

The Giant Eel

The story about the big eel or what the elders called “*iyu*.”

Now this particular story, was a story passed on from generation to generation by ancient Vanaw people who lived in Jukligan and Tavya_lalan.

In the beginning, for the people had not much cloth, the people’s clothing was from a beaten *tolak* [tree] or cotton fiber that they made into blankets, made into their loincloths, and made into skirts. And so the people in the beginning had not much clothing.

And as for the women, they had no underwear back then because it was the beaten *tolak* which they used as skirt.

And there was also a big, friendly, and helpful eel there. At the confluence of Tavya_layan and Jukligan, for the channel in Jukligan from the upper stream up to where the houses were was long where the big eel, or *iyu*, lived, for it was deep. When the water swelled, the eel would go to the bank, the people would ride on it to get across. So then, they loved it. It was enjoyable for they did not have to worry for even when it rained there, they did not have to return home early for the eel was there to get them across, or *iyu* as the old folks called it, for the *iyu* was an extraordinary eel. For it was really huge. It was as long as a coconut tree is high. And so those who went to work did not have to worry. When they finished work in the afternoon, even if the water swelled, there was always one that would get them across.

One day, it is said, there were women who went to work in Tavya_layan, at their swidden, it is said. And... but the water swelled. And when the water rose, the eel went to the bank. And it so happened that one of the women who was having her monthly sickness, positioned herself at its head. *Nanga-ina* [‘Readying for motherhood’], we Itnegs or iVya_lvya_lasang call it, or a term of old. So then the eel got them across. When they had gotten to the other side, [they] went out, er, they got down, the eel tasted the blood for the menstrual blood of one of the women flowed down its mouth, for the woman was having her monthly period. And from then on, when someone got near the river, they would be killed by the eel. It would snatch and eat them, it is said. And gone was the one which the people

expected to get them across the river for it had become a man-killer. It was no longer a friendly eel, but already an enemy of humans for it killed many [people]. Now, during the rainy season, on a full moon at night, the next morning some people would go missing, especially women. And when they followed it, the entire path was moist, er, the grasses which it went through were parted. And so then, they surmised that it was the trail made by the *iyu* or the big eel. So then, the people panicked because there was a man-eater. For it is said that it came out of the river in the middle of the night or during a full moon or rainy season.

And what they did was, “That eel must die,” they reportedly said. So then, they got a *gijuy*. What they called *gijuy* was the bark of a tree which the ancestors would beat into a pulp which they turned into blankets which looked like a coarse fabric when it was worn out. That was what they called as *gijuy*. That was what they burned and placed inside a big jar and they tied a dog to it. When it got hot, the dog was yowling and the eel came out, it is said, and snapped up the dog including the intensely hot jar and swallowed it. Because the *iyu* or giant eel felt the heat in its stomach, it thrashed around and redirected the flow of the channel. That is why the great volume of water went to the picnic area for it was tossed by the eel. And so the eel moved downwards. When it reportedly got across from Lavuyu, its stomach may have become sore already, it flung itself up and crashed here in Vin-ak. That is why there is that [place in] Vin-ak [which] looks like it was just cast there for that was actually a slope but because it was where the *iyu* fell, it became like a flat land. And it moved, it is said, down the river and coiled itself at the upper stream part of Jaw-angan, which they also called Jikus. And it died.

The people were astounded for the water seemed to move up but there were no rains. When they went to the upper stream to look, there was the huge eel which was coiled there for it died and they relayed the news to those in the upper stream. When they reportedly went, when they went to see, as they milled around it, there were many old jewels which were in its stomach which were the jewels of people it ate at night, especially the women for they slept with their hair jewels.

And that was why at Jukligan and Vyalangaw, the people who lived there, got dispersed. There is no place they didn't go. Some of them went to the Abra area, others went

afar, going to Vyalangaw in Natonin. And that is the story of the old people for this Vyalangaw, it is said, came from the other side.

And that is the end of the story of the *iyu* that was a big eel that lived at Jukligan. And that is the story we inherited from our parents.

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