

# **Tribal Wedding Traditions in the Philippines Showcased at "Kaamulan" Festival**

## **Wedding Traditions in the Philippines Promote Peace, Unity and Understanding**

Mindanao's food basket, Bukidnon, is home to a wide diversity of religions and cultures. Therefore, you can find a great variation in Filipino wedding traditions and Philippines marriage customs.

In the luxuriant homeland of the province's seven hill tribes, a tribal wedding is given the utmost significance because it fosters unity and peace.

It is seen as a way to mend tribal gaps between clans having disagreements, especially, when a man is so smitten with the woman in another community or clan.

To mark the importance of this rich heritage, the Bukidnon provincial government annually celebrates the month-long "Kaamulan" cultural festival from **February 18 to March 10**, where local and foreign tourists flock to witness the popular street dancing and tribal wedding.

"Kaamulan" is from the Binukid word "amul" which means "to gather." It is a gathering of Bukidnon tribes people for a purpose. It can mean a "Datuship," a ritual, a wedding ceremony, a thanksgiving festival during harvest time, a peace pact, or all of these put together.

Russel Aquino, Chief, Bukidnon Indigenous Cultural Affairs Office said at the beginning of the occasion there is always a solemn prayer giving thanks to the 'Magbabaya' (deity) for the year's bountiful harvest and blessings, thus, a tribal mass wedding is usually afforded.

### **The prelude to nuptial rites**

The courtship counts in the entire woman's family in wedding traditions in the Philippines. Tribal families then come together with the "Datu" (chieftain) as the emissary and make the best of whatever is presented to him, while everybody listens.

Marked by a highly developed sense of democracy and love for peace, they settle disputes through unwritten treaties. If they agree, wedding procedures begin.

The following are a short description of the traditional tribal nuptials and wedding traditions in the Philippines during the Kaamulan solemnized by the chieftain, accredited by the Local Civil Registrar (LCR):

The "Kagen" and "Taltag:" A pre-wedding ceremony where the man begs for the parents' approval. Dowry is offered and agreed upon by both families.

The "Pamalas:" Solemnized by the "Datu", the "Kagsalu- hu Salungana" (union of physical and spiritual aspect), this starts with the ritual to ward off evil spirits and cleanse the couple of their sins.

Chastity and sexual modesty were also very highly valued. Applied primarily to women, these values were not only tied to family honor but were held to be a religious obligation as well.

## The wedding dress and costume

The bright colors of the costumes are in sharp distinction to the green of the surroundings. The women cover themselves with heavy jewelry and decorated headdress.



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A pair of dangling pieces of jewelry is also worn behind the ears. Bangles are also compulsory, for no self-respecting woman would be seen without them according to tribal wedding traditions in the Philippines.

Dressed with an intricately embroidered outfit called "Pinaksoy" and "Sinulaman," the bride faces the groom-- in "Tangkulu" (beaded turban)--the traditional festivity costume of the hill tribes.

### The ceremony

All against the background of traditional tribal music, the couple exchange vows and eat a hand-mold of rice with boiled pork and chicken to symbolize life's sweetness and fruitfulness.

Merry making includes refreshments of spring water, eating of boiled pork and chicken. The "Datu" and "Bai" (woman leader) lead the dances, songs and music.

Bright festive colors surround the 'Tulugan' (Tribal Hall) which functions much like a barangay hall, except that it may house a whole clan.

The Kaamulan Festival is the ideal occasion to showcase tribal wedding traditions in the Philippines and the unique indigenous culture of Bukidnon's seven tribes namely, the Higaonon, Talaandig, Manobo, Matigsalug, Tigwahanon, Bukidnon, and Umayamnon.

A Tribal wedding is just one of the much-awaited cultural activities lined-up for the upcoming festivities.

Governor Alex Calingasan proudly said that this year's Kaamulan festival would be grander in terms of events and activities, which everyone should look forward to, as the province's biggest tourism event. (Ruby Leonora R. Balistoy/PIA 10, Bukidnon)

Ref.: <http://www.cebuphilippines.net/wedding-traditions-in-the-philippines.html>

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