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Lumawig: The Culture Hero of the Bontoc-Igorot

Joy Christine O. Bacwaden



This is a study of the role of Lumawig as Culture Hero in the "Bontoc Lumawig Myths" (*Philippine Studies* 45[1997]:3-49). The sociocultural values of the Bontoc-Igorot manifested in the myths are also discussed in order to show the background of values and ideas which would further illumine what the narrators did not express directly and which the native audience immediately filled in. In the context of this study, the term Bontoc-Igorot refers to the natives of Bontoc, (formerly a sub-province of the old Mountain Province), now known as the Mountain Province (see map).

An element often found in creation myths is the helper in the process of creation, commonly called the Culture Hero or Trickster. This mythic figure in most ancient form serves as "a link between heaven and earth, a channel to the gods." He bestows on humans gifts of their material and spiritual heritage and makes them aware of their godlike knowledge and their responsibilities to civilization. As cultures become more sophisticated, the Trickster's role undergoes a transformation. He is no longer pictured as one who helped create and furnish order; on the contrary, he comes to stand for the principle of disorder, irrationality, and arbitrariness (Biallas 1986, 88).

The Culture Hero is usually not thought of as the original Creator, though sometimes he is instrumental in the creation of man, which latter incident is almost a necessary part of any creation myth (Thompson 1977, 312-14). Often there is the foundation of a new race by a single surviving couple.

In his original significance, the Culture Hero transforms the world after its creation or assists the Supreme Being in the act of creation. He may dive to the bottom of the ocean to bring up the first bits of earth, or he may put fish in the rivers or stars in the sky, or make rivers and lakes. He changes the shape of the landscape—putting

waterfalls here and hills there—and divides living beings into animals and humans (Biallas 1986, 94). In a word, he is responsible for the present condition of the world.

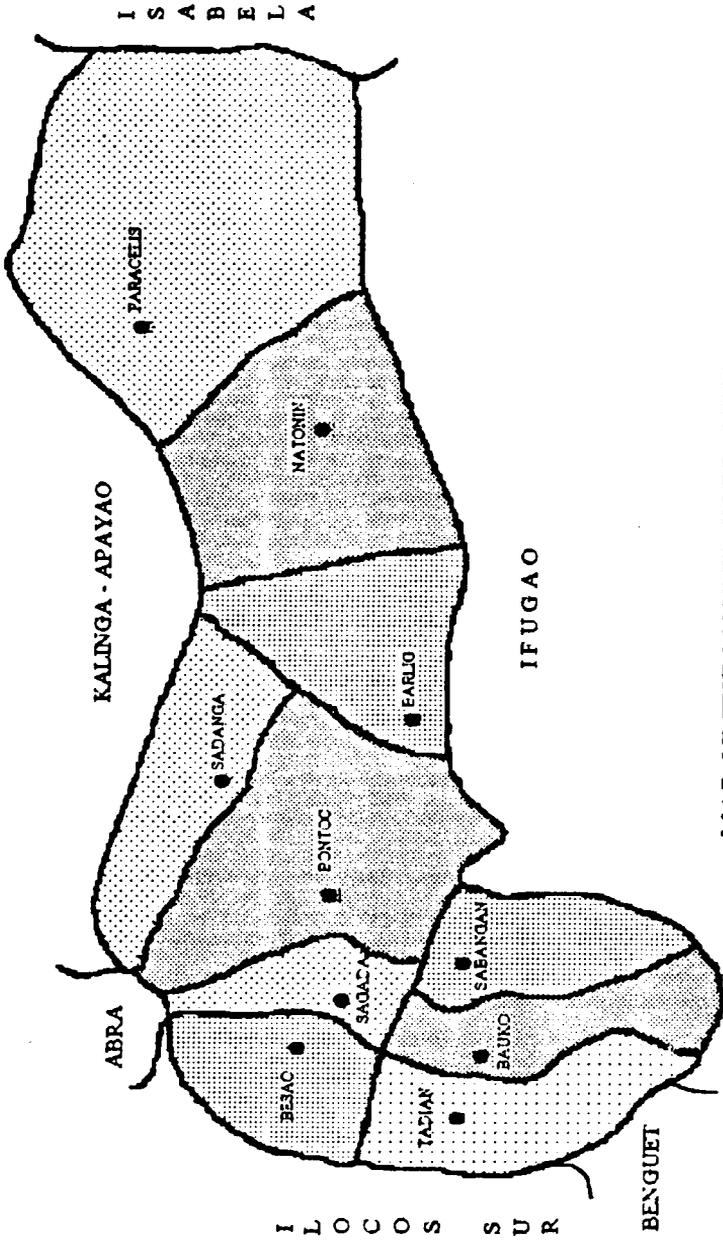
Nearly all mythologies tell of the way in which various experiences of the Culture Hero result in changes in the contour of the land, the creation of mountains, rivers or lakes. Thus, there are frequent stories of the origin of certain mountains or some other features of nature because of the adventures of the Culture Hero. Likewise, nearly everywhere one can hear stories of markings on rocks which have been left by the Culture Hero in his wanderings (Thompson 1977, 310-13).

Another important function of the Culture Hero is the stealing of light, or fire, or water, or game supply from some monster who keeps them from men. Usually in his animal form, and frequently accompanied by helpers, the Culture Hero goes to the monster's house and succeeds in stealing the light, or fire, or other items necessary for man's survival. On his return, he releases it so that it scatters over the earth (314-16).

A considerable part of all creation myths is concerned with the ordering of human life after the initial creation of man. The newly created human being is often thought of as imperfectly formed, with only rudimentary limbs and features. Quite widespread is the idea that original man was not properly provided with sexual organs. Many stories include the beginning of trouble for man particularly the account for the way in which this need was supplied, and for the initiation into sexual intercourse.

Other tales relating the adventures of the Culture Hero tell of the confusion of tongues, the origin of death, murder, disease, and war among men. Having given man his present form and arranged for his life on earth, the Culture Hero is faced with the problem of whether there shall be any end to it. It is frequently in his form as a trickster or mischief-maker that the Culture Hero, often by the mere drawing of lots, decrees that man shall die (317).

