
THE ADAM AND EVE OF THE ILOCANOS

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With the possible exception of Lam-ang and Kannyoyan, hero and heroine of the Ilocano epic, perhaps there are no more famous characters in Ilocano saga than Añgalo¹⁾ and Aran²⁾, cyclopean beings who, according to some Ilocano myths, were the first beings on earth.³⁾

1) Aolo, name of a legendary hero represented in Tagalog saga as a "mighty fisher for sharks, whose net is so large that weights as big as mortars are needed to sink it," is believed to be a corruption of the word Añgalo. See *Filipino Popular Tales*, by Dean S. Fansler, p. 27. Published by the American Folklore Society. G. E. Stechert and Co., New York. Añgalo, an Ilocano word, is now popularly applied to persons of huge proportions.

2) This is the name most popular among the people. See *El Folklore Filipino*, by Isabelo de los Reyes, vol 1, pp. 51-56, Manila, 1890. Añgararab is another name. See *Some Fragments of the Añgalo Legend*, by Herminio A. Figueras, *Philippine Magazine*, March 1934.

3) Ferdinand Blumentritt says: "Añgalo is the name of the Adam of the Ilocanos. He was a giant who created the world at the order of the Supreme God." See *Filipino Popular Tales* op. cit., p. 426. Isabelo de los Reyes says: "Según esta tradición, Añgalo y Aran fueron los primeros hombres, y quizás los padres de los demas, como Adan y Eva." See *El Folklore Filipino*, op. cit., p. 53.

Añgalo and Aran, popular beliefs say, lived before the creation of the sky, the sea, the land, and, for that matter, man. They were beings, with human form, of formidable proportions. They are believed to be the biggest giants in legend. Añgalo's head reached the heavens, and he could make the distance between Manila and Vigan in one step.⁴ The earth trembled when he walked, and he could be heard throughout the world when he spoke or laughed.

Añgalo created the world at the command of the supreme god.⁵ Who this god was, the legends don't mention.⁶ In the beginning the earth was all plain; there were no seas, no mountains, no hills, no valleys. Añgalo dug the earth with his fingers, and with the earth he extracted, he formed the present mountains and hills. He urinated into the bigger and deeper holes and they became the present oceans and seas. He spat and the sputum became the first man and woman. He put them in a bamboo tube, sealed the tube, and cast it into the sea. The tube was tossed on the waves to the Ilocos shore, and the man and woman came out of it and lived in the Ilocos.⁷ Then he put up the sky, the sun, the moon, and arranged the stars.

There are some points of resemblance between Añgalo and Aran and some Japanese and Scandinavian mythological heroes and heroines. For example we read in the *Nibongi*: "When about to give birth to the Fire-God, Kagu tsuchi, Izanami no Mikoto became feverish and ill. In consequence she vomitted, and the vomit became changed to a god, who was called Kana-yama-hiko. Next her urine became changed into a goddess, who was called Midzu-ha-no-me. Next her excrement was changed into a goddess, who was called Hani-yama-hime."⁸

And the Scandinavian mythology: "These three gods (Odin, Vili, Ve) slew the giant Ymir, and out of his body formed the heavens and the earth: from his flesh the earth, from his blood the sea, from his bones the mountains,

4) See *El Folklore Filipino*, op. cit., p. 52.

5) See Footnote No. 3.

6) Isabelo de los Reyes says: "Añgalo fue el Creador, segun la tradicion Ilocana, pero de orden de un Dios cuyo nombre se ignora, y no hay noticia de que fuera objeto de culto de los Ilocanos." See *El Folklore Filipino*, op. cit., p. 54.

7) From Ferdinand Blumentritt to Isabelo de los Reyes: "No solo las Visayas sino tambien otros pueblos de la raza Malaya, dicen que los primeros hombres salieron de un trozo de caña ó bambú. Así los indigenas de las Islas de Montawei (O. de Sumatra), los naturales de la parte SE. de Borneo (Pasir), los de Holontalo y las alfuros de la Minahassa . . . los indigenas de la isla Kabroeang ó Abotean (grupo Talaar entre Celebes y Filipinas) cuentan que el primer hombre fue Hoera Boelauro (Hura Bulao). Este cortó en el monte un bejuco ú rutang, y en este bejuco halló a un hombre y una mujer, de quienes proceden dichos insulares. Segun la conseja, los reyes de los alfuros de la isla de Ceram traen su origen de arboles. . . . Algunas tribus de los indigenas de Amboyna descendian de trozos de bambú, otros de caimanes ó aguilas." *Ibid.* p. 55.

