

# Hinilawod Epic

**SULOD, CENTRAL PANAY ISLAND PROVINCE, CENTRAL PHILIPPINES.** Chanting epics is a traditional practice in the heart of the island of Panay in central Philippines. One of these is the Sulod epic of *Hinilawod*. The epic has two cycles: *Labaw Donggon* and *Humadapnon*.



Boxer Codex

The elite of the Visayan people that include those from Panay Island at the period of the epic could have dressed this way as depicted in the Boxer Codex.

**Labaw Donggon** – This cycle has two parts – the first tells of *Labaw Donggon's* amorous exploits and the second features *Baranugon*, *Labaw Donggon's* son, playing the major role.

IN THE DOMAINS of the eastern sky lives a *divata* named *Abyang Alunsina*. This deity has a husband named *Buyung Paubari*. Three handsome sons are born to them. These are *Labaw Donggon*, *Humadapnon* and *Dumalapdap*. These three brothers are born with extraordinary powers. For example, as soon as they are delivered into this world, they are strong and mature men. They also possess the power of speech.

Shortly after birth, *Labaw Donggon* tells his mother that he is going on a journey to look for the beautiful maiden named *Anggoy Ginbitinan*. She lives in *Handog*, a place located at the mouth of the river *Halawod*. *Abyang Alunsina* gives her consent with extreme reluctance because she knows that her son is hardly a day old. To insure the safety of the young *Labaw Donggon*, she gives him a magic suit. Riding on the shoulders of the wind and traveling over the region of the clouds, *Labaw Donggon* reaches *Handog*. He is able to win the hand of *Ginbitinan* without much difficulty.

A few weeks after his marriage to *Ginbitinan*, *Labaw Donggon* hears about another beautiful woman from the underworld – *Anggoy Doronoon*. *Doronoon* is the spirit of springs and rivers. She is related to the well-known underworld fighter and god, *Sibay Padalogdog*.

*Labaw Donggon* also wins *Anggoy Doronoon* without any trouble. He stays with her for some time and later returns to *Handog*. Again, he hears about another beautiful woman – *Nagmalitung Yawa* or *Sinagmaling Diwata*. This woman lives at the foot of the eastern horizon. She is the wife of *Buyung Saragnayan*, the Keeper of Light.

Asking the consent of both *Doronoon* and *Ginbitinan*, as is the custom of his day, *Labaw Donggon* plans to take *Nagmalitung Yawa* as his third wife. Plural marriages are popular and acceptable at this time. In spite of themselves, *Doronoon* and *Ginbitinan* offer no objection against *Labaw Donggon's* proposal. So, the mighty fighter from the eastern sky set out to win the hand of the beautiful *Nagmalitung Yawa*.

Upon reaching the Land of the Dawning Sun (*borotlakan ka adlan*), *Labaw Donggon* is met by *Buyung Saragnayan*, husband of *Nagmalitung Yawa*. He inquires from the new arrival what his intentions are in coming to the Land of the Dawning Sun. *Buyung Labaw Donggon* tells *Buyung Saragnayan* that he came for the hand of *Nagmalitung Yawa*.

“You can have *Nagmalitung Yawa*,” *Saragnayan* answered, “if I do not have life anymore – that is, if you can defeat me in combat – otherwise, you had better leave right away.”

*Labaw Donggon* refuses to leave. So they fight. *Labaw Donggon* takes hold of

Saragnayan and submerges him in water. It takes Labaw Donggon seven years before he brings Saragnayan up to the surface. Much to his surprise, however, Saragnayan is still alive. Then, Labaw Donggon places his adversary on top of a flat, hard stone and beats him with the trunks of coconut trees. The body of Saragnayan, as well as the coconut trunks, turns thread-like. However, the Keeper of Light withstands the beating unharmed. Next, Labaw Donggon hurls Saragnayan up into space, holding his feet and twirling him around and around and mixing him with the clouds. However, Saragnayan still remains alive. After many years, Labaw Donggon becomes tired and exhausted. He tries all he can in order to subdue Saragnayan but in vain. His adversary proves more powerful than he.

Noting that Labaw Donggon has weakened, Saragnayan assumes an aggressive role. He wrestles with Labaw Donggon. Because the latter is exhausted, he is not able to defend himself effectively. Saragnayan ties the hands and the feet of Labaw Donggon and imprisons him inside a pigpen underneath his kitchen.

Meanwhile, down in the underworld, Anggoy Doronoon gives birth to a handsome boy. She names him Buyung Baranugon. Like his father, Baranugon is able to talk immediately after he has seen the light of day. He insists that his mother allow him to look for his father, Labaw Donggon, in spite of the fact that his umbilical cord is still uncut. Anggoy Doronoon vehemently objects. However, Baranugon is determined to search for his father.

In Handog, Anggoy Ginbitinan also gives birth to a healthy young lad, Asu Mangga. As a child, Asu Mangga possesses magic powers.

