Basics Of Marriage In Mongolia

As described by Jankowiak and Beierle (2006), the Monggols were a nomadic pastoral culture group of Mongolia in Central Asia, found in between Russia and China. Mongolians participate in a group oriented culture structure and live in units, called Clans, which can be of varying sizes and are placed in different parts of Mongolia. Clans are generally made up of families, that work together to guarantee the survival of the clan as a whole. Which is important because the survival of the Clan holds precedence over any one individual's life. They live in a patriarchal society where labor is divided base on sex; the women take care of the household, while the men handle the hunting, bartering and building of the homes. (Jankowiak & Beierle, 2006) Homes can be built of wood and felt, sometimes even grass. Both sexes tend to and raise their animals, preferably sheep and cattle. Monggols hunt and farm most of their food. They hunt antelope, rabbits, wolves and pheasants, as well as, deer and bears. They are known to grow barley, corn, fruit trees and various types of wheat. (Jankowiak & Beierle, 2006)

Considering religion, the Monggols originally were originally strong believers of shamanism and animism, but have also incorporated Buddhism into its culture. Religions are practiced but have minor influence. For example, when a marriage is given approval or rejected by the compatibility of the betroth's zodiac signs. Monggols operate in a primogeniture system in which the firstborn male in every family inherits most of the father's estate, and the rest is given to the younger sons after the death of both parents. (Jankowiak & Beierle, 2006)

In a typical mongolian household, they discipline their children verbally and physically. Education is free and is mandatory for children 8 and up, but traditionally children were educated by their parents and clansmen. (Jankowiak & Beierle, 2006)

Marriage in Mongolia

The maintenance of these clans, was of utmost importance to the Monggols and this is where marriage comes in. The Mongolians placed high significance on marriage as it was seen as a bond between not only two individuals, but also two families and two clans. Every part of the wedding would be attended to by the clan, along with the expenses. (Washington, 1956) Marriages are, for the most part, arranged and do not take place right away, either being that the arranged are too young, or their zodiac signs do not match for a harmonious and fruitful marriage. (Krader, n.d.) The normal ages of the betrothed are different for the male and female counterparts, females usually being within 15 - 17 and the male a bit older. (Washington, 1956)

Since they live in a patriarchy, the Mongolians place great value on sons and believe in the power of a strong male lineage. Prestigious men would marry women who are from good and rich families so as to make meaningful connections and relationships with other clans. (Bold, 2001) Sons are the heads of households and the heir to their father's estate and fortune. Daughters are held in less regard for holding up the family lineage, but are seen as pawns for marriage and politics. The pressure for continuing the male line falls on the wife, who must produce an heir as part of her duties and services, not only for her husband but for his family and clan legacy. (Krader, n.d.)

Polygamy is allowed and a man can take more wives in order to produce more male heirs. (Krader, n.d.) Divorce is a rare occurrence in Mongolian marriages, especially in the peasant and herder classes. (Jankowiak & Beierle, 2006)

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