

THE MYTHS OF THE BAGOBO, TAGAKAULO AND MANDAYA: AN ETHNOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Introduction

The great historian of religion, Mircea Eliade, said that myth defines itself by its own mode of being.¹ It can only be understood in so far as it reveals something as having really happened, as in an event that took place in primordial times. Primordial time is not the same time as our historical time. In fact, it is timelessness. Mythical stories are usually introduced by the words, "Once upon a time ..." or "At the beginning ...", which convey a notion of time before it began. The mythical period is a very different one. It is usually one in which gods mingle freely with men who also have access to heaven or the abode of gods and divinities.

Mythical stories are always about explanations of mysteries such as how the world was created, or how men and women and the littlest insects came to be. As such, myths reflect a people's understanding of the whole reality of existence, and the individual's place in it. The two most significant constituents of myths are the universal and the exemplary. Myths do not treat of individual problems; instead they define the role of the individual in relation to the total reality, or cosmos. Men's individual problems are precisely caused by violations or deviations from their assigned roles and to resolve these problems one has to go through the correct or prescribed act of behavior the way it was done "at the beginning". Many rituals fall in this functional category. The whole catalogue of oral literature of many traditional cultures, e.g. fables, legends, riddles, etc., serve to remind the individual about the exemplary deed and right behavior. In myth, man is an integral part of creation but not necessarily the most important or distinguished.

¹ Mircea Eliade. *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), pp. 14 - 16.

Above all these, myth and myth-making have a deeply spiritual and religious dimension. The apprehension of a myth is considered as a very religious experience because it is a revelation of sacred reality. Eliade describes the phenomenon as "the irruption of the sacred into the profane"². That is to say that the human mind cannot of itself come to a realization of the whole cosmological reality. Those who have participated in myth-making were able to do so only because they have actually experienced a hierophany.

For this reason, it is very interesting to study the myths of other people for then one would be able to understand their own particular religious experience and how this experience is contextualized in their culture. The best way to understand a myth is to refer to the culture of those to whom the myth is the perception of total reality or cosmogony. We will now proceed to an ethnological analysis of the myths of the Bagobo, Tagakaulo and Mandaya.

An ethnological analysis has a number of cultural referents. The sociological structure of the myth is held to reflect the structure of the society or community to whom the myth belongs. In this wise, the web of relationship among gods and men would be very similar to, if not the same as, those in human society. The motifs or elements would indicate the adaptations made by local authors. Finally, encoded in the mythical story is the people's ideology or belief system, the very foundation of the spiritual and religious experience of the people.

Bagobo Mythology³

The Bagobo believe that Tiguiama, a good god, created all things but other gods have their own specialized participation:

- | | | |
|--------------|---|-------------------|
| 1. Mamale | — | created the earth |
| 2. Macoreret | — | created the air |

² Ibid.

³ Faye Cooper Cole, *The Wild Tribes of Davao District*, Field Museum of Natural History, Publication 170. Anthropological Series XII, (1913) 2:49-203.

3. Domacolen — created the mountains
 4. Macaponguis — created the water

An ancient ideology is encoded in the Bagobo ideology and belief system. The myth of a terrible god who lives in the volcano and who demands, as well as devours human victims has animated Mt. Apo. This has enabled the Bagobos to structure a relationship and define a code of conduct towards a dominant and therefore significant feature of the environment. The myth of Mandarangan and Darago, husband and wife guardians of Mt. Apo, renders intelligible the practice of human sacrifice among the Bagobos. The myth conveys the Bagobo notion of evil as an inescapable part of reality and how it is dealt with.

The polytheistic belief system allows the worship of other gods. While Mandarangan permits the Bagobos to come to terms with the terrible reality of evil, Eugpamolak Manobo, another divinity, reflects the Bagobo's appreciation of the good, which notion is equated with nature's bounty. Pamolak is the word for plant as well as for flower, the harbinger of the fruits of the earth, and the placement of this deity in the Bagobo pantheon pays homage to nature and an agricultural existence.