He shows skills in fighting. Like Baranugon, he also insists that his mother allow him to look for his father whom he has not seen since he was born. With a heavy heart, Anggoy Ginbitinan permits her son to search for Labaw Donggon.

Asu Mangga and Baranugon meet on the way. Asu Mangga is riding on a magic boat, while Baranugon is walking on the sea as though it were land. Great waves break to give him way.

Reaching the Land of the Dawning Sun, Baranugon and Asu Mangga consult their crystal ball. They see their father imprisoned under the kitchen of Saragnayan. Angered by this, Baranugon challenges Saragnayan to a fight. Saragnayan thinks it is a joke because Baranugon's umbilical cord is still uncut. He advises Baranugon to go home to his mother; however, the latter insists on fighting with him.

The first encounter is a contest of the power of their respective charms or *pamlang*. In spite of Saragnayan's efforts to overcome his new adversary, Baranugon's *pamlang* proves more powerful. Recognizing the power of his adversary, Saragnayan calls for help from other supernatural beings. Groups of spirits from all parts of the universe come. They are all armed to the last man.

Upon seeing this army of fighters making a formation to attack, Baranugon and Asu Mangga push their black magic boat a little away from the shore. Then, Baranugon calls out to the other spirits to quit the field and to go home, "...because you have no part in this quarrel." However, the helpers of Saragnayan respond that they like to participate in the fight.

Baranugon and Asu Mangga take their own bows and poisoned arrows. With the help of the powerful magic that their mothers have given them, Baranugon and Asu Mangga are able to kill all their enemies. For every arrow they shoot into the air, a number of men are killed. The blood of Saragnayan's men flow over the hills of the Land of the Dawning Sun, until the whole world below is flooded with it.

Everyone is killed except Saragnayan. Baranugon tells his brother, Asu Mangga, that he will take care of Saragnayan. His anger over the fact that Saragnayan put his father in prison has not been appeased by the laughter of the thousands of men who had come to help the Keeper of Light.

The two brothers bring their boat back to the shore. Baranugon runs ashore and wrestles with the gigantic Saragnayan. He places himself close behind the towering man, and this makes Saragnayan's effort to hit him with his dagger fruitless. With the agility of a wild boar, Baranugon wards off the blows of Saragnayan. They fight hard. However, Baranugon finds out that Saragnayan cannot be killed. So, he sends his spirit friends to his grandmother, Abyang Alunsina, for help. Alunsina tells Baranugon through the spirits that the only way to overcome Saragnayan is to kill and eat the heart of the wild pig in Paling Bukid where Saragnayan keeps his breath.

With the use of the charm, called *lumay*, Baranugon and Asu Mangga leave the exhausted but unbeatable Saragnayan. They are able to locate the wild pig, kill it, and eat its heart. After they have partaken of the wild boar, they return. All of a sudden, Saragnayan becomes weak. He knows his end has come. Knowing that he is doomed, Saragnayan asks

Baranugon to allow him to see Nagmalitung Yawa for the last time. His request is granted.

The Keeper of Light bids goodbye to his wife, at the same time advising her to obey whatever Labaw Donggon desires of her. He also puts her to sleep so that she cannot witness the bloody battle.

He gathers himself with all the powers that he can muster to stand his ground. Baranugon shoots him with a poisoned arrow. Saragnayan is hit in both eyes and gives a very loud cry. The force of his voice breaks the trees and the bamboo tops. The world trembles and darkens. This is the first earthquake and the first night.

When the fight is over, Baranugon and Asu Mangga look for their father in order to take him home. Labaw Donggon is gone. He cannot be located. The two brothers therefore proceed home, thinking that their father might have gone home ahead. But they find Labaw Donggon is not there.

Humadapnon and Dumalapdap, younger brothers of Labaw Donggon, join in the search for the lost chieftain. After several days, they find him hiding inside a fish trap near the shore of Saragnayan's domain where he has covered himself with a fishnet.

Humadapnon and Dumalapdap take Labaw Donggon home. The latter loses all his courage. His body is covered with long hair, and his ears are also covered with a strange-looking substance. He cannot hear anymore, and he is out of his mind.

Anggoy Doronoon and Anggoy Ginbitinan are at hand to receive their long-lost husband. Humadapnon requests his sister-in-law to

perform the necessary rituals and invoke all the powerful magic in order to bring Labaw Donggon back to himself again.

When Labaw Donggon recovers, he tells his brothers that Nagmalitung Yawa has two other beautiful sisters – Burigadang Pada Sinaklang Bulawan and Lubaylubyok Hanginon Mahuyukhuyukon. They set out anew to win these beautiful maidens.

**Humadapnon** – *This is one of the two cycles of the epic of Panay. It is the epic of the Sulod people near the headwaters of Jalaur (Halawod), Aklan and Antique. It is sung in Kiniray-a.*

EACH CYCLE centers on one of the two heroes: Labaw Donggon and Humadapnon, although in the Humadapnon cycle, Dumalapdap is an equally central figure.