Scores of stories dealing with the Culture Hero also explain the form or characteristics of animals or plants and of peculiar social organizations within tribes. Others include the distribution and differentiation of peoples. These include the origin of various tribes, the origin of particular languages, and the characteristics of various peoples (Thompson 1932, 1:96-97).



MAP OF THE MOUNTAIN PROVINCE
(FORMERLY BONTOC SUB-PROVINCE)

But this mythological figure is called the Culture Hero, not because of what he does in shaping the cosmos, but because of the boons he brings to humans. He is the bringer of culture and the source of uniquely human institutions, such as agriculture or language. He bestows on humans their material and spiritual heritage, their arts and their crafts, their laws and ceremonies. He steals daylight, or the sun, or water as gifts for humankind. He is the bringer of fire, a "monster slayer, an agent of change, the archetype of the hero, the giver of all great boons, the teacher of humanity" (Biallas 1986, 94).

In the Paleolithic world of story, the chief mythological character is the ambiguous, curiously fascinating figure of the Trickster. A fool, and a cruel, lecherous cheat, an epitome of disorder, he is nevertheless the culture-bringer also. He appears in many guises, both animal and human (Campbell 1959, 273). Best known of all among the North American Indians is Coyote. He is also the Transformer known variously as Raven, or Mink, or Blue Jay. Tricksters such as Coyote, Old man, or Manabozho, may also appear as the serious Culture Hero, and in some cases the Creator himself (Thompson 1977, 319).

It would be easier to understand the roles of the Culture Hero and Trickster if literatures, primitive and sophisticated, kept them separate, but, more often than not the Culture Hero is also the Trickster. In rare cases where the Culture Hero appears as a separate entity from the Trickster, his less admirable qualities are incorporated into a separate character. Perhaps he was seen to have a twin, one bringing good and the other evil, one productive and the other destructive.

In the myths of religious traditions, the Culture-hero-become-Trickster is unmistakable. Sometimes humanized and ennobled, the figure is usually the earthy, greedy, sensual child-animal who believes everything, tries everything, and finds nothing unnatural. A vagabond, erratic in purpose, he is exposed to all kinds of trials. He survives by his own cunning and prowess. With his power as shape shifter, he has the capacity to turn himself into a variety of forms to escape punishment for his tricks, sly jokes, or malicious pranks. He always manages to survive, to pick up the pieces and to move on to another picaresque adventure. Far from the original Culture Hero who displays some of the more ideal characteristics of the Supreme Being, this irreverent and unpredictable being displays ludicrous weakness, great deficiencies, and clumsiness. Yet, he is still portrayed as a wonderfully comic figure, who knows nothing and yet every-

thing. Both manlike and animallike, he epitomizes the spirit of disorder and is the enemy of boundaries and definitions. Ambiguous, arbitrary and capricious, he is the "image of the actual conditions of human life" (Biallas 1986, 95–96).

Lumawig as Creator/Transformer

Most primitive tribes tell stories about their beginnings and sometimes about superior beings; and it is convenient to speak of these as creation myths. Sometimes, but rarely, a real attempt is made to account for creation. But more often these origin tales are nothing more than reports of important changes taking place in an already existing world. These changes may involve the creation of the present earth, or particular features of it, or even of the heavenly bodies; and, more frequently, the creation and conditioning of men and animals.

The Bontoc creation myths begin with the assumption that the world is already in existence and proceed with the adventures of Lumawig, resulting in the establishment of the topographical features of their native earth and in the regulation of human existence.

In the Bontoc creation myths, Lumawig was the indirect cause of the flooding of the earth, and its corresponding result—the formation of mountains. Myth 1 (Bacwaden 1997, 3–49) relates how in the beginning, the earth was flat, and when Lumawig's sons went hunting, there was nothing to block the game, so they decide to flood the earth to form mountains.¹ They block up the river, resulting in a flood in which everyone is lost except for a brother and sister on Mount Pokis. When the water subsides, mountains have been formed. The couple become the forebears of all succeeding generations.

The flood myth is common to many cultures. It symbolizes the destruction of the old life, rebirth, and the hope of a new beginning (Leeming 1990, 43). With the destruction of the world comes the foundation of a new race usually from a single surviving couple, in some cases from incest (Thompson 1932, 96).

Lumawig was instrumental in the creating of man and in laying the foundation of a new race. The idea of supernatural conception is presented in Myth 1. When Lumawig descends on the couple on Mt. Pokis, the woman is already pregnant, although she has not been with a man. It is the same with Fanayan, the woman who survives on Mt. Kalawitan. When the woman on Mt. Pokis gives birth, Lumawig turns the placenta into a baby girl. And when Fanayan

gives birth to a baby girl, he turns the placenta into a baby boy. These become the ancestors of all succeeding generations.

In Myth 2, the concept of incest is introduced. Lumawig marries the brother and sister on Mt. Pokis in spite of their objections. In another version, though, he overcomes this taboo by touching the belly of the woman, and she becomes pregnant (Wilson 1956, 107). In addition, he turns various weeds into human beings and marries them. And they populate the earth.

Lumawig also gives man the gift of fire, a most fortuitous gift. In Myth 2 he finds the couple on Mt. Pokis cold and wet, so with the help of his dog and rooster, he brings them fire from Mt. Kalawitan. Fire was an appropriate gift to bring, since it is the symbol of culture. Fire is a gift that reduces the power that fate and chance have over humans, who now have the power to determine their own destiny. Lumawig, as Culture hero, thus led them out of an ignorant, innocent state, and gave them the knowledge and awareness of the responsibility of civilization.

Stories of the exploits of Lumawig show how as transformer, he created the topographical features of the earth. Among these are the creation, not only of mountains but also of certain springs and fields.

In Myth 4, he creates a mountain spring out of his jealous brother-in-law Khumanab. Khumanab had long been a thorn in his flesh, and, finally fed up with his complaints, Lumawig pushes him into the mountain side. Khumanab turns to stone, with water pouring out of his anus. This spring is still existent today. Through the years, the figure of Khumanab was gradually covered by rocks and soil. All that can be seen is the water coming out of the rock. The modern day Bontok explains that Lumawig covered the site because people kept laughing when they passed by. But it is safe to say that originally, there did exist the figure of a man with water coming out of his anus.