The most eloquent abstraction of the Bagobo's ineffable regard for nature's bounty is found in the story of Tuglay and Tuglibong, the archetypes of the first man and first woman. The couple's progeny would have all but perished were they not refreshed by a single stalk of sugarcane, a gift from the gods, growing lustily in the midst of a scorched plot of earth.

The memory of a scorching period is distinct in the origin myths, especially in the story of how Tuglibong, the first woman, along with the rest of the mythical figures of old, were said to have lived an intolerable existence because the sky and the sun hung low over the earth. The mythical people, known as *mona*, had to live in holes and crevices under the earth to protect themselves from the sun's heat. Moreover, important activities were severely constrained, e.g. pounding rice was a difficult activity since one could hardly move one's elbow, cramped as it were by a low hanging sky. All these changed when, finally, through

Tuglibong's sustained scolding, the sky, and with it the sun, bolted up to their present position thus ushering in a new epoch whereby the *mona* lived on the surface of the earth instead of underground. They were able to build houses, the temperature cooled, and nature and the human race were regenerated — the *mona* who were already old began to have babies!

The god Lumabat and his sister, Mebuyan, goddess of fertility (she is depicted as a woman with breasts all over her body) and guardian of a Bagobo Limbo for dead babies, were children of Tuglay and Tuglibong. The tale of Lumabat is the story of a culture hero who journeyed to the ends of the earth, i.e. the horizon, and after successfully avoiding a number of pitfalls reached the land of the *diwata* or gods. Lumabat himself became a god when the *diwata* divested him of his intestines after which he no longer was bothered by hunger. Lumabat's journey to the sky country was fraught with a number of obstacles; he and his companions passed a region where one could be turned into a stone or a tree if one responded to any of these objects that could talk. This land was conceived as lying beyond the sea, the Gulf of Davao. The sky country itself was thought to be located on the other side of the horizon, the idea of which was construed as a pair of giant jaws which mechanically opened and shut to the peril of those who, like Lumabat, attempted to cross to the other side. Giant jagged teeth and *kampilan* (swords) fencing by themselves added to the dangers of the traveller.

Mebuyan's myth was woven differently from that of her brother. Unwilling to go with Lumabat to the sky country, Mebuyan plummeted to the underworld by sitting on the rice mortar which began to spin downward as soon as Mebuyan sat on it. Mebuyan soon founded a kingdom of her own, Banwa Mebuyan, a place where she fed babies until they were weaned from her many breasts. She also personified death; by shaking a lemon tree people died according to the kind of leaves that fell from the tree. If old and yellowed leaves fell, old people would die, but if the leaves were green and newlygrown, young people would perish from this earth.

Human sacrifice, which the Bagobos practiced until the turn of the present century, was an offering to Mandarangan and Darago

as well as to Malaki T'Olu K'Waig, which name literally means "man at the head of the river". Malaki is also the mythological firstborn of Tuglay and Tuglibong and is the Bagobo word for man in the same way that Bia, Malaki's sister, is the word for woman. In a sense, Malaki and Bia are even more appropriate archetypes of first man and first woman who became *diwata* or gods in the following legend of the founding of Sibulan.

The legend of Sibulan, the biggest Bagobo settlement in historic times, began with the passing of the Tuglay and Tugbilong and all the *mona* into the land of the *diwata*. Only the children of Tuglay and Tugbilong were left in Sibulan. Then a long drought came to pass upon the land so that the people could not plant their crops and famine soon stalked the Bagobo highlands. The children of Tuglay and Tugbilong began to leave their home and travel to other lands in pairs. As soon as any pair found a place to their liking, they settled there and begot progenies who became the ancestors of the other tribes in Mindanao.

One pair chose to remain in Sibulan even as the parched land could no longer provide for them. Then one day, as the man, too weak from hunger, hobbled across the barren fields in search of food, he saw a single stalk of sugarcane growing lustily in the midst of a scorched earth. As he cut the plant with his *bolo* (a long knife), fresh water gushed forth from its stalk and the flow did not cease until both the couple's thirst and the earth were quenched and refreshed. From the plant's abundant flow the rivers and the streams were once more filled with water until the rains fell to water the crops in the fields.

