

Maranao Epics: Darangen

In Filipino epics, Pre-colonial and Colonial Times

Darangen, which is written in Maranao (Maranaw) language narrates the heroic feats of the **Maguindanao people**—highlighting the bravery and prowess of the skilled Moro warriors. Dr. Frank Laubach, an English scholar discovered the wealth of the Maranao epics in 1930, after spending two days with 2 leading Maranaos who chanted and sung the epics all day and night.

Darangen consists of several episodes, and three of these have been translated and have grown in popularity: Bantugan, Daramako-e Babay, and Indarapatra and Sulayman. Bantugan is fabled as “the ancestor of them all.”

- **Bantugan**

Bantugan revolves around the life of Prince Bantugan, brother of **King Madali**, the ruler of **Bumbaran**. The poem opens with:

“Today there is something which gives the lovely King of Bumbaran a severe case of the blues.”- F. Laubach). It is said that while Madali won many battles, Bantugan won many hearts for the younger brother is not only a marvelous fighter but also handsome and popular. He has courted 50 of the loveliest princess in the world but the King does not allow him to marry. His popularity later makes the older brother, Madali jealous. He decrees that nobody shall ever be allowed to speak with his brother. Driven by loneliness, the Prince leaves for foreign lands. The wandering Bantugan eventually falls ill and dies at the **Palace Gates of The-Land-Between-Two-Seas**. Not knowing who this stranger is, the ruler of the place and his sister **Princess Datimbang** (Timbang) give shelter to the poor prince.

Not knowing what to do, and fearing that the prince’s death is of their doing, they summon the council to discuss what has to be done. A parrot (loro) flies in and identifies the handsome man as Prince Bantugan of Bumbaran. He is then sent home to Bumbaran to tell King Madali of his brother’s fate. Upon learning this, the King leaves and journeys to the heavens. He speaks with the gods and bargains for his brother’s soul to be returned to earth. Meanwhile, Princess Datimbang brings Prince Bantugan’s body to Bumbaran. Upon King Madali’s return, Bantugan’s life has been restored and the king soon has a change of heart.

King Madali, overjoyed that his younger brother Bantugan has been brought back to life, calls for a celebration. But the story of his return has already spread, and unknown to them, King Madali’s rival, King **Miskoyaw** has sent his army for a siege.

A battle takes place and Bantugan defends his people. However, Bantugan who has just been restored is eventually captured. It is said that he later regains his strength while held captive, and avenges his warrior's death. Another celebration is held for this victory. The people of Bumbaran feasted and King Madali welcomes his brother back. Bantugan gets married with the loveliest princesses and lives happily in Bumbaran for several years.

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Daramoke-a-Babay

Daramoke-a-Babay is a sequel to Bantugan. It recounts the bravery and might Bantugan. In the battles, no one equals his courage and fighting skills.

- **Indarapatra at Sulayman**

A just, wise, and kind ruler, Indarapatra of the **Mantapuli Empire** is known as the greatest of all kings. He is known to own an enchanted spear (sibat) which comes back to him as he wishes. He has taught his subjects how to farm, hunt for food, domesticate animals, fish, weave, and use plants as medicines. For many years they lived and prospered.

But their peace is broken by the news of the four terrible monsters that threaten the lives and brings havoc to a nearby region. It is said that these monsters-**Kurita, Pah, Tarabusaw** and another dreadful bird haunting Mt. **Kurayan**- devoured human beings as they wanted. Death and destruction reign in the region, and the few people who live there lived in fear. Moved with pity and compassion for what has happened to their neighbors, Indarapatra calls his brother, Prince Sulayman for help. When Sulayman hears the story, he promises to help the people, kill the monsters, and "the land shall be avenged." King Indarapatra wishes his brother a safe and victorious journey and gives him a ring and sword.

In Mt. Bitan, Sulayman slays the dreadful bird but unfortunately, its wing has fallen on him and crushed him. The news reaches King Indarapatra and leaves for his brother and to seek revenge. Upon waking up, Sulayman recounts what has befallen him. Meanwhile, Indarapatra continues with the promise of killing the horrible monsters and restoring peace in the land. In Mt. Kurayan (Gurayan) he kills the fourth monster. In his stay at this place, he chances upon a maiden (who happens to be a goddess or diwata). The maiden captures his heart and Indarapatra decides to marry her. There, he lives and rules over the vast kingdom.

(Although in some versions of the story, Indarapatra meets her while searching for the monster, and not after the battle. Further, the goddess disguises herself as an old woman; never leaving Indarapatra even as he battles with the monster.)

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