

Echoes of the Cosmic Catastrophe: The Extinction of the People of Tagua-Tagua

We saw the lake of Tagua-Tagua which is well known by its floating islands that have been described by Claudio Gay. These islands reach a thickness of six feet being most of them submerged. Depending on the direction of the wind they move from one side to the other of the lake and even some times people and horses are carried on them...

Charles Darwin (1834).

A Spanish Record of a Native Myth

Jesuit and historian Diego de Rosales (1601-1677) wrote a book titled *Historia Jeneral del Reyno de Chile. Flandes Indiano* (“General History of the Kingdom of Chile. Indigenous Flanders”, ca. 1674) which covers scientific and anthropologic fields that were *avant-garde* in that time.

De Rosales was born in Madrid in 1601 and while studying to become a priest he travelled to the Kingdom of Chile in 1629 and settled in the south of the country, specifically in the Bío-Bío Region where he progressively obtained knowledge of the rich Araucanian culture and traditions. He attended at least two *Parlamentos* or Parliamentary Meetings celebrated in 1641 and 1647 between the Araucanians and the Spaniards.

Thus, because of his proximity to both Nature and the contact with the indigenous people, De Rosales was able to write the *Historia Jeneral del Reyno de Chile* which contains descriptions of the soil, the flora and fauna as well as the native cultures he was able to meet.

The book describes also the arrival of the *Conquistadores* to Chile until the great indigenous rebellion in Chile of 1665.

Although the manuscript of the *Historia Jeneral del Reyno de Chile* was sent to Spain for its publication it remained unpublished until 1877 when it was printed in Chile.

Among the many fascinating topics described in Diego de Rosales’ *Historia Jeneral del Reyno de Chile* there is one mythical tradition of the site of Tagua-Tagua in the central area of Chile that was communicated to him by the Araucanians that refers to the destruction of a group of people after a catastrophic event which was warned by *two heavenly beings*.

But, was it just a *myth*?

Mythical History

The singular mythical narration in the book of Diego de Rosales indicates:

The peculiar and striking teaching that is preserved is an immemorial time tradition among the Indios is that in the place called Tagua-Tagua, in remote times, before the arrival of the Spaniards there was a wonderful and mild valley that has numberless inhabitants that was unnoticed for others while it was a prosperous and sown land for their well-being. However with the abundancy and the given gifts they were not happy enough with their own women and even with the women of others as they were like unleashed beasts in the awkward vice of sodomy and bestiality.



Geographic location of San Vicente de Tagua-Tagua.



The front cover of the manuscript of the second part of the book written by Diego de Rosales.

*Then, one day two beautiful young men entered that valley with clothes and **facial features that have never been seen before** and of such admirable beauty and seriousness that in fact they were **angels** and thus they told all the people of that land that they two have been sent by the Lord of the Sky and Earth, the Sea, the Winds, the Sun, the Moon and the Stars, and that they came to reproach them as they should, because of their actions they were offending the Creator of Nature, their God and Lord, to whom they owed all love and obedience; but yet, if they did not stop they would be severely punished in this life and even more in the next one by eternal pain and torments.*

After saying this they disappeared and were never seen again. At the time the people were impressed but they did not change and kept their vicious actions.

Oh! Great patience of God and his mercy because after some years the two angels in human figure came back with their clothes and beauty that could be understood that they were not earthly men but heavenly spirits. They once again spoke to the Indios and reproached them of their vices and told them that the punishment of God was near unless they would stop their sins. They disappeared again and nevertheless the Indios kept their bad habits and blinded by so much light they preserved their crimes, unbelievers just as those of Sodom. Yet after some days the punishment of God came upon them as earth trembled and shook with such fury that many cracks and pits were open and thus the sentence was pronounced and the punishment was executed, expelling so much water that flooded all that valley and drowning everything that was there: The houses, the farms, the fields leaving no memory of that nefarious people remaining thus as eternal memory and a lesson to the rest of the people that the lake that is found there today and that has remained there after so many years since this astonishing case took place¹.

Interestingly enough this myth has real dimensions concerning the geological location of Tagua-Tagua, the extinction of the people that lived in the area because of the catastrophe referred as the 'Punishment of God' and last but not least an unsolved mystery: Who were the *angels in human form*?

The Reality of Myth

It ought to be assumed that this Pre-Columbian myth of the ancient Araucanians is covered with social and religious layers especially when it was written down by Diego de Rosales, this is, the proper Christian moral and Western rational thought that characterized the 17th century. However there are remarking and intriguing factors that make this 'myth' more likely a historical record based in real events. In first term, the geographical description of the site is accurate: The Tagua-Tagua Lake exists, or better, it existed as it was desiccated in the first decades of the 19th century making it a fertile field for farming. The Tagua-Tagua Lake (34°30'S, 71°10'W) had an approximate surface of 90 km² limited by a mountain chain of around 35 km of extension EW and 25 km NS at the eastern edge of the Mountain Coast and connected to the Central Valley through the chain of hills of Cuchipuy.

