Wigan and Bugan

The Ifugao · the mountains of northern Luzon, the Philippines

Where It Comes From

The Ifugao are the people who built the famous rice terraces in the mountains of northern Luzon. This story was recorded by the American anthropologist H. Otley Beyer and published in 1913, and retold in Roland Dixon's *Oceanic Mythology* (1916). Ifugao tellers have other versions too.

What Happens

Once there was a great drought, and the rivers ran dry. The young men dug into the riverbed looking for the spirit of the river, and the river gods were angered. Water burst out, and rain fell, and it would not stop.

The flood rose over everything. Only two people survived: the brother, Wigan, on top of Mount Amuyao, and his sister, Bugan, on another peak.

At night Wigan saw her fire burning far away. When the waters went down he went to find her.

The two married, with the blessing of the god Maknongan. They had nine children, and from them come all the peoples of the earth.

What Stands Out

Why the flood came. People disturbed the river, and the river gods were angry.

Who was saved, and how. One brother and one sister, each on their own mountain.

The boat or the refuge. Two mountaintops.

What came after. A fire seen across the water brings the last two people together, and nine children start the world again.

THINK IT THROUGH

Wigan found his sister because she kept a fire burning. What does it take to keep a light on for someone?

Sources

H. Otley Beyer, in the *Philippine Journal of Science* 8 (1913), as given in Roland B. Dixon, *Oceanic Mythology* (The Mythology of All Races, vol. 9, 1916), pp. 170–172.

Everything here is a summary in our own words. Where a story has many tellings, we follow the source named above and say so.