The palpable significance of the story lies in the mythological death and rebirth cycle: the passing of the mythical people was followed by the rebirth of new life in Malaki and Bia in Sibulan and by the other pairs of children of Tuglay and Tugbilong as founders of the other tribes in Mindanao. At the same time, a claim for some ethnic and cultural hegemony is implicit in the story which tells of the origins of the other tribes in Mindanao from the children of Tuglay and Tugbilong. The legend thus depicts an expansive stage in Bagobo mythological experience and a broadening of horizons from the confines of ethnic perspectives.

In the structure of Bagobo myth, the primordial ancestors, with the possible exception of the *mona*, were always represented in pairs Tuglay and Tugbilong, Malaki and Bia, and the children of the latter who departed from Sibulan, also in pairs, to become the heads of further progenies of the Bagobo. There are no androgynous figures in Bagobo mythology. The prominence of paired ancestors appears as a Bagobo valorization of the man woman tandem and the high value placed on the family and ancestors.

The differentiation of gender roles is strictly delimited as in the roles of Lumabat and Mebuyan. Fidelity to her chores made Tuglibong relentlessly scold the sun until it was offended and bolted away to unprecedented heights. Mebuyan's refusal to go with her brother to the sky country underscores her own distinct role. Even as she plummeted in the opposite direction (to the land of the dead) she continued to perform her role, that of nourishing life.

The Myth of the Tagakaulo

The Tagakaulo are one of the native groups who inhabit the mountainous interiors of Davao del Sur province. They are said to have derived their name from their preferred type of settlement, i.e. the origins or headwaters of rivers and mountain streams. The rootword is *ulo* which means head. This was an explanation given by a missionary account in the 19th century and which in the course of modern day research we were able to validate.

In 1987, the fourth volume of *Tambara*, the Ateneo de Davao University Journal, was being prepared as a special commemorative issue for the anniversary of the missionary Fathers of the Foreign Mission Society of Quebec (PME). The PME Fathers have had a long history in Davao and for this special issue the editors of the *Tambara* were invited to Lanipao, one of the PME missions among the Tagakaulo. We were asked to document the mission and undergo a sort of immersion process that would give us a feel of the mission. The documentation of their missionary works was to be contextualized in the history of Davao, an exciting enterprise since we were about to merge the writing of religious and secular

histories.

About an hour's drive from the Malita Parish, the trail to Lanipao started from a small stream. Our party alighted at a lay leader's house in Talugoy and from there we picked up the trail. For the first two hours we followed the course of the stream, walking sometimes on its banks but most of the time in the stream itself. After a while, the significance of the name Tagakaulo (dwellers of the origins of rivers) dawned on us; we were following the river or the stream to its source up in the mountains.⁴

The PME Fathers follow a strict pattern of inculturation before beginning to work in a mission. They all have to learn to speak the native tongue. One of the Fathers was Fr. Gilles Belanger who was assigned to work among the Tagakaulo of Sangay, Malita. Fr. Belanger lived with a native Tagakaulo family for four months in order to learn the language. He said the Tagakaulo responded easily when one talked to them about their native culture. The Tagakaulo culture, like any other native culture, is steeped in oral traditions which in turn are reflective of their collective experience or history as a people. In the last century, the Tagakaulo were said to have held the region between Malalag and Lais in the southwestern part of the Davao Gulf. Being upland dwellers, they were barred from the sea by the Manobo and Muslims who lived along the coast, while in the mountains they had to contend with the powerful group of the B'laan, another indigenous group of the Davao Region.

In Fr. Pastell's *Mapa Ethnografico* the Tagakaulo were described as being more or less the peers of the Bagobo in terms of industry, but without the cruelty of the latter, who were known to practice human sacrifice⁵. In particular, the missionary account praised the Tagakaulo widowers who were known as brave warriors displaying much courage in the battlefield. This was because

⁴ Heidi K. Gloria and Pasquale T. Giordano, S.J., "The Christianization of Davao", *Tambara*, Vol. VI (1987).

