

Courtship and Marriage

KALINGA, KALINGA PROVINCE, NORTHERN LUZON ISLAND, NORTHERN PHILIPPINES. *The Kalinga are sometimes referred to as the "peacocks of the north" because of the elegance of their dress, although the Ga'dang, contiguous to them, can also claim this reputation. They are a proud people, sensitive with respect to interpersonal relationships, an attitude reflected in the workings of their courtship and marriage.*



A Kalinga couple in unconventional ordinary daily dress.

TRADITIONALLY, the Kalinga practice caution in the conduct of engagement so as not to wound or be wounded. If the father of the boy is sure that the father of the girl will not reject his proposal, he will go to him directly. If less sure, he will send gifts of meat for a while and then send the *banat* (go-between) later. If the father of the girl keeps the gifts, he makes a formal proposal.

The subject will be broached during a feast or similar events in indirect ways, such as saying praises of the boy, that he is one worthy of being a husband of any daughter, making sure that his remarks will be heard by relatives of the girl. This will be reported to the girl's parents, who will send back, also indirectly, a message of approval. The father of the boy sends two messengers to the father of the girl to make an appointment. Neither of the messengers (*membaga*) must be a widower. They carry with them gifts of precious antique beads or gold earrings (*banat*), which are consonant with the wealth of the families. If they encounter a bad omen on the way, they turn back and try again after a long wait.

Upon entering the house, one of the *membaga* will go directly to a water jar to drink, indicating that their arrival is clean, that is, no bad omens have been encountered along the way. They talk about things other than the purpose of their visit, then gradually, warm up and deliver the *banat* with the statement of their purpose. The mother of the girl, in the meantime, washes some rice, takes a pot and lines it with ten *runo* (a kind of reed) blades (*apin*). She cooks the rice while the father sends some men to catch a pig. The pig is butchered and examined for a good omen. They negotiate about what property will be given to each child. *Basi* (sugarcane wine) is passed around then the rice and meat are served with the *membaga* fed first with large shares. When the messengers leave, they are each given a blanket and a Chinese ceramic bowl. The front half of the pig (*longos*) is sent to the father of the boy as a token that the engagement is accomplished. The two youngsters, principals of the occasion, are referred to as *abehyans* and their parents as *mangabehyans* to each other.

As long as the engagement lasts, both sides send the other gifts of meat, pigs, vegetables and others. In all feasts when a large animal is butchered, a leg is sent reciprocally. Meat-sharing is carried out.

While an engagement remains in force, the boy will tell his father that he would like to marry in time, or the other way around with the father telling the boy that it is time. The father calls one of the messengers to notify the girl's father that his son is ready to marry. If the girl's family agrees, they set a day for the marriage (*tugtugao*). The boy will now make daily trips to cut bundles of firewood each day for about ten days, delivering them to the house of the girl. On the appointed day, all the relatives of the girl assemble at her house. Each will bring the following contributions (*bunong*) to the wedding feast: *diket* (glutinous rice), chicken, *basi*, small pig and *palay* (unthreshed rice). About mid-afternoon, the groom with his cousins of similar age come carrying the bundles of wood, followed by the rest of the relatives. Everyone drinks *basi*.

The father of the girl slaughters pigs, chickens and a carabao, if rich. These and rice are cooked for a feast. The groom and his relatives are served first and are honored with larger portions than the other guests. Toward evening, the groom and his party, bearing the upper halves (*longos*) of the animals slaughtered, return home. There, the meat is cut into many pieces and distributed among the boy's kin as far as it can reach. Some are sent to influential people or *pangats*. The spouses are now called *ka-asawa* (newlyweds). The parents continue to be called *mangabehyans*.

After two to three days, the boy goes to the girl's house to live there for two or three weeks. The two are now called *mandapat* (uniters). After this, he brings her to his house, where his parents give another wedding feast called *tugtugao*. The girl's relatives take home the lower half of the animal butchered (*diom*). A few days later, the couple goes to the girl's house to live.