

Rites of Passage

KALAGAN, DAVAO DEL SUR, SOUTHEASTERN MINDANAO ISLAND, SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES. *The Kalagan, another Islamic group, also has their own rites of passage reflecting the practice of other people practicing Islam.*

AT ABOUT the fourth and fifth month of pregnancy, a *panday* (native healer) prays over the woman's belly. On the seventh month, a ceremony (*kandari*) is held to ensure a safe delivery. The extended family is invited. The *imam* or *pandita* (ritual specialist) applies oil on the woman's belly and offers a *padua salamat* (thanksgiving prayer). The local midwife who is the *balyan* (a female native ritual specialist) helps the mother deliver. Upon delivery, the *panday* whispers the Muslim *shahada* (Islamic profession of faith) to the infant's ear.

When the child is about three months old, another *kandari* is held. In a ceremony called *paggunting*, the child's hair is cut. The first verses of the Koran are read by the *imam* (Islamic priest) or *uztadj* (Islamic scholar) then he cuts off a tuft of hair from the forelock. A relative takes this for safekeeping. During the feast, a *sadaka*, a small packet containing a voluntary offering for the child is placed beside the dinner plates of guests.

The *pag'Islam* (*sunnat* – meaning, desirable) is the male and female circumcisions. The females undergo this at age seven, conducted by an old woman who scratches a portion of the clitoris using a thin bamboo stick. The

males have their circumcision in a group, done by a male specialist. Both rituals are preceded by prayers.

Marriage

Among the first acts is the negotiation of the bride price. A third party that will serve as the go-between negotiates the *mabr* (bride price) or *pangayo* (dowry). The agreed amount is given to the couple as beginning investment for their married life. The groom provides the dress, cow/s, goat/s, chickens, rice and other food for the feast. The wedding date is chosen by way of the *potikaan*, soothsaying, largely influenced by the phases of the moon. The new moon is preferred. The eve of the wedding is called *katipunan*, where there is a festive atmosphere. No liquor is served, but people dance. The wedding day is known as *kawin*. The couple bathe separately; believed to rid them of impurities. Relatives lock the door with string and paper money (*lapun*). The groom's relatives are to match this amount when they summon the bride. If the site is far, several *lapuns* may be set up, one even on the bride's face, which is covered by a fan with pasted paper money. The fan is removed at the start of the ceremony.