Myths 10 and 15, from Sabangan and Kayan respectively, are very similar. These myths explain the existence of particularly wide fields in the region. These fields are quite wide compared to the size of the ordinary Igorot field. It is said that Lumawig plowed these fields by using the different parts of his body. In the Kayan version, all the parts of his body were like numerous workers. However, the Sabangan version is more racy, for he is discovered by his wife using his penis to dig up the rocks in the field. Lumawig left these places in disgust because of his wife's disobedience.

There are also stories explaining other natural phenomena, such as the origin of the existence of certain rocks or stones. Myth 3 explains the marks on a rock, afterwards named "Palikot Aso," literally "Twisted Dog." This is the rock Lumawig sat on as he looked down on two young ladies gathering beans in Lanao. This rock still bears the marks where he thrust his spear, where his rooster scratched, and where his dog twisted itself against the rock.

Myth 15 explains the existence of certain rocks in Kayan, Tadian which look like a woman's beads, and a long, thin rock standing upright, said to be Lumawig's spear. Lumawig decides to go back to the sky where he came from because he is disgusted with his wife's disobedience. He seizes his wife's necklace and the beads are scattered, turning to stone. He then thrusts his spear into the mountain and it too turns to stone. He and his two children use this to climb up to the sky.

These are some of the present conditions in the world of the Bontoc-Igorot which are attributed to Lumawig in the myths relating his adventures after he created a new world.

Lumawig as Creator of Law and Order

The principal work of the Culture Hero is not the creation of certain various features of the landscape. Rather, it is the establishment of law and order. He is the giver of all great boons—the fire bringer and the teacher of mankind.

As mentioned above, Lumawig's most important gift to man in order to create a habitable environment was the gift of fire, symbolizing culture. He was also directly responsible for the creation of a new race to populate the new world created after the flood. Afterwards, he then proceeded to bring about the ordering of human life.

He gave man the gift of language, and brought about the distribution of various tribes. In Myth 2, he makes two weeds speak in the dialect of the different municipalities/barrios in Bontoc such as Mainit, Guinaang, Sadanga, Maligcong, Talubin, Can-*eo*, etc. The two who speak the dialect of Mainit prosper in Mainit, the two who speak the dialect of Guinaang prosper in Guinaang, and so on.

Myth 9 explains the tribal characteristic of the people of Can-*eo*. The people of Can-*eo* murder the sons of Lumawig, and as a result Lumawig comes down from the sky and lays a curse on them, telling

them that although their children would grow up to be killers they would die young, and would never multiply. Until today even with the onset of modernization, the people of Can-*eo* are still known to be a warlike people, but there are very few old men in the village and the population of Can-*eo* has never increased.

Lumawig also introduced the concept of war. Myth 4 starts with the statement that Lumawig taught the Bontoks the art of warfare although the myth does not show exactly how he did this. In Myth 9 the belief that one should always avenge the death of a member of the family is hinted at when Lumawig curses the people of Can-*eo* after they murder his sons. But it is in Myth 17 that the idea of headhunting is directly referred to. In this myth the main characters are two young men, who with the help and blessings of Lumawig, successfully avenge the death of their father at the hands of their tribal foes by killing two of their enemies and bringing home their heads.

Aside from the establishment of natural order and the ordering of human life, Lumawig, more importantly, gave the Bontoc-Igorot his culture. In Myth 2, after Lumawig gives the people their languages and distributes them among the different municipalities and barrios, he proceeds to give them their crafts.

At first, he places salt springs in Bontoc *Ili*, but the people speak in too harsh a manner and cannot sell the salt.² So he transfers the salt to Mainit and the people of Mainit sell the salt, for they speak in a soft and pleasing manner. He then orders the people of Bontoc *Ili* to get clay and mold it into pots but the pots they create easily crumble. When he asks the Samoki people to do the same, the pots they mold are well made, so pottery stays with them. In disgust, Lumawig gives the "weeds" to the people of Bontoc *Ili*. Until today, the salt springs are in Mainit, pottery is the trade of Samoki, and according to the people of Bontoc *Ili*, they raise the best palay.

Aside from crafts, Lumawig also established the beginning of social relationships through commerce, shown in Myth 2 in which the people of Mainit and Samoki sell their salt and their pots to nearby villages.

However, the most important heritage given by Lumawig is the customs and traditions, including the various rites and ceremonies that he taught the Bontoc-Igorot before going back to the sky.

The most important ritual, of course, is the *chomno* or marriage rite. This is a grand celebration given by well-to-do members of the village in which several pigs and carabaos are butchered. Myth 3 which relates how he met and married Fukhan, ending in how he

celebrated his own *chomno*, is related as a prayer at every *chomno*. And in Myth 6 he teaches his own brother Kabfikhat how to perform the *chomno*.

Another more simple marriage rite is the *paafong*. During a *paafong*, Myth 1 which relates how he flooded the earth and rescued a couple on Mt. Pokis is also related as a prayer.

There are other rituals mentioned in the myths although unlike Myths 1 and 3, they are not recited as prayers. Myth 5 relates the origin of the three stones Khal-lat, Tinadlangan, and Sabfayan. The stone of Khal-lat is a large flat stone which now has a crack in it. On his way from Lanao, Lumawig picked up this huge stone, placed it in the middle of the village, and instructed the people to use it during the rainy season. Today, when the weather turns cold, the kind of cold which chills you to your bones and in which the rain never seems to stop, old men holding torches come from Umfeg and Foyayeng (opposite ends of the village), meet and light a fire on this stone. They pray to Lumawig to have mercy on them and when the smoke from the fire reaches the sky, Lumawig heeds their prayers and the rain stops.

On the other hand, Sabfayan is a large stone standing upright in the *ato* or council house in Chao-ey. During droughts, when the rain never comes, although the various *ato* in the village keep on beating their gongs, the women fetch water, not from the river, but from a mountain spring called Tuklod-ingyaw. The water is poured over Sabfayan as they pray to Lumawig to give them rain.

