

Sundayo Epic

SUBANON, ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE AND ZAMBOANGA DEL SUR PROVINCES, WESTERN MINDANAO ISLAND, SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES. This *guman* (epic) is a Subanon folk narrative. The *Sundayo* is sung during festive occasions like a *buklog*, a ritual feast, or a wake. It is chanted for a week from nine to ten in the evening to three in the morning. The epic has 6,455 lines, repetitious episodes and scenes involving endless fighting, journeying, ritual drinking and bouts of sleep. Magic is prolific.



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SONDAYO IS THE SON of Datu Salaria, the chief of Tubig Silayan, and his wife, Salaong. One day, while bathing in the magical streams of Silayan, Salaong felt heavy after dipping seven times, even if she is not pregnant. Upon returning home, she combs her hair to dry and from it, a child falls out. This was how Sundayo was born. A magical child, he matures very fast. Within a short period, he asks his parents' permission to go on a quest. His father gifts him with a mighty sword, while his mother provides him with beautiful raiments. However, a pigeon, *limmon*, gives him a dire warning not to embark on this journey. He ignores the warning and goes off flying on a magical scarf, *monsala*, into the center of the sun with the aid of lightning.

He encounters two *datus*, Daugbolawan and Lemolak, and causes their enchantment. After several days, he hears the sound of the pounding beat of a *buklog* festival which enticed him to go and join the festivities. He and the two *datus* go there in spite of a warning again by a *limmon*, the omen bird. While chewing on his betel-nut quid, *mama'*,

he dreams of two ladies, Bae Bolak Sunday and Benebong. In his dream, the ladies offer him their own *mama'*. He accepts that of Bolak Sunday and declines Benebong. In the festival, he actually meets the two ladies. A rivalry among the men ensues, especially when one of the *datus* was favored by the ladies. Sundayo becomes jealous and engages the *datu* in a duel that goes on for two years. Dire phenomena ensue when the waters dry out, forcing life there (like the giant eels) to seek refuge on land.

The deity, Asog, grows tired of witnessing the battle. On the third year, he intervenes and stops the fight. He reveals to them that they are brothers who both fell from the hair of Salaong. The two are reconciled and travel to Balatakan.

Sundayo invites his brother to visit their parents in Liyasan, but he refuses because he is the guardian of Balatakan. Sundayo puts him to an enchanted sleep, while he cuts off the hills of Balatakan and brings these to Liyasan. Thus, the brothers are reunited with their parents in a huge celebration.

(opposite page) A Subanon woman of Zamboanga dances to the accompaniment of a set of graduated gongs – *kulintang* – on the occasion of another unique ritual, the *buklog*, that is performed on a flexible platform.

Much later on, Datu Salaria asks Sodayo to accompany his cousins, Daugbolawan and Lemolak, to Manelangan. They intend to propose marriage to Bolak Sunday and Benebong. While traveling, they meet Ba'e Pigdindingan who confronts them. They kill her but revive her at night. Reaching Manelangan, they see that Bolak Sunday has many suitors. The parents of Bolak Sunday, however, demand so many gifts which the suitors could not provide. Sodayo, with his magic, is able to comply with all the demands for his cousin. They are finally accepted.

Datu Lumalab and the other datu engage them in battle. Sodayo leaves his spear to fight on its own, defeating the datu after several months of fighting. The cousins, using a golden bridge, return home bringing their wives.

Sodayo falls ill when he returns to Liyasan. He asks his magical scarf, *monsala*, to fetch Bolak Sunday and Benebong, but they arrive too late. Sodayo is already dead. Bolak Sunday looks for his spirit in the underworld, while Benebong searches the upper world. Three weeks pass but they could not find him. Benebong then searches the heavens, while Sunday focuses on earth. But still they fail. Finally, two birds tell them that they should search for Sodayo's soul in Tubig Piksiipan, where he is a captive of amazons. They ride on their own magical

monsala with the help of lightning. They fight the amazons for two months for Sodayo's spirit and defeat them. They wake Sodayo up from his deathly sleep and quench his thirst with the sweat of the sun which he asked for. They bring it to him in a golden cup then they all return home.

Disaster befalls Bolak Sunday when she cuts herself while preparing betel-nut quid. She dies. In return, Sodayo and his kindred search for her spirit.

The two birds again reveal that her spirit is in Katonawan, a prisoner of a datu. Sodayo battles the datu and frees the spirit of Sunday. He revives her and they both return to Liyasan where everyone celebrates.

Later, his cousins request for his assistance in obtaining the dowry needed for Datu Tulog to marry Lengotubig. He goes to Tubig Sumina. Sodayo, with his magic, obtains the dowry.

He returns to Liyasan. There, he dreams of a buklog being celebrated. He wakes and gets his kin and wives to go with him to join in the celebration. They ride their *monsala* to Manelangan where the buklog is being held. The buklog rises entirely to heaven and when it descends again, Sodayo and his relatives are not in it anymore. They have remained in heaven.

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