

**THE JOURNAL OF
AMERICAN FOLK-LORE,
VOL. XXVI, PP. 13-59**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649013449

The Journal of American Folk-lore, Vol. XXVI, pp. 13-59 by Various

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

VARIOUS

**THE JOURNAL OF
AMERICAN FOLK-LORE,
VOL. XXVI, PP. 13-59**

THE JOURNAL OF
AMERICAN FOLK-LORE

VOLUME XXVI



LANCASTER, PA., AND NEW YORK

Published for the American Folk-Lore Society

G. E. STECHERT & CO., AGENTS

NEW YORK: 151-155 WEST 25TH STREET

PARIS: 76 RUE DE RENNES

LONDON: DAVID NUTT, 57, 59 LONG ACRE

LEIPZIG: OTTO HARRASSOWITZ, QUERSTRASSE, 14

MDCCCXIII

BAGOBO MYTHS

BY LAURA WATSON BENEDICT

THE following stories were obtained from the Bagobo people, one of the groups of pagan Malays in southeastern Mindanao, Philippine Islands. Their habitat is on the eastern folds of the Cabañangan mountain-range, in the vicinity of Mount Apo, the highest peak, and on the foothills thence sloping down to the west coast of the Gulf of Davao. They practise a primitive agriculture—raising corn, rice, camotes, and several vegetables—in fields and little gardens at the edge of the forests. Their garments are of home-grown hemp; and their artistic interests centre largely around the decorative designs produced in dyeing, weaving, and embroidery.

In spite of physical barriers interposed by mountain-spurs, frequent swift-flowing rivers, and dense undergrowth in the forests, there is considerable intercourse between the small villages, each of which contains from two to twenty or more houses. The people take long journeys on horse and on foot over the trails to assemble at ceremonial festivals and for purposes of trade, as well as for social visiting. On such occasions, stories and songs are repeated.

That the component parts of the stories have been drawn from numerous and widely separated sources, is apparent, even at a cursory glance. Among these sources, the folk-lore material of Sanscrit writers seems to have left a distinctive impress upon the Bagobo mythical romance. Against a Malay background, and blended with native pagan elements, are presented chains of episodes, characteristic personalities, methods for securing a magical control of the situation, that suggest vividly parallel literary forms in the Sanscrit saga. Still more, one is conscious of a prevailing Indian atmosphere, that may sometimes elude analysis, yet none the less fails not to make itself felt. But as to the line of ethnic contacts which has transfused this peculiar literary quality into Malay myth,—whether it is to be traced solely to the influence exerted by Hindoo religion and Hindoo literature during ages of domination in the Malay archipelago, or whether we must reconsider the hypothesis of an Indonesian migration,—this is a problem of great complexity, for which no satisfactory solution has yet been offered.

Modern foreign increments that have filtered into the stories from the folk-lore of neighboring wild tribes—notably that of the Bilan, the Tagacolo, and, to a less extent, the Culaman and Ata—will have to be sifted out eventually. In illustration of this point, one tale known to be outside of Bagobo sources is here introduced. The story of "Alelù'k

and Alëbū'tud" was told by an Ata boy to a Bagobo at the coast, who immediately related it to me. It was unquestionably passed on in Bagobo circles, and has become a permanent accession. Yet this was the sole case that came under my observation of a social visit made by an Ata in a Bagobo house; for the Ata live far to the north-west of the Bagobo, and are extremely timid, and "wild" in the popular sense. Recent ethnic influences from higher peoples, pre-eminently the Moro and the Spaniard, will have to be reckoned with. The story of "The Monkey and the Turtle" is clearly modified from a Spanish source.

The myths here presented include only those of which no texts were recorded. A part of the material was given in the vernacular and interpreted by a Bagobo; a part was told in English, or in mixed English and Bagobo. The stories were taken down in 1907, on Mount Merar in the district of Talua, and at Santa Cruz on the coast.

As regards subject-matter, the stories (*itwan*¹) tend to cluster into groups fairly distinguishable in type. Foremost in significance for the cultural tradition of the people is the *ulii*, a long, romantic tale relating in highly picturesque language the adventures of the mythical Bagobo, who lived somewhere back in the hazy past, before existing conditions were established. Semi-divine some of them were, or men possessing magical power. The old Mona people; the Malaki, who portrayed the Bagobo's ideal of manhood; and the noble lady called Bia, — these and other well-marked characters figure in the *ulii*.

Another class of stories deals with the demons known as Buso, who haunt graveyards, forests, and rocks. These tales have been built up by numerous accretions from the folk-lore of many generations. The fear of Buso is an ever-present element in the mental associations of the Bagobo, and a definite factor in shaping ritual forms and magical usages. But the story-teller delights to represent Buso as tricked, fooled, brought into embarrassing situations.

Still another type of myth is associated with cosmogony and natural phenomena. It is probable that more extended research would disclose a complete cosmogonic myth to replace the somewhat fragmentary material here offered.

