



Mythology of Mindanao

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Philippine

Intermediate

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A long, long time ago Mindanao was covered with water, and the sea extended over all the lowlands so that nothing could be seen but mountains. Then there were many people living in the country, and all the highlands were dotted with villages and settlements. For many years the people prospered, living in peace and contentment. Suddenly there appeared in the land four horrible monsters which, in a short time, had devoured every human being they could find.

Kurita, a terrible creature with many limbs, lived partly on land and partly in the sea, but its favorite haunt was the mountain where the rattan grew; and here it brought utter destruction on every living thing. The second monster, Tarabusaw, an ugly creature in the form of a man, lived on Mt. Matutun, and far and wide from that place he devoured the people, laying waste the land. The third, an enormous bird called Pah, was so large that when on the wing it covered the sun and brought darkness to the earth. Its egg was as large as a house. Mt. Bitita was its haunt, and there the only people who escaped its voracity were those who hid in caves in the mountains. The fourth monster was a dreadful bird also, having seven heads and the power to see in all directions at the same time. Mt. Gurayn was its home and like the others it wrought havoc in its region.

So great was the death and destruction caused by these terrible animals that at length the news spread even to the most distant lands, and all nations were grieved to hear of the sad fate of Mindanao.

Now far across the sea in the land of the golden sunset was a city so great that to look at its many people would

injure the eyes of man. When tidings of these great disasters reached this distant city, the heart of the king Indarapatra was filled with compassion, and he called his brother, Sulayman, begging him to save the land of Mindanao from the monsters.

Sulayman listened to the story, and as he heard he was moved with pity.

“I will go,” said he, zeal and enthusiasm adding to his strength, “and the land shall be avenged.”

King Indarapatra, proud of his brother’s courage, gave him a ring and a sword as he wished him success and safety. Then he placed a young sapling by his window and said to Sulayman:

“By this tree I shall know your fate from the time you depart from here, for if you live, it will live; but if you die, it will die also.”

So Sulayman departed for Mindanao, and he neither walked nor used a boat, but he went through the air and landed on the mountain where the rattan grew. There he stood on the summit and gazed about on all sides. He looked on the land and the villages, but he could see no living thing. And he was very sorrowful and cried out:

“Alas, how pitiful and dreadful is this devastation!”

No sooner had Sulayman uttered these words than the whole mountain began to move, and then shook. Suddenly out of the ground came the horrible creature, Kurita. It sprang at the man and sank its claws into his flesh. But Sulayman, knowing at once that this was the scourge of the land, drew his sword and cut the Kurita to pieces.

Encouraged by his first success, Sulayman went on to Mt. Matutun where conditions were even worse. As he stood on the heights viewing the great devastation there was a noise in the forest and a movement in the trees. With a loud yell, forth leaped Tarabusaw. For a moment they looked at each other, neither showing any fear. Then Tarabusaw threatened to devour the man, and Sulayman declared that he would kill the monster. At that the animal broke large branches off the trees and began striking at Sulayman who, in turn, fought back. For a long time the battle continued until at last the monster fell exhausted to the ground and then Sulayman killed him with his sword.

The next place visited by Sulayman was Mt. Bita. Here havoc was present everywhere, and though he passed by many homes, not a single soul was left. As he walked along, growing sadder at each moment, a sudden

darkness which startled him fell over the land. As he looked toward the sky he beheld a great bird descending upon him. Immediately he struck at it, cutting off its wing with his sword, and the bird fell dead at his feet; but the wing fell on Sulayman, and he was crushed.

Now at this very time King Indarapatra was sitting at his window, and looking out he saw the little tree wither and dry up.

“Alas!” he cried, “my brother is dead”; and he wept bitterly.

Then although he was very sad, he was filled with a desire for revenge, and putting on his sword and belt he started for Mindanao in search of his brother.

He, too, traveled through the air with great speed until he came to the mountain where the rattan grew. There he looked about, awed at the great destruction, and when he saw the bones of Kurita he knew that his brother had been there and gone. He went on till he came to Matutun, and when he saw the bones of Tarabusaw he knew that this, too, was the work of Sulayman.

Still searching for his brother, he arrived at Mt. Bita where the dead bird lay on the ground, and as he lifted the severed wing he beheld the bones of Sulayman with his sword by his side. His grief now so overwhelmed Indarapatra that he wept for some time. Upon looking up he beheld a small jar of water by his side. This he knew had been sent from heaven, and he poured the water over the bones, and Sulayman came to life again. They greeted each other and talked long together. Sulayman declared that he had not been dead but asleep, and their hearts were full of joy.

After some time Sulayman returned to his distant home, but Indarapatra continued his journey to Mt. Gurayn where he killed the dreadful bird with the seven heads. After these monsters had all been destroyed and peace and safety had been restored to the land, Indarapatra began searching everywhere to see if some of the people might not be hidden in the earth still alive.

One day during his search he caught sight of a beautiful woman at a distance. When he hastened toward her she disappeared through a hole in the ground where she was standing. Disappointed and tired, he sat down on a rock to rest, when, looking about, he saw near him a pot of uncooked rice with a big fire on the ground in front of it. This revived him and he proceeded to cook the rice. As he did so, however, he heard someone laugh near by, and turning he beheld an old woman watching him. As he greeted her, she drew near and talked with

him while he ate the rice.

Of all the people in the land, the old woman told him, only a very few were still alive, and they hid in a cave in the ground from whence they never ventured. As for herself and her old husband, she went on, they had hidden in a hollow tree, and this they had never dared leave until after Sulayman killed the voracious bird, Pah.

At Indarapatra's earnest request, the old woman led him to the cave where he found the headman with his family and some of his people. They all gathered about the stranger, asking many questions, for this was the first they had heard about the death of the monsters. When they found what Indarapatra had done for them, they were filled with gratitude, and to show their appreciation the headman gave his daughter to him in marriage, and she proved to be the beautiful girl whom Indarapatra had seen at the mouth of the cave.

Then the people all came out of their hiding-place and returned to their homes where they lived in peace and happiness. And the sea withdrew from the land and gave the lowlands to the people.

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