In one of the versions, Humadapnon is the chief of the Sulod people. He has two brothers: Labaw Donggon and Dumalapdap. He goes on an eventful quest in search of Nagmalitung Yawa whom he wants to wed. The epic recounts how he wins, loses and wins her again which happens in seven-year intervals during which he passes through trials.

In another version, Labaw Donggon is a first generation hero, who is uncle to Humadapnon and Dumalapdap. Humadapnon dreams of a *binukot* named Tubigon Daligan-umis Kuyam-isan, who lives in a tower surrounded by bamboo thickets. He wants to seek her out. His mother, Anggoy Ginbitinan, protests, saying there are other binukots in their village. He is adamant. He prepares for a ten-year journey. His younger brother, Dumalapdap, insists on going with him.

The brothers sail from their home along the Halawod River. They are beset with difficulties when they reach the river, Mabkad, which is ruled by two *datus*: Mamang Mangalayo, the prince who occupies the upstream part of the river and Mamang Dumadakung Dagat, the ruler who occupies the mouth of the river. Humadapnon and Dumalapdap's sailing route is blocked. A battle ensues for days with Mangalayo. Humadapnon wins and they are allowed passage. Then, Dumadakung Dagat engages Humadapnon in an aerial battle which lasts for several days. Humadapnon weakens and asks for water from his eagle. Dumalapdap, seeing his brother weakened, flies to his rescue.

Meanwhile, along the river Makutay-kutay, Baranugon and his younger brother, Padanong Palinti, are having a drink. They are the sons of Labaw Donggon and cousins of Humadapnon and Dumalapdap. Padanong Palinti goes down the river to catch fish, only to find it overflowing with blood. His net catches a stranger's head. Thinking their cousins are in trouble, they rush to the scene of battle. Baranugon takes the place of Dumalapdap against Dumadakung Dagat and defeats him. Baranugon asks Dumalapdap to give him Tubigon Daligan who is Dumadakung Dagat's binukot in exchange for his sister, Nagmalitung Yawa. Dumalapdap refers him to Humadapnon, who consents.

Dumalapdap goes on his own journey to the house of Mamang Tumpong Langit, ruler of the river Mabun-ag. Finding him asleep, Humadapnon casts a sleeping spell over him and steals his binukot, Huyohuyong Adlaw. Later, when Tumpong Langit discovers this, he calls upon his brothers for aid and challenges Dumalapdap to combat. They fight for days and nights.

Meanwhile, Baranugon and Padanong Palinti reach the river, Maragkot, where Abyang Mangalayo, whom Humadapnon defeated, blocks their path. They fight and Mangalayo is killed. Baranugon claims the binukot but restrains himself since he has to attend to other obligations.

The two *datus* reach the place of Abyang Lumbanglantang at Mabun-ag River and threaten to kill him if he does not give up his binukot, Labi-labing Anyang. He does not resist. The two *datus* later reach Baliwagan River where they demand for the binukot, Layalaynga Sukla. Abyang Sumagogong gives her up without a fight. However, Sumagogong journeys to win the binukot Nagmalitung Yawa, Baranugon's sister. When Baranugon arrives, Sumagogong has already offered his bride price. When he realized that Sumagogong already has an edge over winning his sister's hand, Baranugon shapes dough from powdered rice to make a copy of Nagmalitung Yawa, then tells his sister to go to the Halawod River to their younger sister's place. The next day, Humadapnon presents his suit to Nagmalitung Yawa's mother, Matanayon, who favors Sumagogong. As Sumagogong was on their honeymoon, Baranugon tells Humadapnon that the real Nagmalitung Yawa is still his.

Back at Mamang Tumpong Langit's house, Dumalapdap weakens in his fight with Mamang Tumpong Langit. He asks for help from Humadapnon. Humadapnon goes to his aid, but it is their ancestors that settle the fight. Dumalapdap is grateful and tells Baranugon that his father, Labaw Donggon, is kept prisoner by Mamang Magtungub, a witch in a mountain cave. Dumalapdap, Humadapnon and Baranugon head for the Magtungub Cave fortress but find Labaw Donggon already a skeleton. They force Magtungub to restore him. The revived Labaw Donggon fights Magtungub in a battle that lasts for days where he wins with the help of his ancestors.

The *datus* sail home and pass by caves inhabited by fairies. Humadapnon is seduced and decides to stay. He is transformed into a witch and imprisoned by the fairies. Dumalapdap asks for aid from this mother, Anggoy Ginbitinan, to rescue him. All the binukots respond, but only Nagmalitung Yawa succeeds in opening the cave door. She kills all the fairies with her bolo. She also kills Humadapnon, but Anggoy Ginbitinan insists that she bring him back to life. Humadapnon is revived and they board their *biday* (vessel or sailboat) and sail home to Halawod River where they celebrate the wedding of Nagmalitung Yawa and Humadapnon.

*F. Landa Jocano*