8) See *Nbongi*, vol. 1, "Age of the Gods," p. 21. Translated from the original Chinese and Japanese by W. G. Aston, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co., London 1896.

from his hair the trees, and from his skull the sky . . . From the sparks that Muspellsheim (a word of light and warmth) sent forth, the tree gods made stars to illumine the earth, and set them in the sky; and there too they placed the sun and the moon and set a course for them."⁹⁾

There is a divergence of belief as to the place of origin of Añgalo and Anan. Some Ilocano legends say that they came from a land near the south pole inhabited by giants.¹⁰⁾ They had three daughters who were not as big as they were. According to one story, Añgalo and Aran, in one of their wanderings about the earth, came upon an enormous treasure of pearls in the Sulu Sea, which they collected in their bags. When they were in what is now the Visayan islands, they quarreled over the pearls. It was a terrible struggle which shook the earth to its foundations. The land broke up into many parts, some of which subsided beneath the sea. Hence the great number of islands in the Visayas.

In some legends this mythological hero is represented, not as a creator, nor as an Adam, but as a great fisherman.¹¹⁾ In others he is represented as the son of the god of building,¹²⁾ and in others merely as a wanderer over the face of the earth, looking for his lost sweetheart.

That the sea became salty was due to Añgalo, according to Ilocano legend. In the beginning the sea, whose water was Añgalo's urine, was not salty. The story is told that he, his wife, and their three daughters, while carrying salt to Manila from a land across the sea, stumbled with their loads of salt in the middle of the sea, and since then the sea has been salty.¹³⁾

Another story is told this way.¹⁴⁾ Añgalo, son of the god of building, who lived shortly after the creation of the world, one morning spied across the sea, from his loftiest cave in the Ilocos Mountains at a beautiful maiden named Sipñiget, goddess of the dark. Sipñiget beckoned to him and he waded across the sea to her, his foot-prints becoming the present deep caverns of the ocean. Sipñiget told him she was tired of her kingdom of darkness, and requested him to build a mansion, white as snow, on the very spot where they were then standing. He acceded to her request and, as he did not know of anything as white as snow except salt, asked Asin, ruler of the kingdom of salt, for help. Millions of people were employed in the making and

9) See *Myths and Their Meaning*, by Max J. Herzberg, pp. 358-359. Allyn and Bacon, New York, 1931.

10) See *Some Fragments of the Añgalo Legend*, op. cit.

11) See *The Mountain Face*, by Ceferino F. Cariño, *Philippine Magazine*, May, 1933, and *Filipino Popular Tales*, op. cit., p. 27.

12) See "*Why the Sea is Salty*," by José M. Paredes, in *Filipino Popular Tales*, op. cit., pp. 425-426.

13) See *El Folklore Filipino*, op. cit., p. 52.

14) See "*Why the Sea is Salty*," op. cit., p. 52.

transporting of the bricks of salt across the ocean and in the construction of the edifice. But as the work progressed, Ocean became more and more impatient for being disturbed in her deep slumber and finally sent forth big waves to demolish the edifice, which crumbled and dissolved in the water. Hence the salty sea.

Añgalo and Aran and their children settled and lived for some time in the Ilocos. The caves in the mountains were their places of abode.¹⁵⁾ One such cave is in Abra, said to be that of Aran, which is believed to be connected by a tunnel to another cave somewhere in Cagayan.¹⁶⁾ Another is in Sinit, Ilocos Sur, called Balay ni Aran (Cave of Aran), in the little barrio of Marnay, near the foot of the Ilocos Mountains. This cave, according to stories related to the writer by persons who have entered it, is as big as the Manila Cathedral, but it has a very narrow opening. Aran and her three daughters lived here when she was not on good terms with her husband. It is said to be inhabited by snakes, bats, and evil spirits, who guard the supposed treasure stored in it.

A version of the story which departs considerably from the common narrative represents Añgalo, as a lonely lover who had been betrayed and deserted by his sweetheart, and had taken up the job of a fisherman in the hope of finding her and taking her to wife.¹⁷⁾ He had left home on a ship which had been wrecked in the sea, and was stranded, the lone survivor, on the shore of the Ilocos. He helped the people in their fishing to divert his sorrows, and slew a sea-monster which had killed many people annually. His young friends had sweethearts; he alone had none. In memory of his faithless sweetheart, he carved a big image of her on the side of the mountain near the Banawang Gap, on the Abra River, and he loved to gaze at it when he came home from his fishing trips. Towards the end of the fishing season, seeing that if he stayed longer the people would have no more food left (he was a voracious eater), he set out to sea to return no more. The mountain on which the huge image was carved is today popularly known as Bantay Mataan—the mountain with eyes.

Several other stories are told about this giant. One is that while his daughters, who were poor swimmers, were bathing in what is now the China Sea, they got into very deep water and were about to be drowned when Añgalo came to their rescue by dipping his *baag* (similar to a G-string) in the sea. The *baag* absorbed a considerable amount of the water, making the sea shallower. Another story is to the effect that what is now Abra was formerly a lake, but that, in a fit of anger at his wife, Añgalo kicked away

15) This is out of scale. Such big giants as Añgalo and Aran, whose heads were supposed to touch the heavens, certainly could not live in caves in mountains.

