

The Origin of the Jangu Chant and Basket Weaving

The story of the origin of the *jangu* chant and where they learned to weave baskets.

One day in Maḷtuva, there was a man named Sannajan. Sannajan was ashamed because... ashamed before his community because he did not know how to hunt, he did not know how to fish. That was why he distanced his house a bit from the community. During the trapping season, some villagers went to make their traps to ensnare deer and wild pigs. When those who went to trap arrived after visiting their snares, there is this *maḷ-utu* [they brought *maḷ-utu* with them]. What they called *maḷ-utu* was a pre-cooked food which they prepared in their camps and took to the village, so when they arrived, their children would have something to eat.

Each one of the children ate the food while playing outside the house. When Sannajan's children came, the people said, "Go and have your father Sannajan get yours," they said.

The children went away really ashamed by what they said. So when they arrived home, they told Sannajan their father [what the people said].

"Oh, how pitiful these are," he said. Now, Sannajan thought of spending time catching fruit bats, because there were plenty of these in the cave where the trappers were camping. So he went to ask one of the trappers about their camp.

"How far is your camp?" he said.

"If you're strong, you can reach it at noon. But be careful not to take the path going to the area in Jawigi, because that way leads to Majapuḷ where the giants are," they said. "Take the right because that leads to the cave of Makaltub," said those who gave him instructions.

So for his packed meal, [he had] bananas, sweet camote, with yams and taro. And he set his mind on how he could find his way to the place where he could catch bats. He got so focused on walking that he happened to take the path to Majapuḷ, and the road that did not

lead to Makaltub was the one he took, for it was the road going to the cave in Majapul where the giants were.

When he got to the cave, the sun began to set. It was nearly, maybe three o'clock in the afternoon. He was surprised that the cave was clean but there were no signs of rattan strips left by the rattan gatherers, er, trappers. For usually, trappers always left behind strips of rattan which they used to tie their loads, because they would catch [an animal]. He decided to strike a flint to build a fire to get, er, build a fire to cook his food. As he was preparing the flint, there came a gigantic human. And then, Sannajan was about to flee when the giant caught his arm. *Hali*, Sannajan furiously wriggled and screamed for it was a monstrous human. And his eyebrows were upturned towards the heavens, turned upwards. After some time, the giant's brother arrived and held Sannadan's other arm. *Hali*, Sannajan kept on shrieking and crying.

Later on, the father of the giant whose name was Tamukjaw came home and reassured Sannajan, "Don't be... don't worry, you won't be touched, you are not going to die," he said.

And then the giant started chanting a *jangu*, saying, "Long have we waited for you, and it's only now that we've seen you. We are delighted that you came, you who are from Maľtuva," said Tamukjaw their father. And so Sannajan calmed down because he heard a strange tune.

Sometime again later, "Children, I bid you to go get some vines so we can teach [this man] from Maľtuva how to make a basket," he said.

Now, after a while, because they felt hungry, they cooked food. And the small earthen pot they set upon the hearth, filled up with vapor. The giants wasted no time sniffing. They pointed at the pot to Sannajan.

"What can I eat from [smelling] only a vapor?" he thought to himself.

The giants grabbed him and made him smell the vapor from the pot. In a little while, he got sated. And Sannajan was utterly baffled. Then, they left, the sons of Tamukjaw (for Tamukjaw was the name of the father of the giants). He had them get rattan and they

carefully stripped them. *Hali*, they started teaching Sannajan. All of the [weaving] patterns, they chanted in a *jangu* as they taught [Sannajan]. And the length of time Sannajan remained in Majapul was a month.

Then two baskets were finished. Now the basket, when completely woven – because it was excellently designed and carefully pressed together – can be used to fetch water because water does not seep through it.

“This third one we will not finish, Sannajan, so you can complete it at home, so that you will not forget the patterns,” they said. “Now go for they have been very worried. They’ve just performed the cleansing funeral ritual for you,” said their father Tamukjaw. “And now, you will leave soon and my two sons will accompany you,” he said.

Then it was like Sannajan had fallen asleep. But the giants had told him, “When you feel like you bumped yourself, open your eyes for you shall be close to your house by then,” they said.

So that night, *ali* they took the... but Sannajan was not conscious of it. So his two sons, they were the ones who escorted him home, but they were, like, well, even if he was not aware of it, they directed him along the way.

At daybreak, the giants brought him there and when Sannajan was jolted awake, he looked around and the day was breaking. He looked for those who accompanied him but they were nowhere to be found because they had gone home. He did not know where they had gone.

As Sannajan got closer to his house, the people began shouting, “*Uw*, Sannajan is here!” they said. And Sannajan arrived. “Why, you have brought a basket! Where did you get that basket?” they asked. He kept silent because he wanted the people to gather around.

When the people came, and most of them were gathered, he began telling them that he had come from the cave of Majapul. But he spoke in a *jangu* chant. He kept on speaking in a chant and the people were fascinated.

“Ay Sannajan, please teach us that *jangu*,” he said, they said.

“But if I do that, how will I get firewood and how will I get food? We will surely go hungry,” said Sannajan.

“Don’t worry about that because we will take care of it,” they said.

Hali, the people started bringing in wood, they were bringing in food to be cooked, they were bringing in rice or taro, for them to eat. And so they stayed for two weeks to learn the *jangu*. After that, they had already learned the chant. And so on every occasion, they would insist that Sannajan spoke first as he always chanted his speech. And all of them were so enthralled.

When they came for peace pact rituals, those from Vuwaya, the people kept silent as they waited for Sannajan to speak. When Sannajan spoke, his speech was in a *jangu*. And *alli*, those who came to strike a peace pact learned it, and bought it with coconut oil. They bought that chant with coconut oil. The next time they entered into a peace pact, there were others who also wanted to make the peace pact with them. When the Agta came to forge a pact, the Agta learned it and the Agta bought it paying for it with arrows.

So that is the story of... the story of the origin of the chant *jangu* and how they learned the weaving of baskets. And that is the end of the story which we heard from our parents who also heard it from their parents who passed it down to us their children.

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