More than 40 different ethnic groups can be found in the Philippines. There are 18 tribal groups on the island of Mindanao. The most well known is the T'boli Tribe.

A T'boli legend tells that the T'boli are descendants of the survivors of a great flood. A man named Dwata warned...
the people of an impending great flood. But the tribe refused to listen, except for two couples, La Bebe and La Lomi, and Tamfeles and La Kagef. Dwata told them to take shelter in a bamboo so huge they could fit inside and in this way survive the flood. The story tells that the first couple are the ancestors of the Tboli and other highland ethnic groups. The second couple descended the other Filipino indigenous groups.

The Tboli culture is richly connected with and inspired by nature, their dances are a mimick from the action of animals such as monkeys and birds. The Tboli have a rich musical culture with a variety of musical instruments, but the Tboli music and songs are not meant for entertainment only. The Tribal songs are a living contact with their ancestors and a source of ancient wisdom. The Tboli believe that everything has a spirit which must be respected for good fortune. Bad spirits can cause illness and misfortune.

The Tnalak, the Tboli sacred cloth, made from abaca is the best known Tboli craft and is one of the tribes traditional textile, this cloth is exchanged during marriages and used as a cover during births. The Tboli women are named dreamweavers, another legend tells us that the Tnalak weaving was taught by a goddess named Fu Dalu in a dream and that women learn this ethnic and sacred ritual, based on tribal designs and cloth patterns through their dreams. These unique patterns are made with centuries-old practices and passed down from generation to generation. This typical Tboli textile is history held in the hands of their makers and the rich cultural heritage can be seen through their creations, it shows the tribe's collective imagination and cultural meanings.

The weaving is a very tedious job and requires much patience, a lot of creativity and a good memory to remember the particular designs. Men are not allowed to touch the chosen abaca fiber and materials used in the weaving process and the weaver should not mate with her husband in the time the cloth is woven, for it may break the fiber and destroy the design. At present the T'nalak products have become the signature product of the province of South Cotabato.

When visiting the friendly Tboli tribe in South Cotabato you will be in the midst of a distinctive and very well preserved culture that is keeping their characteristic, ancient traditions alive. A visit that will be an unforgettable and inspiring experience!
Mindanao, Tboli girl
Mindanao, female Tboli musicians
Mindanao, Tboli tribal dance
Mindanao, Tboli musicians

Mindanao, young Tboli girl

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