The third stone, called Tinadlangan, because it has the marks of ribs or "tadlang" on it, is used to insure a good harvest. Again it was Lumawig who carried this stone from the river and brought it to At-ato. After the *apey*, a ritual done right after the planting season in which villagers dressed in their new and colorful clothes for the occasion, walk from one ricefield to another to "bless the ricefields" (De los Reyes and De los Reyes 1987, 40), people put rice wine or sugar cane wine on this stone and place their *paluki* (a small cactus-like plant with small pointed leaves) as they ask for a plentiful harvest. The *apey* is also referred to in Myth 16 in which two brothers pray for an abundant harvest as they lodge their *paluki* on Tinadlangan.

An important ritual for visitors to the village who come to attend a *chomno* is called the *alawig* by the people of Sadanga. In Myth 7, Kabigat, Lumawig's brother, who settled in Sadanga, went to Bontoc to attend Lumawig's *chomno*. When he and his companions reach

the outskirts of Bontoc, they do not stop to pray before going straight to Lumawig's house. Because of this, an old man takes one of their children in order to make them return to the edge of the town. When they do so, he explains that he has taken the child to remind them that they had forgotten to perform the *alawig*. Performing the *alawig* would insure that there would be other opportunities for them to return to Bontoc.

Another important ritual is the *patik* mentioned in Myth 17. This is a thanksgiving ritual performed at the *ato* in which a pig is butchered. In this myth, two brothers are able to avenge the death of their father at the hands of their tribal foes. Upon their return home, they perform the *patik* which gains the approval of Lumawig, for they perform the ritual properly. As a result, they are granted the things they asked for, i.e. an abundant harvest and healthy chickens and pigs.

In Myth 12, Lumawig's youngest child becomes ill. So he goes to his father and is instructed to sacrifice a cock. After the ritual is done, Lumawig's child recovers. This ritual is later named the *pasang*.

All these rituals are but a few of those performed by the Bontoc-Igorot.

Lumawig as Trickster

Lumawig, in the Bontoc myths, is primarily portrayed as Culture Hero, a benevolent being of great power whose object is to advance the interests of mankind. But anyone used to the concept of God the Creator, as that image is rendered in the higher mythologies and religions of the agriculturally based civilizations, will be surprised to read of certain adventures of Lumawig, such as his turning his brother-in-law into a mountain spring, which is not consistent with this god-like image. This can be easily explained if we see Lumawig in the dual role of Culture Hero and Trickster.

Culture Heroes and Tricksters are paradoxical. They bring the gifts of civilization, and yet they break every taboo and shatter every moral boundary that civilization sets up. While bearing the gift of fire, and with it, reason and enlightenment, they represent as well the principles of inevitable chaos, disorder, and the irrational (Biallas 1986, 98).

This ambiguity of Culture Hero and Trickster has made it difficult for everyone who has dealt with this area of mythology and folklore to understand their roles. For instance, on the American North-West Coast the Trickster is Raven. The cycle connected with him consists of two parts, the first recording incidents dealing with

the creation of the world and of natural phenomena, the second, those relating Raven's insatiable hunger and how he, by force and trickery, obtains or tries to obtain all he wants. Not only does he obtain satisfaction for all he desires and appeases his voracious appetite, he creates many of the objects man needs, and fixes the customs they are to have (Radin 1956, 156).

In the myths of religious traditions, the Culture Hero-Trickster is unmistakable, although his actions may vary according to the cultural context. In the Bontoc myths, Lumawig is primarily seen in the role of the serious Culture Hero, but in his role as Trickster, it is the comic side that comes through. It is cleverness, rather than stupidity that is emphasized in the myths which relate the tricks and sly jokes he plays, particularly on his enemies.

Myth 6 portrays him as a mischievous prankster who causes the grain in the rice granaries to disappear when the people go to get palay, because his brother, Khabfikhat, does not wait for him before going ahead with his chomno. When Lumawig finally arrives, he tells the people to return, and, to their surprise, the granaries are filled to the brim. They take only the topmost level and even this is more than enough.

In another incident with Khabfikhat, in the same myth, he and his brother have cut down a tree in order to build a mortar. But Khabfikhat kicks the *poon* or lower half of the trunk all the way to Sadanga where he has settled. This offends Lumawig's sensibilities because, as the elder brother, he should claim first choice. As a result, he lays a curse on the pigs of Sadanga. Until today, the Sadanga pigs are small, lean, and have long snouts compared to the Bontoc pigs which are very much bigger and fatter.

Another instance when Lumawig lays a curse, this time on a whole village, is found in Myth 9. As mentioned in Chapter 3, this explains the tribal characteristic of the people of Can-eo. Because they murder his sons without just cause, Lumawig curses them, and as a result the people of this village grow up to be killers, but die young.

Myth 4, on the other hand, relates an incident in which Lumawig also punishes his enemy but in a somewhat humorous vein. He and his companions are on a war expedition, and because the sun is hot they become quite thirsty. His brother-in-law, Khumanab, who has long been jealous of him because of his miraculous powers, keeps heckling him, challenging him to produce water for them and prove his god-like abilities. Fed up with his taunts, Lumawig thrusts his spear into a rock and water gushes out. After everyone has drunk

his fill, he pushes Khumanab into the rock and turns him to stone as the water pours out from his anus.

As Culture Hero Lumawig furnishes order, but as Trickster he introduces disorder when he breaks the incest taboo. In Myth 2, he orders the brother and sister who survive the flood to marry each other in spite of their objections. This idea, of course, is found among mythologies of other peoples, and merely proves that in dire circumstances, rules have to be broken, especially for such a weighty reason as the perpetuation of the human race.

Another taboo that Lumawig breaks is that no Bontok can divorce his wife once she has given him a child. But Lumawig leaves Fukhan and their children behind when he can no longer stand the petty behavior of his in-laws. He also does the same thing to his pregnant wife in Kayan when she disobeys him.

