

# Marriage in Somali Culture





## Essential Question

How do Somali marriage customs reflect the values of family, culture, and community, and how do they compare to marriage practices in other cultures?

# Learning Targets



- I can explain how Somali marriages serve as a bond between not just individuals, but also **between families and clans**.
- I can describe the differences between traditional arranged marriages in rural areas and **modern dating practices (“shukaansi”)** in urban Somali culture.
- I can define the terms **“yarad”** and **“meher”** and explain their significance in Somali marriage customs.
- I can discuss the role of **Islamic law** in Somali marriage practices, including the concepts of divorce, retention, and the three-month grace period (**“iddah”**).

# Marriage



Marriage in Somali culture is a bond between clans and families.

The two families become in-laws (Xidid)



# What do these words mean?

## What is their closest equivalent in English?

- Xidid
- Yarad
- Sooryo
- Meher
- Iddah
- Raja,tu



# Traditional/ Rural Marriage Practices

- Most marriages in rural areas are arranged; they may also be arranged in urban settings.
- The father of the bridegroom makes initial informal contact with the family of the bride.
- The family of the bride agrees and sets a date for official request.



# Traditional/Rural Marriage Practices

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- The bridegroom's family pays a pride-price ("Yarad") usually livestock.
- The girl becomes officially engaged.
- The two families set a date for the marriage and wedding.
- During the marriage they will pay "Sooryo."
- The bridegroom will promise "Meher" for the bride.
- The sheikh will carry out the marriage contract.

# Urban Marriage Practices

- In urban areas, couples typically date until they mutually agree to marry.
- The groom expresses his intention to marry to his family.
- The subsequent steps in the marriage process remain consistent with traditional practices.



# Divorce Process

- The husband can initiate a divorce by stating, “I divorce you.”
- The woman can also initiate the divorce through the Kadhi (Judge) in a process known as khul’ (Wife initiated divorce)
- He has the right to retain his wife during the *Iddah* period, which lasts for three months.
- If he repeats the divorce declaration two additional times, the third declaration results in a permanent divorce.



# Resources

Videos: “Two Weddings, Somali Style” (44 mins.) by Al Jazeera

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mbNctEUO294>