

The Legend of Kasapa II

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ABSTRACT

The Manobo people have an oral history called "The Legend of Kasapa II." It tells the story of how a peaceful realm became a land cursed and how it was eventually fixed. At the center of this story is the Baylan, a spiritual being whose role as a go-between for humans and gods underscores the importance of understanding rituals, developing psychic insight, and following group rules. The story tells of how the evil gods Silhiganon and Ligadanon caused many deaths, and the land was named Sapa, which means "curse." Even though neglect and fear have left scars on the land, it still stands. The Baylan brothers' defiance of the god Nangalindahaw, along with the spiritual fallout represented by Sisib and his dog, make this place unique. The most important person in the story is Datu Hawudon Kugbahan Tagleong Coguit. His Taephag practice restores balance, heals sick children, and, in a way, breaks the curse. The story uses vivid images and echoes of the past to show how resilient people are, how important it is to take spiritual responsibility, and how important cultural heritage is. In the end, it shows how Sapa changed into Kasapa II, a land made by pain, bravery, and return.

Keywords: Manobo oral tradition; Baylan; indigenous spirituality; sacred rituals; deities

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The Legend of Kasapa II

Before Kasapa II came to bear its full name, the land underwent harrowing days, drenched in bloodshed, where countless lives were lost in the struggle to survive. This land, once a peaceful and simple dwelling, eventually became the home of the Manobo tribe. Among them was a renowned Baylan, an individual gifted with the ability to commune with the gods, to understand the subtle signs of the spiritual world, and to predict events with an accuracy that left the tribe in awe. The Baylan's role was vital in keeping the clan safe. He alone could speak to the deities, decipher their intentions, and know the sacred steps necessary to protect their people and territory.

But one fateful day, the Baylan delivered dire news to his companions: two powerful deities from Homonhon—Silhiganon and Ligadanon—were approaching. *Silhiganon* derived its name from the Manobo word for a broom made of thin twigs, symbolizing a sweeping death that would follow his path. Wherever Silhiganon traveled, no life remained in his wake, as if death followed his every step, leaving entire villages wiped out with no trace. The very thought of his arrival struck terror into the hearts of the people.

Similarly, *Ligadanon*—whose name conveyed the sudden and mysterious deaths he brought—traveled from place to place without warning. When Ligadanon passed, people dropped dead instantly, with no illness or cause, dying in the middle of simple, everyday tasks: cooking rice, fetching water, or even sitting in quiet reflection. His presence was a harbinger of death itself.

The Baylan, with his deep connection to the spiritual world, warned his people of the impending arrival of these malevolent deities. He instructed them to perform the sacred *Taephag* ritual, hoping to shield them from the wrath of Silhiganon and Ligadanon. This ancient prayer was meant to protect the tribe, to invoke the gods' mercy, and to ward off evil forces. However, despite the warning, only a few followed Baylan's urgent counsel. Many of the villagers, skeptical of the Baylan's foresight, remained in their homes, unwilling to leave their land.

The Baylan, along with the Coguit and Sadae families, took shelter in a distant area known as Utukan, hoping to ride out the threat. After three days, they returned home only to be confronted by an unimaginable sight. Silence hung thick in the air, the kind of quiet that seemed to press down on their very souls. As they walked through the village, they discovered that everyone left behind had perished—lifeless bodies lay scattered across the land. The Baylan, devastated by the enormity of the disaster, declared the area cursed. The once-peaceful settlement was now known as *Sapa*, which, in the Manobo language, means "curse." It was a land too dangerous for humans to live in, and so the survivors fled.

The survivors resettled elsewhere, but the trauma of the tragedy weighed heavily upon them. The memory of the horror never left their hearts, and as time passed, the place that had once been home became nothing more than a barren, forsaken area. The land was left untouched by most, shrouded in fear and darkness.

Yet, over time, something remarkable happened. Despite the land's eerie, cursed reputation, the area became known for its abundant fishery. The river, called *Tagakupan*, was teeming with fish, and while few dared to remain, some brave souls came to fish and left quickly, unable to bear the oppressive atmosphere of the place. *Tagakupan* was named after the Manobo word *Akupanon*, meaning "plenty of fish," a testament to the river's fertility despite its ominous surroundings.

