

Aimee Robbins
Feature Article
Word Count:

Tying the Knot: Weddings Around the World

An arrow streaks through the air and strikes a beautiful woman. Then another one, and another one.

The man with the bow stops shooting and walks over to her. He gathers the arrows and breaks them, one by one, to show that he will love her forever.

Though it may not sound like it, this is actually part of a wedding, specifically for the Yugur culture in China (and don't worry, the arrows don't have arrowheads).

People all over the world get married, but sometimes they tie the knot differently. And it doesn't always consist of the Western-style engagements, diamond rings, white dresses, and kissing the bride.

First Comes Love

In many cultures, the process of love typically begins with dating and becoming engaged. However, how single people go about finding love varies across cultures.

In the Somali culture, women cannot date multiple men just for fun or to get to know them.

"If you bump into your Prince Charming and you decide you want to date him, it's a serious commitment to considering him for marriage," says Mayran Mohamed, whose family is from Somalia. "If women [dated around], they would be seen as shady. . . . But men can date around."

Once a woman finds someone to be exclusive with, she goes to her siblings to get approval of the man; she doesn't even talk to her parents about who she is dating until they are engaged and have a wedding day picked.

"It is disrespectful to talk to your parents about whom you are dating," says Mohamed. "If you do and whom you are dating doesn't work out, your parents won't have a high opinion of you."

Commented [SC1]: This semicolon feels wrong to me. I would have put a comma but that's because the first part isn't technically an independent clause.

Commented [SC2]: Technically this isn't parallel. "engagements, rings, dresses, and kissing" but I'm having a hard time coming up with an alternative. Food for thought.

Commented [SC3]: Not parallel: "just to have fun or to get to know them" might be better.

Commented [SC4]: Is there a specific reason this has a hard return and indentation? It feels off and I couldn't find anything in the style guide to support it.

Once the parents are informed of the wedding, all the men in the woman's family interview the groom-to-be. If the men approve, the woman comes into the room to formally accept the engagement. The women of the family come to meet the groom-to-be, and they eat, laugh, and take lots of pictures.

Traditionally, people in the Philippines also follow a lengthy and complicated process to find love—even more so than in other countries. If a Filipino man sees a woman he likes, he won't talk with her; instead, he must find a "go-between" who will talk to the woman's father and seek permission for the suitor to visit. If the father agrees, the man and the "go-between" go to the house where introductions are made.

At that first visit, the suitor must bring gifts to the family, including a special one for the daughter. During the next few visits, he will continue bringing gifts and will also serve the family by chopping wood for them or completing other chores. At night the suitor plays a guitar and sings love songs outside the woman's window until she invites him inside.

A The Filipino woman usually tries to play hard-to-get, believing that in doing so the man will value her more because of all his hard work to get her. After some time, they can date in public, but they have to have a chaperone; unmarried couples can't be left unsupervised. Once they decide to become married, the man brings food, presents, and a dowry to persuade the father to let him have his daughter's hand in marriage.

In Kazakhstan, the man's family finds a bride for the groom him. Once the family has selected a woman, they send matchmakers to the woman's home. If the marriage negotiations are successful, the matchmakers and the woman's family eat a liver and broad tail fat dish to signify successful courtship.

The next day, the woman and the matchmakers go to the groom's house. The groom's parents decide how many of the woman's close relatives they want to honor with gifts. During the ceremony of engagement, the man's parents place earrings on the woman, meaning that the man and woman are officially engaged.

Commented [SC5]: I would use a better transition between Somalia and the Philippines here. "Similarly, people in the Philippines also follow a traditionally lengthy and . . ."

Commented [SC6]: Not parallel. "He will continue bringing gifts and will begin serving the family . . ."

Commented [SC7]: Need a transition: "Unlike the Philippines" or "In contrast," etc.

Then Comes Marriage

Put a Ring on It

Rings traditionally symbolize everlasting love in a marriage. Usually only women ~~usually~~ wear an engagement ring, but in some places like South America, both men and women wear engagement rings so others know that they are taken. In Western culture, the wedding rings are usually adorned with diamonds and worn on the fourth finger of the left hand. ~~-~~ However, there are other ways to wear rings.

Spaniards wear their wedding rings on their right hand, a custom followed in most northern and eastern European countries. The custom is also partly followed in Brazil. Likewise, Brazilians wear the ring on the right hand, but only during their engagement. During the wedding ceremony, the rings are moved to their left hands. However, if a ring falls on the ground during this transition, it is believed to symbolize that the marriage will not last. The rings must also have the name of their spouse engraved on the inside.

~~Other~~Some cultures don't even worry about what hand to wear a wedding ring on. Some parts of India use a Bichiya, or toe ring, instead. During the marriage ceremony, the groom will put a toe ring on each of his bride's second toes. The toe rings serve as a symbol of their marriage.

Yet, s~~Some~~ cultures ~~even~~ leave out rings entirely. In Wales, couples spoon—but not that kind of spooning. The man carves a piece of wood into an ornate spoon and presents it to the woman he loves. If she ties a ribbon around the spoon and wears it around her neck as a necklace, it means that she has accepted his proposal. They are then officially engaged.

Like the Welsh, the Spaniards believe that simpler is better. "In Spanish weddings, we don't spend very much [money] on the rings," says Carmen Alldredge, from Madrid, Spain. "They are just regular bands; no huge diamonds."

Commented [SC8]: These last two sentences need a transition. Maybe, "But, the differences don't stop at whether the woman or both man and women wear engagement rings." Or something like that.

