

Tausug - Marriage and Family

Marriage. Marriage is ideally arranged by parents. Contacts between the sexes are restricted and marriageable women are kept in relative seclusion to protect their value to their family as political and economic assets. First and second cousins are favored spouses (with the exception of the children of brothers). A series of negotiations precedes marriage, concluding with an agreement on the amount of bride-wealth and other expenses to be paid by the boy's family. In addition to arranged marriages, wives may be obtained by elopement or abduction, both common alternatives. Weddings are held in the groom's parents' house immediately upon payment of bride-wealth and are officiated by an imam. Newly married couples generally reside uxorilocally for the first year, or until the birth of a child, after which they are free to join the husband's family, remain with the wife's family, or, preferably, build a new house of their own, typically close to the husband's natal community. Independent residence is the eventual ideal. Relations between husband and wife are characteristically close and enduring. Divorce is permitted but is infrequent, occurring in less than 10 percent of all marriages and, although polygyny is allowed, few men take more than one wife.

Domestic Unit. The Tausug household consists of either a nuclear family or a stem family, the latter being comprised of parents, unmarried children, plus a married child, spouse, and grandchildren. Fully extended families are rare.

Inheritance. Land is usually divided between sons, with some preference given to the eldest. Other property is generally inherited bilaterally.

Socialization. Children are looked after by both parents and older siblings. A newborn infant's hold on life is thought to be precarious; therefore, children are commonly protected with amulets (*hampan*) and temporarily secluded immediately after birth. At around 1 or 2 years of age, both boys and girls undergo a ritual haircutting and immediately afterward are named. Most preadolescent children attend Quranic school or study the Quran with a private tutor, and when proficient they demonstrate their skills at recitation in a public ceremony called *pagtammam*. This is typically a festive occasion, its scale reflecting the family's status and economic means. Boys are circumcised (*pagislam*) in their early teens; girls undergo a similar rite (*pagsunnat*), but without ceremony and attended only by females, when they reach the age of 5 or 6. Socialization emphasizes sensitivity to shame, respect for authority, and family honor. Today children attend public schools, but few attain more than a primary education. Only one in five who begin school complete grade six.