⁵ *Cartas de los Padres de la Compania de Jesus de la Mision de Filipinas*. (Manila: Los Amigos del Pais, 1897).

according to Fr. Pastell, being a good warrior was an index of male attractiveness and desirability. Tagakaulo widowers who were eager to be remarried had to demonstrate their prowess in the battlefield in order to obtain a new wife or wives. The missionary account also mentioned the sub-groups of the Tagakaulo: the Kalagan (Kagan) and the Loac, the latter being very primitive and described as *cimarrones*⁶.

Sometime during the latter half of the 19th century, the heretofore scattered groups of Tagakaulo from Malalag to Lais were said to have united under one chieftain whose name was Paugok. This was ostensibly due to intertribal conflicts with the Bagobo against whom they waged war successfully with the result that the Bagobo were driven from the rich valleys of Padada and Balutakay. The establishment of Tagakaulo settlements in these valleys resulted in their prolonged exposure to Kulaman Manobo and Moro. The Tagakaulo had friendly relations with these two groups. They were probably friendlier with the Moro than with the Manobo for at the turn of the present century the accounts of the Tagakaulo described their culture as being strongly influenced by the Moro or Muslim. The influence of the Moro among the Tagakaulo was so great that they not only adapted the Moro style of dressing but also substituted cotton for hemp in the manufacture of their garments. During this time, the Tagakaulo were recognized by their close fitting suits of red and yellow stripes from which the word *Kagan* was derived.

In 1897, Malalag, together with two other *reducciones*, Balutakay and Piape, was being prepared for conversion into a pueblo or town status along the Kulaman coast. A census was taken of the houses in twenty-one *reducciones* in the area. Here, the native Tagakaulo of Malalag used to engage the Moro in frequent and sanguinary conflicts. The arrival of the first Spanish colonists worsened the lot of the Tagakaulo who became the prey of the latter in the traffic of slaves. Eventually, because of these insufferable conditions, the Kulaman coast was depopulated of its native populations. In particular, the Tagakaulo fled to the interior and upland regions. Thus, the Christianization of the Tagakaulo

⁶ *Ibid.*

of Malalag originally started from the uplands and not in the coastal areas. In 1891, the *reducciones* or resettlements of the Tagakaulo in Malalag and Malita were given pueblo status.

In the American period, the Kalagan Tagakaulo lived on the American plantations along the Padada and Balutakay rivers. The Kalagan remained on friendly terms with their Tagakaulo kinsmen and, except for professing the Islamic faith were in every way like the Tagakaulo in language, custom, and oral traditions.

A tribal historian of the Tagakaulo has said that they were descended from Lakbang and Mengedan and their wife Bodek⁷. At the beginning, the three lived on a small island in the sea. Later, two children were born and they in turn became the parents of two birds, the kalaw and the sabitan. These birds flew away to other places and returned with bits of soil which their parents patted and molded with their hands until they formed the earth. Other children were born and from them came all the other people who came to inhabit the island.

Two powerful spirits, Diwata and Tiunanem, watched the formation of the earth and when it was completed the latter spirit planted trees upon it. Each year he sent the spirits Layag and Bangay as stars to tell the people when to prepare the fields for planting. Other spirits, less friendly than these two, also existed. One named Siling caused much trouble by confusing travellers, thus causing them to lose their way in the forest.

Spirits of the unborn known, as the *Mantianak*, were believed to wander through the forest crying "Ina-a" (mother) and often attacked human beings. The only defense was to run to the nearest stream and throw water on their abdomen. The spirit *Larma* owns the deer and the wild pigs and is kind to hunters who offer him the proper gifts. Failure to make such offerings could result in getting lost or injured. Mandalangan, the warrior god of the Tagakaulo, is identical with the Bagobo Mandarangan.

⁷ Antolin Ginsalan, interviewed at Brgy. Kilalag, Malita, Davao del Sur on March 7, 1991.

