

# Sandayo: Using Magic to Defeat the Foe

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March 23, 2001

Finley, an American lieutenant-colonel who, in 1904, apparently put up the barter trade system in Zamboanga, observed a marked “lack of warlike instincts” in the Subanon, adding that “probably they could not have withstood the aggressive control of outside forces but for the fact that as this pressure became more and more persistent the Subanu moved farther and farther into the inaccessible interior.” (Finley 13)

By all accounts, the Subanons had a more stratified society than the Livunganen-Arumanens. Even their Sandayo yields *tinoyobos* and *obos*, or *aliping namamahay*, unlike the Ulahingan, which mentions none of the kind. Laviña relates that in a research done in Lapuyan, Zamboanga del Sur among the Sibuguey Subanon, each *balangay* was headed by a datu, under whom were *timuays* who handled the villages and acted as advisers to the datu. Among the *timuays* a *timuay-langhap* or vice datu was chosen. Each *timuay* had a right-hand man called *sulong* or *pagulima*. Only members of the royal families or *dlunan* could succeed to the titles of datu, *timuay*, or *sulong*. No slave, however wise or eloquent, could attain the rank. The eldest son got it, provided he exhibited great wisdom. And he had to continually prove that wisdom, for his sustained leadership over his people depended not by force of arms but by might of intellect. As Laviña emphasizes, “The Subanon, as a people, were peaceful. They were not reared for offense. To them, engagement in war was a grievous sin and a crime.” (Laviña 37-41)

It is worth noting that the early Subanons were supposed to have engaged only in the *binal* or *kaingin* method of agriculture. (Laviña 37) However, today, as the CCP Encyclopedia relates, they already practice wet agriculture with plow and carabao to produce their staple, rice; dry agriculture; and swidden farming. They also produce coconuts alongside rice in the coastal areas, corn further inland, and root crops such as camote, cassava, gabi and ubi; and in some areas, even tobacco. Fishing, hunting and food-gathering supplement their income. They have also been known to grow hemp or abaca, using the fiber to make ropes or cloth, or for trade. (CCP 284-5)

All these products, including rattan baskets, fine mats, sinamay cloth, beeswax and cotton were traded with Chinese jars, aluminum kitchen utensils, and silks beginning in the 10<sup>th</sup> century, during the Mongol rule in South China. (Laviña 46) It could have been these centuries of trade with the Chinese that encouraged productivity among the Subanons, and consequently, a transition into a more complex economic system, a transition that was aided by the existence of a more complex political system – one that included *tinoyobos* or *aliping namamahay* at the very least, thereby freeing a class for rulership and another for productive work.

Geography also helped the Subanons gain relative productivity. The CCP map of their present domiciles will show that while they moved inland, they always kept touch

with the shoreline. They therefore had the advantage of the natural fortresses of the forest fastnesses, even as they could go back and forth to the coast to trade.

Thus, even if their old ways were unexpectedly threatened by the coming of the Muslims who tried to force them to renounce their native forms of worship, (Laviña 62) many of them were able to retain their identity without having to engage in extensive war, thereby extending rather than contracting their economy in the process. Those who were not able to resist the Islamic faith came to be known as Kalibugans, so-called because of the intermarriage between Samal, Ilanun or Maguindanao fishermen with Subanon girls, starting settlements on the coastlines of Subanon upland country. Upland Subanon who were caught by the Moslems became slaves or were subjected to peonage, but coastal Subanons who intermarried with Moslems but never quite assimilated the Muslim faith were derisively called Kalibugans. (Finley 13-5) Therefore, while outcasts of both cultures, they nevertheless provided a bridge between the two.

All these data explain the magical elements in the Sandayo, as well as in the Keboklogan and Guman. Far from warlike, the Subanons invented in their minds their weapons of concourse with each other: the *monsala* or flying scarf, the golden thread that serves as a bridge from one house to another, pinching people into finger rings to save them from the enemy. For their houses were not only set mountains apart, their settlements were also eventually cut off from each other over the entire length of the Zamboanga archipelago. They needed such magical instruments to maintain their indigenous identity in the face of the cultural invasions of the Muslims, and in the light of their own military incapability.

In contrast to the Ulahingan, where fighting still goes on in the paradise Nelendangan, Sandayo and his royal family ascend to their ninth heaven only after the two fight scenes, borne up by their *buklog*, singing and dancing, and *nganga*, shedding, along the way, their obo and *sampilakan*, or aliping namamahay, who fall back to earth together with the buklog. Not relishing war, the Subanons invent a pure heaven, absolutely without the fighting the warlike Livunganen-Arumanens have to do all their immortal lives:

Lahat ng datu at bae  
Doon maninirahan,  
Hindi na sila lilisan,  
Pagkat wala nang iba pang  
Angkop na tahanan,  
Kundi itong daigdig na walang hanggan  
Na ang naghahari'y kaligayahan.

#### References

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