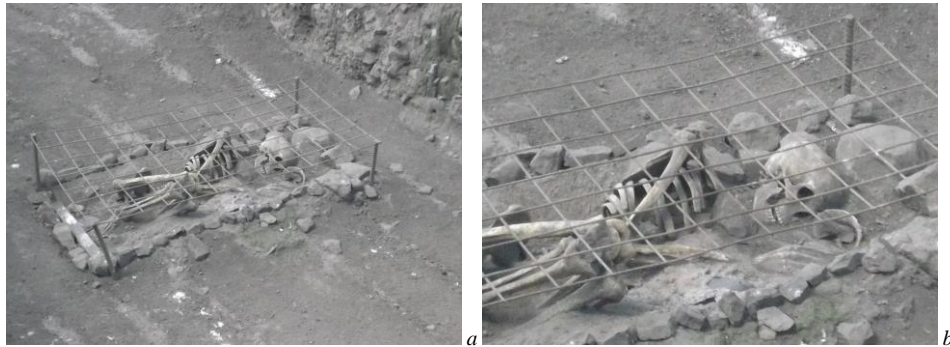
Secondly, the myth mentions the presence of a group of people that was *destroyed* by the 'Punishment of God'. Quite probably this is a Christian commentary bias that De Rosales might have added to the original tradition but nonetheless the fact is that in the area there was a group of people that vanished is real: Archaeological evidence shows that the primordial people of Chile –and also of the Americas– were Dolichocephalic, this is, a type of skull which is longer than wider in opposition to the Brachycephalic which are wider than longer and that is abundant among the Indigenous people until today. The first group or Paleo-Americans –defined as well as Paleo-Indians– is known in North America as the Clovis

¹ Rosales, D. *Historia Jeneral del Reyno de Chile*. Quoted in: Medina, J. T. *Los aborígenes de Chile*. Pages 41-42.

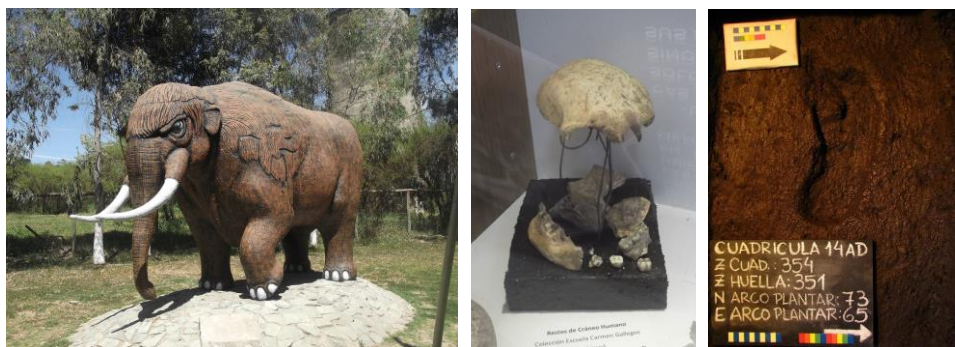
People which became extinct by the cosmic impact that generated a worldwide cataclysm around 12.900 years ago².

One fine example of this primitive people is found precisely at the Paleo-American cemetery of Cuchipuy in Tagua-Tagua³.

The *Piedras Horadadas* –the so called “Donut Stones”–, this is, roundish stones perforated in their center part which are associated too to Paleo-American sites throughout Chile reinforce the antiquity of this primitive group. The origin, use and meaning of these lithic artifacts remain unknown.



a, b, c. The Paleo-American cemetery of Cuchipuy in Tagua-Tagua. The individual buried at this place has a dolichocephalic or dolicoïd skull. d. A Paleo-American skeleton with some of the stone artifacts found in Tagua-Tagua and now exhibited at the School Museum of Tagua-Tagua (MELT).



Left: A natural scale Gonfoterio reproduction at the School Museum of Tagua-Tagua. Center: Fragments of a dolicoïd skull found at Tagua-Tagua (MELT). Right: A Paleoamerican footwear track fossilized at the site of Pilauco, near Osorno in the south of Chile. This is another site in the country that corroborates the coexistence between the megafauna and the primitive inhabitants of Chile. Significantly both became extinct around 12.000 years ago.

² See *Evidence for an extraterrestrial impact 12,900 years ago that contributed to the megafaunal extinctions and the Younger Dryas cooling* (2007) by R. B. Firestone, R. B., A. West, J. P. Kennett et al. and *Evidence from central Mexico supporting the Younger Dryas extraterrestrial impact hypothesis* (2012) by I. Israde-Alcántara, J. L. Bischoff, G. Domínguez-Vázquez et al.