Kawe are the shades or souls of the dead, the chiefs of whom were the ones who created the earth. In life, the *kawe* live in the body but, after death, they go to the sky. They return to earth at certain seasons, usually during times when the rice fields need to be protected and guarded.

The *balyan* or priestesses can talk to spirits and from them have learned the ceremonies which the people should perform at certain times or at crucial periods in life. The rituals for birth, marriage, and death are similar to those of the Kulaman Manobo. A slight variation was noted by the anthropologist Faye Cooper Cole after a rice planting at Padada when all the workers placed their planting sticks on an offering of rice and then poured water over them. Another difference was noted in the rituals following the death of a warrior. A knife lies in its sheath beside the body and can only be drawn if it is to be used for sacrificing a slave. If such an offering is made it is usually carried out in the same manner as among the Bagobo. If it is impossible to offer a slave, a palm leaf cup is filled with water and is carried to the forest. Here, the relatives dance and then dip the knife and some sticks in the water "for this is the same as dipping them in blood". According to custom, warriors must go to fight once a year when the moon is bright.

The Mandaya of Caraga⁸

In the 19th century, Spanish missionary accounts identified the people of the eastern coast of Mindanao as the Caragans. They were described as "an honorable people, peace-loving, respectful, obsequious, docile, submissive, and patient." Their complexion was brown and sometimes white and their noses were tall and even aquiline. The men grew the hair on their head as long as the women's, but they trimmed their long beards with pincers. Their kinglets were called *Hari-hari* or *Tigulang* and were said to occupy their social station on account of their wealth. The *Hari-hari* took precedence over the principal families who had their own followers or *sacopes* and was consulted and obeyed even by the *gobnadorcillo*

⁸ *Cartas de los Padres de la Compania de Jesus de la Mision de Filipinas.*

and other Spanish officials in the locality. He alone had the power to declare war on others, demand satisfaction for insults to his ranch or farmstead, and act as an arbiter and court of last appeal after hearing the opinion of the *principales* in the trials of subordinates. It appeared that the Caragans retained their traditions and native institutions up until the 19th century. The writer of the account attributed this to the close family ties among them. Relatives always sought to live close together. For this reason, they remained inseparable from their native beliefs and believed they would die if forced to abandon them to become Christians. Today, the Caragans are known as the Mandaya.

The Mandaya believe that Mansilatan, the principal god and father of Badla, descended from the heavens to create the world. Afterwards, his son, Badla, also came down to protect and preserve the world against the evil spirits Pundaugnon and Malimbong (man and woman, respectively). A spirit known as Busao proceeded from Mansilatan and is said to animate fighting men or warriors known as *bagani*.

When the Mandaya wish to cure someone, priestesses known as *bailan* invoke Mansilatan and Badla in the religious sacrifice called *balilic*.

... Ten, twelve or more *bailanes* come together according to the splendor they want to give to the feast. A small altar of the *diwata* is previously erected in front of the house of the man who spends for the ceremony: the owner comes out with a huge hog and present it to the *bailanes* in the presence of 100 or 200 invited guest. The hog is set on the altar and *bailanes*, dressed meticulously for the occasion, immediately gather around it. The Mandayas next sound (the) *guimbao* music consecrated to the *diwatas*, as the *bailanes* keep time with their feet, dancing around the hog and altar, singing "Miminsad", etc. Shaking from head to foot and swaying from one side to the other, they form several semicircles with their movements. They raise the right arm to the sun or the moon, depending on whether it is day or night, praying for the intention of the patron ... All at once the chief *bailan* separates from the others and pierces with

her *balarao* the victim on the altar. She is the first to share in the sacrifice, putting her lips to the wound to suck and drink the blood of the animal ... the others follow and do the same ... They return to their place, repeat the dance, shake their bodies, utter cries... (and) converse with Mansilatan who they say has come to them from heaven to inspire them in what they later prophesy.⁹

It could be that the Mandaya's creation myth was strongly influenced, and hence modified or altered, by Christian mythology. Caraga is the oldest town in Mindanao and has a history of colonization that dates back to the 16th century. The myth of a principal god creating the world is very similar to the Christian story of creation. The notion of gods being exclusively male is also familiar. Moreover, Badla, the son of Mansilatan, also came or descended to the world to protect and preserve it from the evil pair Pundaugnon and Malimbong. Finally, a spirit called Busao, which also originated from Mansilatan, completes the triumvirate.

