

Magwasi

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Philippine

Advanced
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A great many years ago some Tinguian left their little village in the valley early one morning and made their way toward the mountains. They were off on a deer hunt, and each carried his spear and head-ax, while one held in leash a string of lean dogs eager for the chase.

Part way up the mountainside the dogs were freed, and the men separated, going different ways in search of game. But ere long the sharp barking of a dog called all in his direction, for they believed that he had a deer at bay. As they approached the spot, however, the object did not look like a deer, and as they drew nearer they were surprised to find that it was a large jar.

Filled with curiosity they pressed on, but the jar evaded them. Faster and faster they ran, but the object, disappearing at times and then coming into view again, always escaped them. On and on they went until at last, tired out, they sat down on a wooded hill to rest and to refresh themselves with betel-nut which they took from brass boxes attached to their belts.

As they slowly cut the nuts and wrapped them in the lime and leaf ready for chewing, they talked of nothing but the wonderful jar and the mysterious power it possessed. Then just as they were about to put the tempting morsels into their mouths they stopped, startled by a strange soft voice which seemed to be near them. They turned and listened, but could see no person.

“Find a pig which has no young,” said the voice, “and take its blood, for then you will be able to catch the jar which your dog pursued.”

The men knew then that the mysterious jar belonged to a spirit, so they hastened to do as the voice commanded, and when they had secured the blood the dog again brought the jar to bay. The hunters tried to seize it, but it entered a hole in the ground and disappeared. They followed, and found themselves in a dark cave where it was easy to catch the jar, for there was no outlet save by the hole through which they had entered.

Though that was many years ago, the jar still lives, and its name is Magsawi. Even now it talks; but some years ago a crack appeared in its side, and since then its language has not been understood by the Tinguian.

Sometimes Magsawi goes on long journeys alone when he visits his wife, a jar in Ilocos Norte, or his child, a small jar in San Quintin; but he always returns to Domayco on the hillside near the cave.

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