

Agyu Epic

ARAKAN-ARUMANEN/ILIANON MANOBO, NORTH COTABATO PROVINCE, CENTRAL MINDANAO ISLAND, SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES.

This is an epic of the Arakan-Arumanen or the Ilianon Manobo of North Cotabato. It is related to the Ulahingan of the Livunganon Manobo, both having the same characters. According to Melendrez-Cruz Castro (1983), the two groups used to be one, jointly called Arumanen Agyu. The epic is chanted without music or dance. The tempo of the melody is determined by the nature of the incident being narrated

THE AGYU HAS TWO PARTS: *pemabra/pamara* or the invocation and the *ulahingan* or the narrative proper. The *ulahingan* has two parts. The first is *kepu-unpu-un*, which is a standard narrative about the history of Agyu's family and how they fled to Nalandangan and became immortal. This is recited rather than chanted. The second is *sengedurong*, which is chanted and continues the history. It deals with the continuing adventures of Agyu and his relatives in Nalandangan, which is a paradise on earth. There are many Agyu stories.

The heroes, Vanlak/Banlak, Agyu and Kuyasu are the sons of Pemulaw/Pamulaw. Agyu has four sisters. They gather beeswax in the forest to trade with the Moro. One day, Agyu sends nine lumps of beeswax to his trading partner, the Moro datu. The datu did not like the amount and throws it down, hitting Kuyasu's foot which has an ulcer. Kuyasu spears the datu. Banlak returns to Ayuman and reports to Agyu. Anticipating retaliation, Agyu and his brothers leave their homeland and build a fort up a cliff. They gather logs and boulders that can be rolled down the slope in case of an attack. When the Moros finally attack, they are met with these logs and boulders, killing them. Agyu decides to resettle again at the Pinamatun Mountains. While on a hunting trip to the Sandaya mountain (Mount Apo) his brother Lono/Lena cuts a path on

the mountainside, while his two sisters are left behind. While swinging on a vine from bank to bank over a stream, their feet were stung by bees. They locate the beehive. Agyu arrives with a small pig. They feast on the meat and honey. Agyu remembers Banlak's wife, Mungan, whom they left behind due to her illness. Banlak refuses to fetch her to join in the feast. Lono volunteers to bring Mungan her share of the feast. She, however, refuses this. She gives Lono betel-nut and young rice to distribute to the people. Lono returns to Pinamatun and tells Agyu that Mungan has turned immortal having eaten golden betel-nut and golden rice. Banlak wanted to return to his wife but Agyu forbids him, having abandoned her before. When the betel-nut and young rice were distributed, the people felt new life. Agyu returns with the people to Ayuman, but they find Mungan having already ascended to heaven leaving only a golden house. They decide to continue their journey until they reach Tigyandang, known as Nalandangan.

Other episodes have been documented; e.g. The Sengedurong of Tanagyang, the Son of Agyu; The Battle of Nalandangan; Agyu Gets a Husband for His Sister; The Marriage of Tabagka; Tagyakusa and the Black Datu; Capture of Nalandangan; The Warriors of Saliga Attack Nalandangan and; Matabagka Searches for the Deity of the Wind.