

Kudaman Epic

PALA'WAN, SOUTHERN PALAWAN ISLAND PROVINCE, CENTRAL PHILIPPINES. *This is one of the epic poems of the Pala'wan of Palawan province. Composed of six songs, it takes about seven days to chant this epic. The first night introduces the epic; each of the songs takes one night to perform. The hero, Kudaman, appears after the introduction.*



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The mythical river, Tabunganan, where the story of the epic chant of the Pala'wan people, began.

AN EVIL SPIRIT lives in a spring near the river Tabunganan. Tuwan Putli, with her cousin Ambaynan, goes there to fish. One day, Tuwan Putli disappears in the river. Ambaynan sees blood in her fish basket and returns to report the disappearance. Tuwan Putli's husband, Muta-Muta, was ordered by her father to search for her but he disobeys. Muta-Muta turns to the Young Man of the Clouds for assistance, who accepts on the condition that Tuwan Putli will become his if he succeeds. The Young Man of the Clouds finds a fragment of Tuwan Putli's toenail in the teeth of a crocodile that accidentally ate Tuwan Putli. The Young Man retrieves the fragment and puts this in a golden chest. Later, they hear the voice of Tuwan Putli from the chest, begging to be let out. She emerges bathed in golden light. Learning of the events, she consents to live with the Young Man of the Clouds.

Later on, the Young Man of the Clouds falls in love with the Lady of the Sea-Beings, the wife of Kudaman. The Young Man wins her love, alienating Tuwan Putli, who leaves him. Kudaman decides to bring the Lady of the Sea-Beings to her father, Surutan Tamparan, the sultan of the seacoast. On his journey back on board *Linggisian* (the Purple Heron), Kudaman meets Tuwan Putli who accepts a betel-nut from him. She becomes his *puun* or principal wife. When Surutan Tamparan finds out that his daughter has left Kudaman, he beheads her, but she emerges from death lovelier than ever.

Muta-Muta, Tuwan Putli's first husband, and his brother, Datu of Ligayan, visit Kudaman and offer a blood compact that reminds Muta-Muta that Tuwan Putli is now Kudaman's wife. Muta-Muta asks to stay in Kudaman's place to which the latter agrees and builds him a house. They celebrate with *tabad* (rice wine).

Kudaman goes on subsequent journeys, riding on *Linggisian*, initially for seven years, where he collects three additional wives: the Lady of the Wild Green Pigeon, the Lady of the Sea-Beings and the Lady of the Ginuu Tree. They celebrate the building of his new

kalangbanwa (big house) in honor of Ampu, the Master of the Rice. Gongs are played and the ladies dance.

The Young Man of the Clouds hears the music and joins the celebration. However, the dreaded Ilanun army also hears the music and decides to test Kudaman's mettle. Kudaman calmly waits for the Ilanun and invites them, but they reject the invitation. Angered, Muta-Muta attacks them, joined by the Young Man of the Clouds. They fight for seven years, taking them to several levels of the world, but Kudaman wins in the end.

Kudaman and the Young Man of the Clouds return home together, passing by the house of Limbuhanan, his first cousin. The Lady of the Agoho Tree offers to accompany the heroes back home. Upon arrival, the celebration resumes where jurat matters are discussed regarding marriage rules, relationships and others. Kudaman finds himself in a state of stupor from the drinking, and is transported to another universe. He is brought back to consciousness to see the face of the Lady of the Hooks, whom he proposes to marry. He chews betel and spits at the dead Ilanun army, reviving them, who then surrender to him.

Earlier, there was conflict over Tuwan Putli between Kudaman and the chief judge of Pinagsaraan. The Lady of the Luray Tree, the wife of the chief judge of Pinagsaraan, proposed that Tuwan Putli be cut in two. Kudaman slices her. Each half, however, became a lovelier Tuwan Putli.

The epic continues with Kudaman's travels to other lands where feasts are held. In one of these, he drinks one hundred and eighty jars of *tabad* after which he plummets into the navel of the earth where he wrestles with himself. He meets the Lady of the Young Men, who becomes his fifth wife. He wins other wives subsequently. The epic ends with the final celebration of his tenth marriage.