

Scottish couples were traditionally joined in marriage just outside the church, with vows and a joining

Scotland

ceremony spoken in vernacular Scots. After the joining, the priest led the bride and groom and all the witnesses into the church for a long mass conducted in Latin. The mass ended with the blessing of the food and drink that were brought along by the guests and participants to be shared. When the festivities moved on to the couple's new home, the priest blessed the newlyweds, their new home, and their marriage bed.

The Philippines

The Filipino groom offers the bride 13 coins blessed

by the priest as a sign of dedication to his wife's happiness and the welfare of their future children. A veil is placed over the bride and groom's shoulders for the ceremony, and a *vugal*, a decorative silk cord, is set over the veil in a figure 8. Then a candle is lit. A similar custom is performed by a native group in the Philippines called the Visayan in which the couple's hair is tied together. The white veil over the couple, or the tied together hair, symbolizes the two people being clothed as one. The veil also represents the couple's path to heaven, and the candle is an angel's torch that lights their way. The figure 8 formed by the *veugal* symbolizes everlasting fidelity.



Salem Multicultural Institute was founded in 1997 to create an atmosphere of openness and appreciation for people of all ethnic backgrounds. We believe that education about and exposure to the traditions of different cultures can counter intolerance and enrich the community. We are best known for our World Beat Festival, held at Riverfront Park the last weekend of June.

The World Beat Gallery opened in 2006. It is located on the 2nd Floor of the Reed Opera House, on the corner of Court and Liberty in downtown Salem, Oregon.

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