

Origin Myth

I'WAK/IKALAHAN, NUEVA VIZCAYA PROVINCE, NORTHERN LUZON ISLAND, NORTHERN PHILIPPINES. *Mount Poleg is a prominence in the Cordillera mountain ranges of northern Luzon, where this creation folktale of the I'wak and Ikalahan proliferates. This version is from Buyasyas, Nueva Vizcaya province. Mount Poleg is the mythological origin of these peoples.*

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 Mount Pulag is the highest prominence in the Cordillera Mountain Ranges of northern Luzon, the grey ranges in the far background, and the subject of many myths among the upland peoples. Among the I'wak, Mount Pulag is known as "Poleg".

IN THE BEGINNING, the world was flat. There were no mountains. There were no deep valleys. Anywhere a person would look, everything was the same. The Creator looked down and decided that it had to be changed. "How can the people find their way home when everything is flat like this?" he asked himself.

The Creator told the springs to produce more water to flood the earth. Then he shook things up underneath the water. Most of the people drowned, but one male and one female were saved because they were in a box-like thing that floated.

When the water subsided, they landed on a barren peak. It surprised them because they had never seen a peak before.

The water continued to recede and exposed many mountains and valleys with streams, rivers and lakes. The two people stayed on top of the barren peak from where they saw the growth of grass and forests around them.

When the forests finally developed, the couple went down and built themselves a house on a level place between two mountains near the barren peak. The Creator restored the animals, which had drowned, so that the two people would have meat to eat. The male and the female mated and produced children.

The Creator looked down again and said, "That is better! Now they will know the difference between upstream and downstream. They can tell their children to go uphill or downhill or to follow a ridge. Now it will be easy for them to find their way home."

The children grew up and scattered. Some of them looked toward the rising sun and said, "We won't go there. Let's go to the left." They are now the Ifugao people.

The other children went toward where the sun goes down and they are now the Kankana-ey people.

Some went beyond the Kankana-ey to where the mountains joined the big water and they became the Ilocano. Some went into the forest and they are the Ikalahan. The languages of their grandchildren changed but they were all from the same family.

The man and woman sat and looked at the mountain where they first landed. The sides were forested but the top was still bald so they called it "*Poleg*" (bald spot).

Mount Poleg is still there and still has a bald spot on top with only a grassy fuzz covering it.