The number of explanatory animal tales thus far collected is surprisingly small. Doubtless there are many more to be gathered. Yet, in view of the comparatively scanty mammalian fauna of Mindanao, we might anticipate a somewhat limited range of animal subjects.

It will be observed that these groups of stories, tentatively thus classified for convenience, are not separated by sharp lines. Buso figures prominently in the *ulii*; animals play the part of heroes in Buso tales; while in nature myths the traditional Mona are more or

¹ The general name for a story, of whatever type.

less closely associated with the shifting of sky and sun. But this is merely equivalent to saying that all the tales hang together.

A word as to the form of the stories and the manner of narration. Here we find two distinct styles dependent on the content of the myth. The tales of animals, cosmogonic myths, and the folk-lore of Buso, are all told in prose, with many inflections of the voice, and often accompanied by an animated play of dramatic gesture. In marked contrast is the style of the mythical romance, or *ulit*, which is recited in a rapid monotone, without change of pitch, with no gestures, and with a regard to accent and quantity that gives a rhythmic swing suggestive of a metrical rendering.

Although Bagobo songs are often designated as men's songs and women's songs, in the case of the stories I have found as yet no monopoly by either sex of any special type. The *ulit*, however, is often told by a young woman just after she leaves the loom, when darkness drops. She sits on the floor, or lies on her back with hands clasped behind her head, and pours out her story in an unbroken flow to the eager young men and girls who gather to listen. Again, I have seen a girl of thirteen the sole auditor while a boy but little older than she rolled off an *ulit* that seemed interminable, with never a pause for breath. The children did not glance at each other; but the face of each was all alight with joy at the tale.

I. MYTHS ASSOCIATED WITH NATURAL PHENOMENA

I. COSMOGONY

In the beginning, Diwata¹ made the sea and the land, and planted trees of many kinds. Then he took two lumps of earth,² and shaped them like human figures; then he spit on them, and they became man and woman. The old man was called Tuglay,⁴ and the old woman, Tuglibung.³ The two were married, and lived together. The Tuglay made a great house, and planted seeds of different kinds that Diwata gave him.

Diwata made the sun, the moon, the stars, and the rivers. First he made the great eel (*kasili*), a fish that is like a snake in the river, and

¹ Among the Bagobo the name "diwata" is used rather as a collective than as a specific term, and refers to the gods in general, or to any one of them. Pamulak Manobo, creator of the earth, is the *diwata* here referred to.

² In Malayan-Arabic tradition, Adam was moulded from a lump of clay mixed with water (cf. W. W. Skeat, *Malay Magic* [1906], pp. 21-22); but the suggestion may as well have come from a Jesuit story.

³ Tuglay, the "old man" of Bagobo myth, and Tuglibung, the "old woman," were the Mona, who lived on the earth before time began. Tradition says that they were acquainted with only the rudest of Bagobo arts and industries; that they were very poor, and dressed themselves in the soft sheath torn from the cocconut-trees. Tuglay and Tuglibung are not specific, but general, names for all those old people of the tales.

wound¹ it all around the world. Diwata then made the great crab (*kayumang*), and put it near the great eel, and let it go wherever it liked. Now, when the great crab bites the great eel, the eel wriggles, and this produces an earthquake.

When the rain falls, it is Diwata throwing out water from the sky. When Diwata spits, the showers fall. The sun makes yellow clouds, and the yellow clouds make the colors of the rainbow. But the white clouds are smoke from the fire of the gods.

2. IN THE DAYS OF THE MONA

Long ago the sun hung low over the earth. And the old woman called Mona said to the sky, "You go up high, because I cannot pound my rice when you are in the way."²

Then the sky moved up higher.

Mona³ was the first woman, and Tuglay³ was the first man. There were at that time only one man and one woman on the earth. Their eldest son was named Malaki; their eldest daughter, Bia. They lived at the centre of the earth.

Tuglay and Mona made all the things in the world; but the god made the woman and the man. Mona was also called Tuglibung. Tuglay and Tuglibung got rich, because they could see the god.

But the snake was there too, and he gave the fruit to the man and the woman, saying to them, "If you eat the fruit, it will open your eyes."

Then they both ate the fruit. This made the god angry.

After this, Tuglibung and Tuglay could not see the god any more.⁴

3. WHY THE SKY WENT UP

In the beginning, when the world was made, the sky lay low down over the earth. At this time the poor families called "Mona" were living in the world. The sky hung so low, that, when they wanted to pound their rice, they had to kneel down on the ground to get a play for the arm. Then the poor woman called Tuglibung said to the sky, "Go up higher! Don't you see that I cannot pound my rice well?"

So the sky began to move upwards. When it had gone up about five fathoms, the woman said again, "Go up still more!"

This made the sun angry at the woman, and he rushed up very high.

¹ The Malays of the peninsula have a similar tradition as to the snake element (cf. Skeat, *l. c.*, p. 6).

