Imperial *Tsumadoi* ("Wife-Visiting")

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*Tsumadoi* ("wife-visiting" or duolocal marriage), in which the man commutes to the house of the woman with whom he wishes to have a marital relationship, is the classic form of marriage in a matrilineal society. It is usually temporary and does not involve cohabitation. Japanese emperors in ancient times practiced *tsumadoi*.

The emperor would send a poem to a young woman with whom he wished to have such a relationship. With the poem as evidence, she could, in the future, become a consort, and a child born of the union could be eligible to succeed to the throne. Thus, an emperor’s *tsumadoi* was usually accompanied by a poem.

As only one such child could become emperor, however, the others became provincial officials or local leaders and supporters of the emperor. Thus, in siring many potential successors, the emperor made allies of regionally powerful families, all "heirs to the blood of Amaterasu." In this way, generations of emperors carried on the practice of *tsumadoi*. 