

Modern Marriage and Courtship Among the Isneg, Apayao (Abstract)

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Contemporary courtship and marriage practices among the Isneg of Apayao, Northern Luzon show modern modifications gradually impinging upon traditional patterns. Affected are procedures for determining mate selection, courtship, ceremonial negotiations, brideprice (*tadug*), and the choice of residence for the new couple. Instrumental in the shift are higher educational levels, greater contact with outside communities and individuals, the drawing of marriage partners from a wider geographical area and from other cultural-linguistic groupings, and the effect of modern Philippine government institutions and law penetrating Apayao. Despite the obvious innovations, the force of the traditional system remains dominant, geared as it is to the agricultural economy, family characteristics, and the attention to extended kinship ties.

On the whole, Isneg marriage is contracted with its economic functions in mind. A man needs a woman to cook, wash his clothes, and help farm the kaingin, while his wife and prospective children need a protector. The preference for a non-related spouse from the same community cannot always be met, and a

fairly large proportion of marriages involve second- and third-cousin unions. Parents frequently arrange marriages but usually with the consent of the principals involved.

Courtship patterns still follow the long-time practice of a favored suitor's going to bed with the girl he is courting. However, sexual intercourse may be put off for several nights. Pregnancy is the signal for marriage, and the father who refuses to take the woman as his wife incurs a fine. As suitors are increasingly being drawn from more distant communities, with a consequent diminution of primary group sanctions upon non-law abiding members, the number of unresolved pregnancies and unpaid fines has increased over the years.

The brideprice paid by the groom's family remains an important consideration, although some Christian clergymen and teachers have counselled its waiver, especially in cases of financial difficulty. The amount of wealth to be transferred is decided at the betrothal ceremony (*mangatawa*), as is the decision concerning which set of parents the couple will move in with, or whether they will establish a rare neolocal residence. The *manakit* celebration represents the final

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marriage stage at which the bride's family receives the brideprice amid much feasting at the home of the groom's family. Although a few couples have chosen a Christian church or civil ceremony in addition to the traditional ritual, resistance to these forms prevails. Reasons given are the inconvenience and length of time required for obtaining a license, pressure from the elders to favor the traditional forms, and the finality of a marriage which bars polygamy and divorce.

Plural marriage as in the past is the exception rather than the rule and indicates a high status male, since his family must pay a brideprice that many times more. Girls do not usually favor marrying into a polygamous family, but when this does occur, the first wife usual-

ly supports the practice for help in her work. Divorce occurs primarily in case of adultery and may be initiated by either spouse, usually the male. The partner at fault must turn over the brideprice to the spouse's family, while the children may remain with either parent or be divided between them. Divorce seems less frequent than formerly, perhaps because the impinging larger society does not recognize it and because spouses seem more willing to reconcile their differences. The rate is higher among couples who were forced to marry their spouses. Similarly, prolonged bachelor or spinster status is the chosen lot of those who preferred not to wed at all rather than accept the partner promoted by their parents.