On the more comic side, in Myths 10 and 15, Lumawig plows fields in Sabangan and Kayan. Using his power as shape-shifter, he turns the different parts of his body such as his hair and his ears into numerous workers. In Sabangan, he uses his penis to dig up the rocks from the field.

Also in Kayan, Myth 13 relates how during his wedding celebration, Lumawig tells the people to bring containers for their share of the meat. Some obey him, for earlier they had seen how he turned the piglets which were about to be butchered into full-grown pigs. But some do not obey him because they are influenced by his jealous brother-in-law who reminds them that Lumawig is a nobody, for he doesn't have any ancestors. As a result, those who obey him have more than enough to eat, and they take home containers overflowing with meat, while those who do not obey him have only one slice of meat.

Thus, Lumawig in his role as Trickster, is not always a benevolent being. He himself brings disorder and chaos as breaker of laws. Still, unlike other Culture Heroes, he does not really lose his god-like qualities by degenerating into stupidity or buffoonery. He merely takes on a more human quality when he gives in to baser instincts and plays tricks on his enemies.

Lumawig as God

The Culture Hero or Trickster is seldom an unequivocal deity, but in his ideal form merely a demigod who gives fire, daylight, game animals, and the like by means of which man tries to overcome his

hostile environment, and who institutes the social rules by means of which man tries to overcome his own self-destructive nature (Greenway 1964, 87).

To the Bontoc-Igorot, however, Lumawig is more than Culture Hero. He is also a god, and it is this which makes Lumawig distinct from other Culture Heroes. The Bontoc-Igorot believes in a superdeity called Kamfunian or Kafunian, but it is Lumawig his son, whose name is more often invoked in prayers and sacrificial ceremonies.

Worship as it is understood by Christians, is not practiced by the Bontoc-Igorot. The Bontok is rather informal in his communication with his god. The communication may take the form of asking, telling, bribing, or cajoling as evidenced by prayers said by elders during rituals (Botengan 1976, 21).

For example, Myth 5 relates the ritual which is performed during storms. The elders of the village light a fire on the stone Khal-lat and say:

Make the sun shine, you Lumawig who taught us. We have brought the fire to light Khal-lat as you instructed us to do. Have mercy on us, for the people, and their chickens, and their pigs are cold. Bring out the sun and let it shine.

These conversations are not necessarily directed to Lumawig. Prayers are oftentimes directed to the things around and to the *anitos* or spirits who are believed to be still around on earth, although the living cannot see them (Botengan 1976, 22). An example of a prayer addressed to the inanimate surroundings, specifically the stone named Tinadlangan, is also found in the same myth. After the planting season, the Bontoks offer rice wine to the unseen *anitos* and place their paluki (cactus-like plant with small pointed leaves) on Tinadlangan to insure a plentiful harvest. They say, "I'm giving you something to drink, Tinadlangan. Have mercy on me so that my rice plants will grow tall and have lots of grains."

Above all, Lumawig is a fertility god, and all prayers for fruitage and increase—of men, of animals, and of crops—all prayers for deliverance from the fierce forces of the physical world, are made to him (Jenks 1905, 200–201). In fact, in practically all the myths are found prayers for the fertility of domestic animals, people, and cultivated plants.

At this point, it has to be explained that the Bontoc-Igorot does not look at Lumawig, or anybody among his pantheon of gods, in

the same way a Christian understands God. Lumawig is not considered as an omniscient being. Instead he is presented as a supernatural, wonder-working enlightener of the people on earth, also subject to the same need for performing sacrifices as anybody else.

Thus, he also performs the prescribed rituals for specific situations. But as the original performer of rituals, he takes on the role of teacher and enlightener. In Myth 11, the basic myth for the *Bayas* ceremony is found in the account of how Lumawig taught the wedding rites. On his travels from the coast to the Bontoc region he performs many magical feats. Finally he meets two sisters and marries the younger one. He then carries the rituals from Bontoc to the villages in the higher valleys, ultimately reaching the several *dap-ay* or council houses in Sagada.

To the Bontoc-Igorot, Lumawig is not merely the bringer of culture, the teacher of all rituals, he is also one of his most important deities for he embodies that which the Bontoc-Igorot places great importance—fertility.

Sociocultural Values

Except for a small band of professional folklorists, there is an absence of a world audience which enjoys oral literature. One reason is that the content of an exotic literature is not often very intelligible to persons of other sociocultural heritages. Many of the themes are foreign. The manner of life of the people is strange and is left undescribed. The personalities of characters in the stories are unfamiliar. The humor seems bizarre. A second reason lies in the structuring and style of an oral literature: its narrators usually deliver relatively bare bones of their stories, while the native audience immediately fills in with many associations and feelings which a non-member of the group could not possibly have. An outline, no matter how excellently translated, is not likely to maintain a reader's curiosity, because too much of the original, whether spoken or sensed, is missing (Jacobs 1959, 1).

Oral literature must be written out in terms of the total literary event in the native setting, accompanied by all that needs to be said in order to reconstruct and explain that phenomenon to the outsider. In other words, publication of an exotic oral literature should include the probable audience and community responses to it.

The Bontoc myths can be presented more vividly and intelligibly if they are set in their context. The needs and feelings of the Bontoc-

Igorot expressed in the myths may lead the reader to a better understanding and appreciation of the society and culture which produced them. Thus, the sociocultural values of the Bontoc-Igorot that can be gleaned from the myths, although not verbalized as such by the narrator, are presented. These are the personality traits of the Bontoc-Igorot reflected by the characters in the myths; their social relationships with the opposite sex, siblings, family, tribe, and gods; the political structure; the economic life; and how all of these in turn affect the ethical standards of the Bontoc-Igorot.

The dominant male character in the myths is, of course, Lumawig. His personality manifests the best and the worst in man, and he represents the kind of upper-class man that men want to be. Lumawig displays the idealized characteristics of a wise leader, a brave warrior, and a member of the community who shows proper respect for customs and traditions.

