

Huminodun

The Mystical Origin of the Kadazandusun People

Sources: after a text by Benedict Topin (Kadazandusun Cultural Association), and with excerpts from 'Traditional Stone and Wood Monuments of Sabah', by Peter R Phelan



First, there was nothing but Kinoingan and Sumundu . Together, they created man and the universe, the earth, and everything seen and unseen, known and unknown.

In the beginning, all was well in the Heavens, and the world was pure and beautiful. But one day, Ponompulan, Kinoingan's son, rebelled against his divine father, and he corrupted the hearts and minds of the humans on earth.

Disappointed and angry, Kinoingan banished Ponompulan from the Heavens and cast him to Kolungkud . Then, to punish mankind for their sinful ways, Kinoingan sent seven plagues. The last plague was a severe draught, and famine threatened to destroy every living being on earth.

But at last, the people on earth realised their sin, and turned back to Kinoingan, to ask for forgiveness. Ponompulan, Kinoingan's only daughter, entreated her father's mercy to forgive the people of the world and consented to Kinoingan's proposal that she be sacrificed, as a symbol of the greatest love of all.

Kinoingan sacrificed His only daughter so that the people could have food. Her body parts were planted as seeds and became the food resource of the world: rice. Ponompulan's spirit dwells in the paddy, and is the seven-in-one Bambaazon (Bambarayon), the spirit of the paddy. Red rice is the most sacred of all, because it was from the flesh of Ponompulan.

Ponompulan, who is often called Huminodun, is in essence the soul of the paddy. During harvesting time, the Bobohizans (Bobolians) usher the seven-in-one soul of Bambaazon to dwell in the Tangkob (Toguruon), at home, until the next planting season is due.

Bambaazon is embodied in every part of the paddy and its related products. During the course of its seasons it is inevitable that the paddy is damaged, be it naturally, unintentionally, innocently or through abuse and neglect. Also, during the harvest itself, parts of the spiritual components of Bambaazon are separated. Thus, it is of utmost importance that immediately after the harvest Bambaazon's dispersed mystical spirits are collected by the spiritual specialists, brought home, reunited, healed and appeased.

The Bobohizans perform the Magavau, Modsuut and Humabot Ceremonies, travelling through the different levels of the spiritual world to rescue the severed and strayed Bambaazon. Whole again, Bambaazon will ensure that the next harvest is equally bountiful.

To thank Kinoingan for Bambaazon's gift of a good harvest, the Pesta Ka'amatan (Harvest Festival) is held. The Kadazans forgive each other, restore and strengthen peace and harmony – not only on a worldly level, but also between nature and the spiritual world – and play the gongs, sing songs and dance to the ancient rhythm of life.

To commemorate the greatest love of all, Kinoingan's sacrifice of His only daughter, the Kadazans idolise Huminodun and select the Unduk Ngadau (lit: zenith of the sun; Harvest Beauty Queen) in order to remember that Ponompulan was perfect: she was of total beauty of the heart, mind soul and body.

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