Commented [SC9]: Mix it up since you begin with "Some cultures" down below.

Much like Spain, Ireland traditionally doesn't include diamonds in their wedding rings. Instead, the Irish think having one's respective birthstone on an engagement ring is good luck. Some Irish also use a Claddagh ring, named after a fishing village in Western Ireland. Usually, the ring is handed down in families from mother to daughter to be used as the engagement and wedding ring. The design of the ring includes a crown; if the crown is pointed toward the wrist, the wearer is engaged, and if the crown is pointed toward the fingertip, the wearer is married.

Here Comes the Bride

All over the world, a wedding ceremony marks a milestone in the life of the bride and groom. The wedding day is meant to be a fond memory the couple will treasure forever. For this reason, women want to look their very best, but that doesn't necessarily mean wearing the biggest, whitest dress they can find.

In India, brides wear saris with gold or silver detailing. The color of the sari can depend on the community, but wedding colors are usually red, yellow, green, or white. Red is a popular choice because it symbolizes marital happiness, prosperity, and fertility. Intricate henna decorates the bride's palms, wrists, arms, legs, and feet. After the wedding, the bride isn't expected to do any housework until after the henna has faded away.

Weddings in Donje Ljabinje, a small town in Kosovo, also include vibrant dresses and patterns drawn on the bride's skin. Here the townspeople make the wedding dresses by hand, and these dresses are usually very colorful. To top off the look, brides paint their faces for their wedding day. The paint creates beautiful patterns and is often embellished with sequins. Brides do this because the paint is said to ward off bad luck.

Instead of using paint, Chinese brides wear dresses of red for luck. In China, a bride can have three dresses for her wedding. The first dress she wears is the qipao, a slim-fitting dress that is usually red. The second dress is usually a white dress that copies the style of Western wedding dresses. For the

Commented [SC10]: You should specify for what? "Some Irish also use a Claddagh ring as both engagement and wedding ring, Claddagh being named after a fishing . . ." You do specify in the next sentence, I just felt like it was missing information that could fit better here.

Commented [SC11]: I changed it to plural because "All over the world" seemed to call for it.

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reception, the bride slips into her third dress, which can be of any color or style. In some areas of China, a bride will change multiple times during the reception to show off her family's wealth.

Weddings in Afghanistan are joyful, as well, but there is also a sober air. This is evident on the bride's face as she shows her understanding that marriage marks a momentous point in her life. Her sober expression is covered with heavy make-up. Afghan wedding dresses are green, which represents prosperity and paradise, according to Islamic tradition.

Sealing the Deal

"You may now kiss the bride." Most people are familiar with this phrase, which usually follows the pronunciation that the couple is now man and wife. Kissing plays a large role in weddingsmarriage, but a kiss over the altar isn't the only way to seal a marriage.

In Somalia, the wedding ceremony lasts a bit longer because the bride has to answer "yes" three times. During the ceremony, the bride is asked twice if she agrees to the marriage. She is then taken into a private room and asked the question again. This is to make sure that the bride is not being forced into the marriage. If she says yes three times, the family and neighbors come forward to congratulate the couple.

The number three also shows up in Japanese weddings. Once the wedding ceremony is over, couples will drink sake, or rice wine, instead of kissing. The bride and groom each take a sip of the sake from three different cups. Then both sets of parents take a sip of sake from the three cups to indicate the new bond between the two families. The nine total sips taken by the couple and their parents represents-mean happiness.

A popular custom in African cultures is "broom jumping." The tradition of broom jumping most likely originated in Ghana during the eighteenth century and is still carried on today in many different places. After the wedding ceremony, a couple jumps over a broom to symbolize sweeping away their old

Commented [SC12]: Using joyful as the transition feels a little weird since joy isn't specifically mentioned in the previous paragraph. Therefore it can't really be used as the connection. Maybe say, "Instead of red, Afghani women wear green wedding dresses . . ." and just switch around the order of the paragraph.

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Commented [SC13]: If we count them as individuals taking sips instead of couples shouldn't it be 18 sips, six people taking 3 sips each?

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life and welcoming in their new life together. As the couple jumps over the broom, whoever jumps the highest is said to be the head of the household.

Instead of a broom, a shawl traditionally signifies a Scottish couple's union. After the wedding ceremony, a groom will put a shawl adorned with his clan's colors on it around his new bride's shoulders and fasten it with a silver pin. A similar tradition is used in French Polynesia. After the ceremony, a newlywed couple is wrapped in quilts known as *tifaifai*. The more quilts that are wrapped around them, the higher their status.

During a wedding ceremony for Celtic couples, the couples' hands are tied together. This is called handfasting. Handfasting is performed by having ~~the~~ right hands gripping each other ~~the right hand~~ and ~~the~~ left hands gripping each other ~~the left hand~~ to form a figure eight, which symbolizes eternity. The couple then says their vows and their hands are untied.

Hunting for a happily ever after doesn't always need to include billowing white dresses, expensive diamond rings, and kisses over the altar. Shooting a bride-to-be with blunt arrows doesn't need to be the way to tie the knot, either. Whether traditional or contemporary, there are many different ways to tie a knot that can secure a happily ever after.

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Commented [SC17]: You should mention that their hands are initially tied, if they are then untied.

Commented [SC18]: This sentence structure is a bit weird. Rephrase: "One can shoot a bride-to-be with blunt arrows, jump over broomsticks, wrap up in quilts, or any number of unique cultural traditions. But whether traditional or contemporary, there are . . ." Or something like that.