He is a good husband in that he provides a proper home for his wife and children. He is also quite wealthy, indicated by the fact that he does not forget his obligations as father to his sons by holding a *chomno* for them. In Bontok society, it is only the very wealthy or the *kachangyan* who can afford to hold *chomnos* because of the requisite number of pigs and carabaos necessary for the ritual.

At the same time, Lumawig is not exempt from petty troubles such as pesky in-laws and even more serious ones such as the illness of a son. In some instances he himself is the breaker of taboos.

Among the female personalities in the myths, the role of the wife is most emphasized. As stated earlier, obedience is the character trait which is most desired in women and wives. Other admirable traits are competence, self-sacrifice, and industry at feminine tasks such as gathering beans. These were actually the reasons for Lumawig's choice of Fukhan as his wife.

The Bontoc-Igorot practice primogeniture, and thus the oldest child inherits the biggest share of the family property (De los Reyes and De los Reyes 1987, 48). Younger brothers are supposed to give way to older brothers, and in Myths 6 and 7, the emphasis on the rights of the elder over the younger is clearly illustrated and verbalized by Lumawig himself. Kabfikhat earns the ire of Lumawig when he practically steals the *poon* or lower half of the tree trunk which Lumawig wanted for himself. As a result, Lumawig gives him a scolding saying, "Are you the elder so that the *poon* is yours? You are abusive."

A younger child always obeys his elder brother or sister. On the other hand, the older children take care of their smaller brothers and

sisters. Thus, in Myth 17, it is the elder brother who volunteers to be tested first by Lumawig when he finds out they desire to seek vengeance for the death of their father. Lumawig asks the elder brother to grasp his spear. As he does so, lightning suddenly strikes, but he doesn't loosen his hold. Once again lightning strikes but he doesn't loosen his hold on the spear. When the younger brother in turn passes the test, Lumawig gives them his blessings and tells them that they will be successful in their undertaking.

In addition, close family ties are very important to the Bontoc-Igorot. For example, in cases when rituals are held, aside from the immediate family, the kinship group or family clan have to be present. This explains Lumawig's key role in Kabfikhat's chomno. As Kabfikhat's only sibling, he is the most important guest in the wedding celebration and he emphasizes this when, in Myth 6, he deliberately stops the proceedings by causing the grain in the rice granaries to disappear. He says, "It is your fault. Why did you not wait for me? That brother of mine, Kabfikhat, he didn't even say that you should wait for me, his brother Lumawig."

The wives of Lumawig play very minor roles in the myths. But what is emphasized is that wives should always obey their husbands. Because of their disobedience, Lumawig's wives in Sabangan and in Kayan see him using various parts of his body to plow a field, something which they should not have witnessed. As a result Lumawig leaves them. In addition, Fukhan his wife in Bontoc, and his wife in Kayan, are instructed not to dance in the open air. Because they refuse to heed his warning he drops a bolo down from the sky on them.

The choice of a wife is also a very important factor for the Bontoc-Igorot. In Myth 3, Lumawig stops by several places, each time finding something wrong, either with the place itself or its people, before he finally settles down in Bontoc. For example, he does not like the women of Sabangan because their hair is cropped at the nape and they fish in the river. The people of Talubin are too dark, the people of Gonogon titter like birds, and the people of Alab are very fair, but their village is too low and narrow. Finally, he stops in Bontoc and he chooses Fukhan as wife after first observing her and her sister as they gather beans in Lanao. He asks his father to make the sun shine very brightly and as a result, Fukhan's older sister keeps going to the river to wet her *tapis* (native wraparound skirt). Fukhan, unbothered by the heat, keeps on gathering beans. Thus, patience, industry and the ability to withstand physical discomfort are seen to be very admirable traits in a woman.

Incestuous relationships are frowned upon, as seen in the reaction of the brother and sister on Mt. Pokis in Myth 2. When Lumawig tells them to marry each other, they strongly demur. In Myth 1, the concept of incest is avoided because the women on Mt. Pokis and on Mt. Kalawitan are already pregnant when Lumawig finds them. And in order to avoid incestuous relationships among their offspring, Lumawig creates mates for the babies by turning their placentas into babies of the opposite sex. In Myth 11, it is also to avoid incest that Lumawig, who fools with his sisters, is sent away by his father to marry in another town.

A Bontok never divorces his wife if she has already given him a child. Lumawig, as trickster and symbol of disorder, breaks this law when he leaves Fukhan in Bontoc and his wife in Kayan.

Elders in Bontok society are given very high regard. The Bontoc-Igorot child at an early age is taught to respect and revere his elders. It is the male elders of the *ato*, the politico-religious institution in the village, who have a final say in all village activities. The necessary prayers and rituals for any occasion are dictated by them. For example, in Myth 14 Lumawig and his companions go hunting, but are not able to catch anything. Because of this, the old men of the *ato* send them to the river to "cleanse" themselves of the bad luck they had brought home with them before they can proceed to the *ato*.

It is not only the male elders of the village who are afforded great respect. Old women, too, are considered as founts of wisdom whose advice should be heeded. In Myth 1, before the sons of Lumawig flood the earth, they first go to an old woman living on a nearby mountain. It is only after she gives her permission that they proceed to flood the earth.

A major theme which crops up in the myths is the tension or distrust between in-laws. In this case, it is Lumawig's brothers-in-law who make his life miserable. Envious of his miraculous abilities, they take advantage of every opportunity they can find to ridicule him. For instance, in Myth 3, Khumanab says, "Where did [this fool] come from who talks of having a *chomno* when he doesn't have any carabaos or pigs!" And in Myth 4, he taunts, "I thought you were Lumawig, how come we don't have any water to drink."

Another reason for this distrust his in-laws have for Lumawig is the fact that he is a stranger who does not seem to have any relatives or kin. In Myth 13, his brother-in-law says to the people, "Are you going to obey that son of an *anito*? He doesn't have any ancestors." More than anything, this lack of kinship ties is what damns Lumawig in

their eyes. To the Bontoc-Igorot, a person without any kinship ties is a nobody, for the main determinant of social status is lineage.