On the other hand, the *bailan*, priestesses who officiate in various rituals and ceremonies, appear to be a survival of a more autochthonous tradition and institution. *Bailan* are diviners, healers, and soothsayers. The description of their roles in rituals, in which they dance, go into a trance and speak in strange voices, believed to be God's, is strongly evocative of the shamanic techniques of ecstasy.

... during his trance, the shaman seeks to abolish this human condition that is, the consequences of the "fall" and to *enter again into the condition of primordial man* as it is described in the paradisiac myths. The ecstasy re-actualizes, for a time, what was the initial state of mankind as a whole except that the shaman no longer mounts up to Heaven in flesh and blood as the primordial man used to do, but only *in the spirit*, in the state of ecstasy¹⁰.

⁹ Jose Arcilla, S.J. "The Christianization of Davao Oriental. Excerpts from the Jesuit Missionary Letters" *Philippine Studies*, (Oct. 1971), 19:690.

¹⁰ Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism*, (n.p. Princeton University Press, 1964), pp. 97-98.

Comparative Analysis of the Three Myths and Conclusion

Of the three mythological creators, only the Tagakaulo made use of an agent, a bird which initiated creation by bringing some bits of soil to the gods who later fashioned it into the earth or the world. All three myths have more than one divinity involved in creation, and among the three, the Bagobo mythology is distinguished for having the most number of creators, each with its own special creation. Only the Tagakaulo creation myth has a participant who is clearly interested in the welfare of man on earth. Tiunanem, one of the *diwata* who watched the formation of the earth, came down and planted trees. This *diwata* also sent the stars to instruct men when it was time to plant their crops. The old man who was the teller of the myth called Tiunanem "our eldest", thus ascribing direct kinship between men and gods.

The Bagobo myth is alone (except for a T'boli variant) in the myth of Tuglibong, she whose scolding made the sun angry and precipitated its bolting to the high heavens and its present position. The outcome of this mythological event is however, unique in the annals of mythology. All over Southeast Asia and Oceania many similar myths tell the story about the sky being previously close to the earth. This element is regarded as a paradisiac motif, i.e. an expression of lost paradise, of rupture between heaven and earth or the cosmic schism. On the other hand, the outburst of Tuglibong led to a new beginning and a regeneration of life and the world. After the sun rose to its present height, the first people began to build houses on the earth's surface instead of living in holes under the earth and the *mona* (primeval ancestors), who were already old, began to have babies!

The Bagobo mythical figure Lumabat has Higaonon and Tagakaulo variants. In the former variant, Lumabat was a folk hero who left the earth (or died) and then became a god himself who continued to provide useful knowledge to his people. In Malita, Davao del Sur, the Tagakaulo have been urging me to visit a place called Lumabat to see for myself his *tima-anan* or landmarks.

The Bagobo Lumabat is paired with a sister, Mebuyan, who refused to accompany him to the sky country. So, Lumabat went

alone. The journey was long, arduous, and full of dangers and followed the typical pattern of a shamanic flight, i.e. descent to hell and final ascent to heaven. Upon reaching the sky country, Lumabat came upon a group of *diwata* chewing betel nut. As he approached, one of them spat betel juice at his stomach and immediately, Lumabat's intestines disappeared. From then on he was never again bothered by hunger. Lumabat, of course, became a god himself. This, too, is a pattern of shamanism. Lumabat might have been a great shaman.

In the Mandaya mythology, the various rituals and ceremonies officiated by the *bailan* invoke the gods Mansilatan and his son, Badla. Although the Bagobo were also known to have the *mabalian*, priestesses who guard the secrets of their ancestors, their activities have not been described as prominently as have the Mandaya *bailan*. The *bailan* in Southern Borneo are acknowledged shamanesses or female shamans, who like the Mandaya *bailan*, invoke the gods through ecstatic techniques, fall into a deep trance and make prophecies.¹¹

Eliade considers shamanism as a great religious tradition among Asiatic peoples, although shamanic phenomena are by no means limited only to them. As a religious experience, shamanism pertains to the genre of "nostalgia for lost paradise".