It was during this time that two Baylan siblings, hailing from the Umajamnon tribe, decided to venture into the cursed land. They were fearless, strong, and determined to prove themselves. They sought to hunt wild boar in the heart of the forest. After successfully

catching one, they decided to spend the night there, ignoring the foreboding warnings that surrounded the place. But as night fell, something unnatural occurred.

The sky turned red like blood, casting a malevolent glow over the forest. The ground beneath them trembled as though it, too, was alive. The siblings, though brave, felt a deep sense of unease, as if the very air had grown heavier, pressing down on their hearts. The wind, too, seemed to carry a message, whispering warnings that sent shivers down their spines. They decided to cover the boar with Agutoy leaves (wild banana leaves) in the shape of a human form, hoping to confuse any deity that might pass by.

Not long after, the air grew thick with tension. Something was coming, something dangerous. The siblings stood firm, gripping their spears tightly. From the dense shadows of the forest, *Nangalindahaw*, a malevolent deity from Minagba, emerged. The very sight of him sent terror through the siblings, but they did not falter. They were prepared to defend themselves.

When *Nangalindahaw* saw the wild banana leaves covering the boar, he charged toward it. But as he drew closer, he halted, hearing the call of the Limukon bird. The bird's song was a warning, a divine message that if he attacked, he would suffer great consequences. Three times the bird called, and three times *Nangalindahaw* paused, breathing deeply as if to regain his composure. But on the fourth call, he ignored the warning and pressed forward, determined to strike.

It was then that the Baylan siblings acted. They leaped from their hiding place, spearing *Nangalindahaw* at the same time. The battle that followed was fierce, a struggle between the gods and mortals. *Nangalindahaw*, enraged, fought back with unmatched strength. One of the Baylan siblings was thrust upstream to the Timbo River, while the other pressed on, fighting valiantly. The pursuit continued for miles, through the Timbo River and eventually down to the Dapot River. For thirty kilometers, they battled, each blow a testament to the determination and strength of both sides.

At last, *Nangalindahaw* grew weary. He stopped at the gates of Minagba, his body battered and broken. There, his family's mourning cries echoed in the air, marking his final moments. As he entered Minagba, the siblings heard the somber voice of *Sisib*, *Nangalindahaw*'s father, who uttered words of wisdom: "Do not be too proud, for every being has its equal and its end."

Years passed, and the descendants of Datu Hawudon Kugbahan Tagleong Coguit settled in the cursed land. Life was difficult, as the place remained haunted by the echoes of the past. Each afternoon, before the sun dipped below the horizon, the sound of *Sisib*'s enormous dog could be heard, its bark shaking the very air. The dog was said to be as large as a horse, and it roamed the land, its presence a constant reminder of the past.

Children were told to remain indoors before sunset, and only the Baylan and older people were allowed to venture out, as they were the only ones who could see the great dog and its owner, *Sisib*.

Sisib's anger was not to be taken lightly. The deities, displeased by the return of humans to the cursed land, unleashed their fury upon the children, afflicting them with debilitating illnesses that threatened their lives. In desperation, Datu Hawudon Kugbahan Tagleong Coguit traveled to Minagba, hoping that a prayer and ritual would heal the suffering children.

At Minagba, Datu Hawudon performed the *Taephag* ritual. The tribe slaughtered a large pig and cooked it as an offering to the deities. The ritual was powerful, and as the children were fed, they were miraculously healed. The curse that had once claimed the land was lifted, and the deities—Sisib included—relented.

Though the land was no longer cursed in the same way, its crops remained sparse, and the land was still not as fertile as before. Yet, Datu Hawudon, in his wisdom as a Baylan, had guided his people through the trials. The place that was once known as *Sapa*—the cursed land—was now called *Kasapa II*. The name carried the legacy of its dark past but also symbolized a new beginning.

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