

# Marriage Ritual

WESTERN BUKIDNON MANOBO, SOUTHWESTERN BUKIDNON PROVINCE, CENTRAL MINDANAO ISLAND, SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES.

*Establishing an affinal relationship is, at best, a sensitive situation. This branch of the larger Manobo group suggests a lineal form of kinship system, such that the arrangement in marriage is not done with the parents but with the father's brother.*



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Manobo man and woman are bound for life in the clutching of palms.

**PENGINSÁ** – The “asking” phase begins when a girl is selected and the groom’s family gets a relative to act as go-between. He brings several 10 centavo coins and goes to the paternal uncle of the girl and not to the parents. He states his purpose directly, offering the coins as “the means of talking”. He places the coins on a mat, asking the amount of the bride wealth. The uncle will ask him to return after he has spoken to the girl’s parents. The uncle who received the coins contacts the parents and discusses the proposal. If the proposal is accepted, the uncle meets again with the go-between informing him of the acceptance and informs him of the amount of bride wealth required. The go-between returns, bringing with him the *kagun*.

**Kagun** – The go-between brings a plate or porcelain dish, a threaded needle, a string of beads and a peso coin if the groom-to-be is a *datu* (a ranked or rich person), lesser if not a *datu*, and declares the bringing of the *kagun*, pointing the items out. Next, he offers the *delundun*.

**Delundun** – This consists of any kind of valuable – money or property – which he has been able to collect. The two then make a rattan calendar to set the date for the wedding negotiations, one for each party. When the date is set, a *bolo* is acquired by either side but the spokesperson of the bride-to-be keeps it. The relatives of the girl must supply a chicken to be given to the man’s spokesperson. This is called the “anointing”. The blood of the chicken will be used to anoint the spokesperson and the rest of the relatives of the groom to prevent misfortune and assist them in securing the bride wealth.

**Sunggud** – The relatives must begin to gather the items for the bride wealth. The girl’s relatives prepare food for the feast (*apa* or food to be fed to the prospective in-laws). If the wedding date is 20 days after the giving of the *delundun*, only one knot is left on the calendar, which is the 19th day. The knot is not cut for it will not augur well. On the wedding day, the groom’s party goes to the girl’s house but stops short of reaching it. The go-between goes ahead and meets his counterpart, announcing the arrival of the groom. The girl is kept inside the house in a secluded back room. The uncle goes to meet the groom’s party. He and his counterpart bring out their calendars and both offer a prayer to the gods. The uncle then invites the group to proceed to the house.

When they reach the foot of the stairs, two or more of the bridal group (*ed-ipal*) will sit at the entrance and bar the groom’s party from entering unless what they ask for is given. If what they ask for is not available, the party may offer something else. They will have to bargain. Only then will they be allowed to go into the house. The final settlement of the bride price is done before the feast, first of the relatives of the groom, then the other guests. Then, the relatives of the bride will eat, but different food from what was served earlier. They may not eat the *apá*. The parents of both bride and groom, and the two go-between *datu*s will not eat until the couple performs the nuptial rite of feeding each other.

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