... the most representative mystical experience of the archaic societies, that of shamanism, betrays the Nostalgia for Paradise, the desire to recover the state of freedom and beatitude before the "the Fall", the will to restore communication between Earth and Heaven; in a word, to abolish all the changes made in the very structure of the Cosmos and in the human mode of being by that promordial disruption. The shaman's ecstasy restores a great deal of the paradisiac condition¹².

By means of special techniques, the shaman endeavors to rise above the present condition of man and to re-enter the state of

¹¹ Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism*, p. 350.

¹² Ibid.

primordial condition described in the paradisiac myths. Shamanism is the counterpart of Judeo-Christian mysticism.

From an ethnological perspective, the myths of the Bagobo, Tagakaulo, and Mandaya show a uniqueness and distinctiveness which is significant considering a number of factors, e.g. inter-ethnic or mixed marriages among them and overlapping geographical boundaries. Although the Bagobo and the Tagakaulo occupy contiguous areas in Davao del Sur and have been known to marry across cultural boundaries within the last one hundred years, their creation myths are clearly distinct from one another. The Bagobo has the most number of creators; the Tagakaulo creators consist of a family of two husbands and their wife, and children which are birds. The Mandaya creator is a father-god.

On the other hand, if we take a broader look at the religious pantheons, we will note some close similarities among the gods. Tiumamen of the Tagakaulo is identical with the Bagobo Eugpomolok Manobo while Lumabat has a Tagakaulo variant. This would seem to leave the Mandaya out of the picture, were it not for the *bailan*, the Mandaya shamaness. The *bailan* appears to be an indigenous substratum in the Mandaya tradition. As a pre-Christian institution, it has survived Spanish colonization and Christianization. Lumabat of the Tagakaulo and Bagobo might have been a great shaman. It would seem that shamanism is a unifying element in the religious experiences of the three. As an intensely religious experience, shamanism owes nothing to western mysticism although sharing in its spiritual and religious attributes. If we agree with Eliade, who said that the sacred never ceases to manifest itself, here then is a meeting point between pre-Christian and Christian beliefs.

In what way do these mythologies address ecological concerns?

In covert and sometimes overt terms, the myths of the Bagobo, Tagakaulo, and Mandaya tell us about the meaning and significance of nature in their lives and how they relate to it. The Bagobo gods are guardians of specialized creations, e.g. earth, mountains, water, etc. Each element of the natural environment is regarded as having deeply spiritual attributes and is in fact animated or held to have a life of its own. Spectacular features of the landscape, as in the case

of Mt. Apo, exert a powerful influence in their lives, more so because the spirits who were supposed to dwell there were anthropomorphised. In this case, the relationship becomes institutional or social as between fellows in the same social group. The myth of Tuglibong and the sun is particularly interesting. Agricultural peoples commonly weave their myths around celestial bodies which, to a great extent govern their agricultural and economic activities. However, the story of Tuglibong reveals a perception of the sun as a not too benign entity. The Bagobos are not known to worship the sun. Even the grim practice of human sacrifice has an ecological significance, nature's bounty is not free. The Bagobo have to propitiate the gods of Mt. Apo with offerings of human victims in exchange for a bountiful harvest and valor in the battlefield.

The Tagakaulo construed the world as having been molded from bits of soil brought by a bird. Of the three myths, this is probably the most worldly or earthly. That the world as created is less than perfect may be inferred from the act of planting trees on it by one of the *diwata* that watched the formation of the earth.

Although the *bailan* experience is spiritual, a motif in the shamanic dance is particularly unusual. The Mandaya *bailan* calls upon the god to come down instead of her going up: "*Miminsad, miminsad, Mansilatan*". ("Come down, come down, Mansilatan") an insight to a most earthbound worldview.