

# Kanggunting Rite of Passage

MAGUINDANAO, MAGUINDANAO AND COTABATO PROVINCES, CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN MINDANAO ISLAND, SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES. This ritual hair-cutting is actually performed by all the ethno-linguistic groups that practice Islam in varying modes according to specific local beliefs.



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Wide-eyed in innocence and unawareness, a child undergoes the rite of passage of ritual hair-cutting.

SEVEN DAYS after the birth of a child, a hair-cutting ceremony is held in the presence of relatives and learned elders in a ritual called *kanggunting*. The naming of the child also takes place together with some rituals performed as requisites. These are the following:

**Ubad** – This is performed by a *walian* (midwife) before noontime in the belief that thunder and strong winds (*manta mawa sa kuludan*) that happen during afternoons will be

avoided as the *tunong* (ancestral spirits) travel with these.

The ritual requires: ordinary and glutinous rice, rice starch, two boiled eggs, four pieces of young coconuts, one piece unopened flower of the areca palm (*daliday*), assorted herbal plants (*salimbangun, kalila, kanyag-nyag, dengaw*), two young chickens (rooster and hen), one goat, a plate of popped rice, fourteen pieces of *duwa pito* and assorted indigenous staple food (*pangialam, balebed* and *kamukunsi*).

A red flag made of handwoven cloth is placed at the eastern portion of the house. A small, rectangular bedding covered with a *malong* (tube skirt) is also prepared. Each of the coconuts is placed on the four corners of the bedding. The tips of the coconuts are cut and engraved with traditional designs. A hole is placed on each, into which a bamboo reed straw is inserted. The coconut juice is offered to the ancestral spirits who are expected to visit the place. A plate of *getti* (popped rice) and fourteen pieces of the *sulabay* (yellow, cookie-sized, cooked rice starch of various designs) are also placed near the bedding.

The *walian* invites the ancestral spirits by chanting a prayer using a *tudtugan* (smoke from a fire in a coconut dish), while walking around

the bed going toward the flag. Later, the *daliday* flower is opened to observe its direction. If most of the stems are directed upwards, the child will be a good leader; if most are broken, the child will be extravagant; if fragrant, his future will be good, otherwise he will have difficulties in life.

A *buwaya* (crocodile-shaped pastry) made of yellow rice is prepared over layers of three to seven banana leaves arranged on the floor. This is an offering to the ancestral spirits living in bodies of water. Two boiled eggs are its eyes, while the *duwa-pito* or fourteen pieces of *kalintubo* (cooked rice in coconut leaves) are placed beside its body. Cooked chicken parts (chopped in large pieces) are placed on the different parts of the *buwaya*. This is placed over the child's body. The number of banana leaves determines the number of years the ritual will be performed, thus, seven pieces is preferred.

**Teluk** – This is a ritual performed using the smoke of dried husks of *marang* (*Artocarpus odoratissimus*) or *lansones* (*Lansium domesticum*). A prayer is chanted to call the ancestral spirits to welcome the child as a new member of the family. The *telkom* is encircled above the head of the child while sitting on the lap of his mother, then to the bedding. The *walian* touches the chicken's blood with her right forefinger and stains the child's palms, feet and nose, to serve as a mark recognized by the ancestral spirits signifying that he is a new member of the family. The remaining chicken blood in the coconut shell is examined: if the blood is coagulated, the fortune of the family will not be good. If the blood is liquefied or if it increases, the family will prosper.

The *walian* slices the *daliday* over the head of the child and his parents. The drops of water are believed to represent the blessings

that they will receive from God. Afterwards, the father will pick his choices of the different chicken parts from the *buwaya* three times to determine the future of the child: if he chooses the head (*ulo*), breast (*kapba*) or drumstick (*bubon*), the child will be a good leader – other parts chosen are not good omens for the child's future.

**Akika** (*sacrifice*) – A heathy goat is chosen for the sacrifice because it will be the child's ride on judgment day. Before butchering the goat, a prayer is said mentioning the name of the child for whom the sacrifice is being made. A monetary token (*sadaka*) is offered to the *pandita* (local priest) to serve as witness of the *akika*. The liver of the goat is licked by the child when cooked (to remind him of this *akika*), while the meat is served in the *kanduli* (set of rice and viands).

**Peggunting** – This is done by the *pandita*. Immediately after everybody has eaten, the child is prepared for the hair-cutting (*gunting* - scissors) ceremony. The name of the child is chosen. A glass of water, some cooking oil and a little sugar are placed by the side of the child together with other ritual articles. The child is placed on a relative's lap then the *pandita* or *imam* after which, other learned men take their turns in the ritual. The hair of the infant is moistened (sometimes with perfume) then locks of hair are cut at least three times. The locks of hair are placed in a water container to determine the future of the child. If the hair does not sink instantly, his fortune is good, otherwise it is bad. A bit of cooking oil and sugar are placed in the child's mouth with the use of a finger so he will be fluent in speech when he becomes an adult. All participants are given *sadaka*.

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