16) See *El Folklore Filipino*, op. cit., 53-54.

17) See *The Mountain Face*, op. cit.

a part of the Ilocos Mountains, draining all the water of the lake into the China Sea. The opening is the Banawang Gap, a deep chasm in the Ilocos Mountains through which the Abra River bursts on its tortuous seaward course. A different version of the story states that the opening was caused by the unintentional kicking of Añgalo when he was sleeping one night on the Ilocos Mountains.¹⁸⁾

There are said to be in the Ilocos, in Pangasinan, and in Cagayan some big "footprints," suggesting those of a gigantic human being's, attributed to Añgalo. One is in the mountains of Pangasinan, one in Cagayan, one on Bangbang near the Banawang Gap, one on Mount Bullagaw in the Ilocos Mountains, and one at Pinsal Falls, Santa Maria, Illocos Sur. The Tagalogs say there are similar footprints in the Mariveles and San Mateo Mountains.¹⁹⁾ Footprints like these have also been imagined in other parts of the world, particularly in China and Malaysia.²⁰⁾

How long Añgalo, Aran, and their children stayed in the Ilocos, is not known. Some stories say they lived there to the end of their lives, some say they returned to their land in the west or in the south after a number of years, and some say they perished at the north pole on one of their wanderings in that land of perpetual snow.

These cyclopean beings are said to have lived thousands of years ago, but they are still popular among the Ilocanos today. Besides their caves and footprints, there are other reminders of their stay in the region. It is told that even today, the spirits of the giant couple, especially that of Añgalo, still haunt the region, particularly the country around the Banawang Gap, working havoc and destruction among the people.

The people living near the Cave of Aran, in Marnay, Sinit, Ilocos Sur, say that on moonlit nights, about the midnight hour, they will sometimes see a big apparition, in the form of a woman, standing motionless in front of the cave. On dark nights they sometimes hear a weird, unearthly wailing about the cave. It is, they say, the spirit of Aran shouting curses upon the inhabitants. A child may be taken ill the next day and if his parents are unable to propitiate the irate spirit by means of a *panyang*²¹⁾ or some other offering, the child dies in a few days.

The spirit of Añgalo which, according to the inhabitants near the Banawang Gap, haunts the region, has the power to assume any form it pleases. "It may appear to any one", one writer says, "in the form of a white bird,

18) See *Some Fragments of the Añgalo Legend*, op. cit.

19) See *El Folklore Filipino*, op. cit., p. 53.

20) In a letter to Isabelo de los Reyes, Ferdinand Blumentritt says: „Huellas de dioses, demonios, y gigantes, como las de Añgalo, se encuentran en todo el mundo." See *El Folklore Filipino*, op. cit., p. 55.

21) An offering of food and prayers to the evil spirits.

in the shape of a beast, or in the guise of an extended piece of cloth. It may take the form of a headless priest, or of a man fishing by the river bank. It may be a beautiful woman sitting quietly on a large boulder, in the cool moonlight. Or it may merely be a piece of live charcoal, leaping and dancing in the dark, lonely wood at night."²²⁾

If you happen to see any of these forms, be careful not to incur its ill-humor, for woe to him who does so. The curse of Añgalo will surely fall upon you. But this was not formerly the case. In earlier days, the old inhabitants of the place will tell you, the spirit of Añgalo was not so vindictive as now. It was only about twenty ears ago that his spirit became revengeful. The change came about this way.²³⁾ (Myth-making has not ceased.)

In 1915 or thereabouts, Vigan and its environs were alarmed by the mysterious disappearance of little children. This was attributed to a gang of men called Kumaw (kidnappers), who were believed to have been assigned by some evil spirit to this evil work. The kidnapped children were not returned to their parents because, according to the natives, they were killed for their blood, which was precious to the spirits. The inhabitants took immediate steps to catch the culprits and inflict upon them the punishment they richly deserved. One day they saw a strange-looking man in the streets of Vigan, and they went in hot pursuit after him. The stranger fled to the Banawang Gap and sought refuge in a dense thicket on the bank. His pursuers fired several pistol shots at the place where he had disappeared, and one of the bullets must have hit him, for they heard a blood-curdling, hair-raising wailing, like that of a man dying in extreme anguish. They considered too late that the stranger was the spirit of Añgalo in human form! They had incurred his eternal hatred.

From then on the gap has been exacting its yearly toll of human life. There has not been a year but has witnessed an accident in the gap. Not less than fifty persons have been drowned in its angry waters, and not less than ten trucks and automobiles have been destroyed in accidents there during the last twenty years. The Banawang Gap is now commonly referred to as the deathhole of the Ilocos.

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22) See *The Deathhole of the Ilocos*, by Marcelino Tongson, *Graphic*, December 29, 1932.

23) *Ibid.*