² The name "Mona" is ordinarily applied to the old man as well as to the old woman of prehistoric days.

³ A generic name for the old man of the ancient myths. The word seems to be related to *tugul* ("old"), which is used only of persons. "An old thing" is *tapi*.

⁴ With ready ease the Bagobo incorporates elements that have come from Catholic sources, yet without breaking the thread of his narrative.

In the old days, when the sun as well as the sky was low down, the Mona had a deep hole in the ground, as large as a house, into which they would creep to keep themselves from the fierce heat of the sun.

The Mona were all very old; but after the sun went up very high, they began to get babies.¹

4. WHY THE SKY WENT UP

In the beginning, the sky hung so low over the earth, that the people could not stand upright, could not do their work.

For this reason, the man in the sky said to the sky, "Come up!" Then the sky went up to its present place.

5. THE SUN AND THE MOON

Long ago the Sun had to leave the Moon to go to another town. He knew that his wife, the Moon, was expecting the birth of a child; and, before going away, he said to her, "When your baby is born, if it is a boy, keep it; if a girl, kill it."

A long time passed before the Sun could come back to the Moon, and while he was gone, the Moon gave birth to her baby. It was a girl. A beautiful child it was, with curly hair like *binabbüd*,² with burnished nails that looked like gold, and having the white spots called *pamohi*³ on its body. The mother felt very sad to think of killing it, and so she hid it in the big box (*kaban*⁴) where they kept their clothes.

As soon as the Sun returned, he asked the Moon, "How about our baby?"

At once the Moon replied, "It was a girl: I killed it yesterday."

The Sun had only a week to stay at home with the Moon. One night he dreamed that a boy with white hair came to him from heaven. The boy stood close to him, and spoke these words:—

"Your wife got a baby, but it was a girl; and she hid it away from you in the box."

When the Sun awakened from sleep, he was very angry at the Moon, and the two fell to quarrelling about the baby. The Moon wanted the child saved.

"You ought to keep it with you," she urged.

¹ A tradition of the first peopling of Mindanao was found by Mr. Cole at Cibolan. Cf. *The Philippine Journal of Science*, vol. vi, pp. 128-129 (1911).

² Hemp warp that has been laced in a banded pattern before dyeing, in order to produce decorative figures in a textile, is called *binabbüd*. After the binding-threads are clipped, there is an effect of rippling in the hemp, of which curly hair is suggestive.

³ Such auspicious white spots are referred to in the text of a Bagobo song (in manuscript), in which the Divine Man who lives at the source of the streams is said to have the *pamohi* on his body.

⁴ A well-made box of hard wood in which fine garments are kept.

"No, no!" protested the Sun. "I cannot keep it, because my body is so hot it would make your baby sick."

"And I cannot keep it," complained the Moon, "for my body is very dark; and that would surely make the child sick."

Then the Sun fell into a passion of rage; and he seized his big *kampilan*,¹ and slew the child. He cut its small body into numberless little bits, — as many as the grains of sand that lie along the seashore. Out of the window he tossed the pieces of the shining little body; and, as the gleaming fragments sparkled to their places in the sky, the stars came to birth.

6. ORIGIN OF THE STARS

All the old Bagobo men say that the Sun and the Moon once had a quarrel about the Moon's baby.

The Moon had a baby in her belly; and the Sun said, "If our baby is a girl, we will kill it, because a girl could not be like me."

Then the Sun went on a journey to another town, and while he was gone, the baby was born; but it was a girl. Now, the Moon felt very sorry to think of her little child being killed, and she hid it in a box. In a few days, the Sun came home to rest with his wife. Then he asked her for the baby.

The Moon answered, "I killed it yesterday: it was a girl."

But the Sun did not believe what his wife said. Then he opened the box to get his clothes, and there he saw a baby-girl. And the Sun was very angry. He seized the baby and cut it into many pieces, and threw the pieces out of the window. Then the pieces of the baby's body became the stars.

Before the Sun and the Moon had their quarrel, they journeyed together through the sky, and the sky was not far above the earth, as now, but it lay low down.

7. THE FATE OF THE MOON'S BABY

The Sun wanted the Moon to have a boy-baby so that it would be like its father. The Moon too hoped to give birth to a boy. But when the child was born, it was a girl. Now, at that time, the Moon was very hungry, and wanted to eat her own baby. Then the Sun killed the girl-child, and ate it up himself.

8. THE BLACK MEN AT THE DOOR OF THE SUN

The men who live in that part of the world near to where the sun rises are very black. They are called *Manobo tagselata k'alo*.² From

¹ A long, one-edged sword that hangs at the left side, in an elaborate scabbard, when a man is in full-dress.

² Men (*ta*, "the;" -*g*-, a formal or euphonic infix; *selat*, "door;" *k'* [*ka*], "of;" *alo*, "sun") at the door of the sun. *Manobo* is a general term for "man," "people."