The peace pact or *pechen* is considered one of the unique features of social relationships among the Bontoc-Igorot. It is an instrument which determines the attitudes and conduct of the people belonging to different villages. In the absence of a peace pact between two different villages, such conduct such as trickery, stealth, lying, and stealing against anyone outside of the local group is condoned in actual practice.

In Myth 9, the people of Can-*eo* murder the sons of Lumawig merely because they are strangers in their village. In the myth, there is no indication whatsoever that such conduct is considered reprehensible. After their deaths, the people of Bontoc retrieve the corpses to give them a proper burial. Lumawig retaliates by laying a curse on the people of Can-*eo*. What is not said but understood, is that from then on the Bontoks and the people of Can-*eo* became tribal foes, and any hostile action by the Bontoks against the people of Can-*eo* would be justified.

In Myth 17, two brothers go to Suyangan to avenge the death of their father. They lie in wait for innocent passers-by and kill them. Again, this is shown to be acceptable in that they are able to reach their village safely. A rock helps facilitate their escape from their enemies by swallowing them up when their foes are almost upon them. Upon their return home, they immediately perform the necessary ritual and are blessed by Lumawig.

The Bontoc-Igorot firmly believes in the power of prescribed rituals, the only means by which he communicates with the unseen forces around him. Rituals are performed in connection with the agricultural cycle. In addition, all events of the Bontoc-Igorot's life from birth to death have specified rituals that must be performed. Thus, it is very important that Kabfikhat does his *chomno* properly, and Lumawig goes all the way to Sadanga to insure this. And upon the death of Lumawig's sons, their bodies have to be retrieved and given a proper burial. Otherwise, this would bring bad luck down on the whole village.

In everything he does, wherever he goes, the Bontoc-Igorot must observe omens. In Myth 17, before the two brothers can proceed with their mission to avenge their father's death, they first go to the forest to seek a favorable omen.

Besides deliberate omen-seeking trips to the forests, and the careful observation of chance omens such as birds alighting on the roof

or an unusual celestial phenomenon, every sacrifice of an animal or fowl is the occasion of reading signs from the victim's internal organs. The sacrifice can be repeated until a fortuitous portent is obtained. Thus, when Lumawig's sons leave their companions to defecate after Kabfhikat's chomno, Lumawig remarks that they bring bad luck to their uncle and because of this he will have to butcher another pig, that is, perform another appropriate ritual to negate this bad luck.

The Bontoc-Igorot is affiliated with one of several ato in a village. It serves as a council house where male members converge to discuss vital matters affecting the entire community. There is no single headman or chieftain. Instead, each ato is governed by the oldest male members. Decision is arrived at by consensus, and is usually based on past experience and precedents. The decisions of the old men indicate whether everyone should stay home, go to work in the fields, or be engaged in some other activity. Thus, rituals and the ato cannot be separated (Botengan 1976, 62).

In addition to being a council house for community affairs and a sleeping place for men and boys, the ato is perceived as the place in the community where bad luck can be cleansed both for the individuals and for the community as decided by the old men. Individuals involved in accidents or murder are deemed "dirty" in that they met with bad luck which can either affect them or the other members of the family (Botengan 1976, 63). This significant aspect of the ato can be seen in Myth 17 when the brothers come home from a headhunting expedition. They proceed to the ato to perform the *patik*, a thanksgiving ritual designed to "cleanse" them of possible bad luck. Because they perform the ritual properly, this in turn insures prosperity not only for them but also for the whole village as well.

The Bontoc-Igorot engages in various kinds of economic activities in order to survive in a rugged and mountainous region. These include agriculture, fishing, hunting, barter and trade, and cottage industries such as weaving, basket weaving, pottery, and others (De los Reyes and De los Reyes 1987, 38).

Some of these activities are cited in several of the myths. For instance, in Myth 11, Lumawig finds a woman weaving a baby blanket. In Myths 1, 2, and 4, hunting is mentioned as a necessary means of providing food. In Myth 14, Lumawig and his companions fish in the river to supplement the sweet potatoes for lunch. In Myth 2, trade, agriculture, and pottery are given to certain villages in answer to their need for livelihood and crafts.

Rice is the main produce, which the Bontoc-Igorot supplements with other crops like camote, millet, corn, sugar cane, vegetables and legumes. Almost all depend entirely on their produce as farmers for their livelihood. This concern for crops can be seen particularly in Myth 16 when two brothers express their dismay upon seeing that all their rice plants have withered. Lumawig informs them that the rain will come and they perform the prescribed ritual on the stone Tinadlangan to ask for a plentiful harvest.

As stated earlier, the Bontoc-Igorot places the greatest value on the fertility of animals, people, and crops; a direct result of the difficulty he has in trying to eke out an existence from a harsh and unforgiving land. Thus rituals are very important because they serve to propitiate the unseen gods and anitos around him. As a result, the characters in the myths are always careful to perform the prescribed rituals and repeat them if necessary. And in practically all the myths, the prayers and rituals are directed towards the fertility of people, crops, and domestic animals.³

Inter-tribal relationships are also a major source of concern. The absence of a *pechen* or peace pact between villages justifies the taking of heads of enemies, usually to avenge the death of a relative. Retribution, which to the Bontoc-Igorot is a moral obligation, vindicates headhunting. He believes that justice could only be achieved with the death of an enemy and the failure of male kin to seek revenge constitutes a disgrace to the family and kinship group. It is this moral obligation which pushes the brothers in Myth 17 to seek their revenge against their tribal foes once they learn that contrary to what they had always believed, their father had been murdered by their tribal foes.

Scott (1988) suggests that the real basis for this custom, in addition to the belief in the fertility which an enemy head brings to the victors, is a cosmology which divides mankind into a "we" and a "they" group. In the course of the socialization process, one learns to differentiate groups of people to which one belongs as the "we" in contrast to another group of the same kind as the "they." The group with which the individual identifies himself gives him a sense of belonging. Solidarity, camaraderie, esprit de corps and a protective attitude toward the other members in the group prevail. On the other hand, towards the "other group", one has feelings of strangeness, indifference, dislike, avoidance, antagonism and even hatred (Panopio, Cordero, and Raymundo 1978, 97-98).

This is further supported by the ethnocentrism inherent in the Bontok which is repeatedly manifested in the myths. The people of Bontok Ili firmly believe that all things Bontok are good and therefore superior and they look down on other villages accordingly. For instance, they believe that they raise the best palay and in Myth 1, when Lumawig uproots rice plants from various villages in the region in order to find the best, it is only the rice plants in Bontoc which cannot be uprooted.

In Myth 3, Lumawig is shocked when he sees that the people of Kayan butcher their pigs on slabs of wood, and decides not to settle there. The Bontok laughs at this because he butchers his pigs on a bed of sticks tied together. Obviously, the pigs in Bontoc are very much bigger. Another instance which further underlines the superiority of the Bontoc pigs is found in Myth 7. Because of Lumawig's curse the pigs in Sadanga are small, lean and have long snouts, compared to Bontoc pigs which are very much bigger. And in Myth 16, when the people who went to Applai or the western towns compare the contents of their containers with those who went to Bontoc Ili, they are jeered at, for as one said, "What have you gotten from Appay! Why it's the head of a bird. How come your share is so small. Here in Bontoc we have pigs and chickens."

Clearly, the most important sociocultural value indicated in the myths is the need for the utmost feeling of security in ties with kin, food, and animistic supernaturals. Emphasis seems to have been in masculinity, cleverness, and courage in men and patience, industry, and obedience in women.

Conclusion

Lumawig, in the Bontoc creation myths, is indirectly responsible for the creation of the major characteristic of the Cordillera region—its mountains. In addition, his adventures are responsible for various features of the landscape such as certain markings on rocks, and the creation of particular fields and mountain springs.

He is also instrumental in the creation of man. After he rescues the only surviving couple on Mt. Pokis, he gives them the gift of fire—the symbol of culture. Through supernatural conception, he also creates other pairs to populate the various regions in the area.

His principal work is the establishment of law and order. After the initial act of creation of man, he brings about the ordering of

human life. He gives man the gift of language, gives certain villages their tribal characteristics, and also introduces the concept of war.

As culture bringer, he gives man his crafts such as agriculture, pottery, and trade. But the most important heritage he brings are the customs and traditions, particularly the rites and ceremonies he teaches the founding fathers of the various *ato*. And as they prospered and had long lives and many children, pigs, chickens, rice, and *camote*, so will the present celebrants receive the same gifts as a result of their offerings and sacrifices to the deities.

In his role as Trickster, Lumawig is the breaker of rules. Thus, although incest is looked upon by the Bontoc-Igorot as one of the worst offenses, he commands the brother and sister on Mt. Pokis to marry each other. He breaks another rule when he divorces his wife although she has already given him a child. This shows the sophistication of the Bontoc-Igorot culture which can handle mistakes humans may make and with which it can live. And still the people and the society survive. In addition, he plays various pranks and tricks on his enemies. In the main though, in his role as Trickster it is the comic side which comes out, not stupidity or buffoonery, making him merely seem less god-like and more human.

Unlike other culture heroes, there is no explanation of Lumawig's birth. He comes down to earth a full-grown man. One thing which clearly marks his superiority is the fact that his father is Kafunian, the supreme deity of the Bontoc-Igorot. Lumawig is a hero with no luxury of childhood, thus, the implication is he is still alive. In addition, Lumawig is never conceived of in animal form unlike the American Indian culture heroes such as Coyote, or Raven, or Mink. This is consistent with one of his most important traits—that of fertility god. It is this which makes him distinct from all other culture heroes. As a divinity, it is his name that is invoked in prayers and sacrificial ceremonies. In fact, the basic theme of this collection of myths centers around the fertility of domestic animals, people, and cultivated plants in prayers made to him. Fertility is important to the Bontoc-Igorot, and this is embodied in his Culture Hero.

This preoccupation with the fertility of man, animals and crops manifests one of the sociocultural values of the Bontoc-Igorot. This rootedness in the earth is seen in the way rocks are used as ritual places. Life for the people of the Mountain Province has always been a grim business, the soil of the region being too rocky and too poor to yield plentiful harvests. Thus, in order to insure a good harvest and good luck in all other aspects of his life, the Bontoc-Igorot sees

to it that he is in accord with the supernatural by scrupulously performing all specified rituals pertaining to his life cycle and the agricultural cycle.

One practice which has long since died out with the coming of the American missionaries in the 1900s and the subsequent introduction of education and Christianity, is headhunting. Revenge was a moral obligation which vindicated headtaking. The death of a family member at the hands of tribal foes obligated the male members of the family to seek revenge. This violent practice could only be avoided by a peace pact or pechen between villages.

The Bontoc-Igorot places great importance on close family ties, for kinship defines who he is. The oldest child inherits the biggest share but this carries with it great responsibility. Younger children are taught always to obey their elder brothers and sisters, and they in turn take care of their younger siblings. Elders, even non-family members, are given very high regard. The Igorot child at an early age is taught to respect and revere his elders. And it is the male elders of the *ato* who have a final say in all village activities.

Incest is frowned upon and a Bontoc-Igorot never divorces his wife if she has already given him a child. Emphasis is placed on cleverness, courage, and masculinity in men, and patience, industry, and obedience in women. There is also a highly developed sense of ethnocentrism manifested by the Bontoc-Igorot.

It thus becomes obvious that Lumawig is definitely a Culture Hero, bearing the important characteristics of the Culture Hero such as helper in creation, transformer, and above all bringer of culture. At the same time, he also possesses one particular indigenous trait which differentiates him from other culture heroes—that of fertility god.

Notes

1. All myths subsequently referred to are found in this collection.
2. The Bontoc *Ili* is where the Bontok indigenous culture in general is found, as distinguished from what is found in the Bontok *Poblacion* where an agglomeration of different culture has already taken place.
3. Even until today, these rituals still persist and are strictly observed by the Bontoc-Igorot. The circumstances surrounding these rituals have not changed except that for grand rituals like *canaos* or *chomnos* the audience may include outsiders, such as tourists, who watch the rites purely for their entertainment value, without being aware of the real purpose of these rituals and their significance to the people involved.

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