³ Kalwasser, J.; A. Medina & J. Munizaga. *Cementerio del Período Arcaico en Cuchipuy*. Pages 109-123. See also *Estudio de once fechas de R. C. 14 relacionadas con el hombre de Cuchipuy* (Pages 9-13) by the same authors.



The *Piedras Horadadas* or 'Donut Stones' found in Tagua-Tagua. Their origin, use and meaning still represent an enigma as they do not belong to any indigenous culture in Chile (MELT).



Archaeological objects found at Tagua-Tagua. *Left*: A Toki-Kura or sacred stone axe of the ancient Araucanians. It is a symbol of their authority. *Center*: A stone instrument of unknown use. *Right*: A mortar with a *mano* or *muller* (MELT).

In geological and archaeological terms this event is known as the *Clovis Comet Impact*. In the mythical language is the last *Great Flood*.

It is the *Tripalafken* or "Great Water" of the Araucanians.

A geological proof of the antiquity of this site can be reinforced by the discovery made in the area of the Gonfoterio (*Gomphotheriidae* - *Stegomastodon platensis*), a Proboscidean kind of local Mammoth that disappeared around 13.000-13.500 years ago.

Other megafauna of the area are the extinct American Horse (*Hippidion*), the Deer (*Antifer*) and the Palaeolama (*Palaeolama*).

Specimens of the Gonfoterio have been found in Chile in Paleo-American sites such as the Chiloé Island and Pilacuo (Region of the Lakes), Collilelfu near Valdivia (Region of the Rivers), and in Los Vilos (Region of Coquimbo).

Now, one of the most eloquent and metaphorical grounds of this myth is the reference to the ‘Punishment of God’ described as when *earth trembled and shook with such fury that many cracks and pits were open (...)* being followed by a flood that covered everything. This is the *Great Catastrophe*, the *Flood* of the myths which as explained before it is today known as the *Clovis Comet Impact*.



The desiccated Tagua-Tagua Lake as it looks today (2017).



Left: A scale model reconstruction of the Gonfoterios of Tagua-Tagua. Center: A Pre-Columbian clay vessel of Tagua-Tagua. Right: A vessel fragment of Tagua-Tagua with a symbol painted on it (MELT).



Left: The differences among the Mesocephalic, the Dolichocephalic and the Brachycephalic skulls, respectively. The last two are recognized as Paleoamerican and Pre-Columbian in the archaeological context of the Americas. Center and left: The *Piedras Tacitas* or Cup-Marked Stones. These enigmatic manifestations are associated to the *Piedras Horadadas*.

Mysterious Messengers

All the fields mentioned above are recognizable and verifiable. They consist in geological and archaeological scientific evidence. However, who were those *two beautiful young men with clothes and facial features that have never been seen before and of such admirable beauty and seriousness* that were described in Diego de Rosales’ book as *angels* who warned the people of Tagua-Tagua about the coming catastrophe?

Certainly it could be considered that these two figures have a resemblance with the *angels* that destroyed Sodom:

¹² The two men [angels] said to Lot, “Do you have anyone else here – sons-in-law, sons or daughters, or anyone else in the city who belongs to you? Get them out of here, ¹³ because we are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it.

¹⁴ So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were pledged to marry his daughters. He said, “Hurry and get out of this place, because the Lord is about to destroy the city!”. But his sons-in-law thought he was joking.

¹⁵ With the coming of dawn, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or you will be swept away when the city is punished”.

¹⁶ When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them. ¹⁷ As soon as they had brought them out, one of them said, “Flee for your lives! Don’t look back, and don’t stop anywhere in the plain! Flee to the mountains or you will be swept away!”.

¹⁸ But Lot said to them, “No, my lords, please! ¹⁹ Your servant has found favor in your eyes, and you have shown great kindness to me in sparing my life. But I can’t flee to the mountains; this disaster will overtake me, and I will die. ²⁰ Look, here is a town near enough to run to, and it is small. Let me flee to it – it is very small, isn’t it? Then my life will be spared”.

²¹ He said to him, “Very well, I will grant this request too; I will not overthrow the town you speak of. ²² But flee there quickly, because I cannot do anything until you reach it.” (That is why the town was called Zoar.

²³ By the time Lot reached Zoar, the sun had risen over the land. ²⁴ Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah – from the Lord out of the heavens. ²⁵ Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities – and also the vegetation in the land. ²⁶ But Lot’s wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

²⁷ Early the next morning Abraham got up and returned to the place where he had stood before the Lord. ²⁸ He looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, toward all the land of the plain, and he saw dense smoke rising from the land, like smoke from a furnace.

²⁹ So when God destroyed the cities of the plain, he remembered Abraham, and he brought Lot out of the catastrophe that overthrew the cities where Lot had lived⁴.

Was Diego de Rosales’ account influenced by the biblical destruction of Sodom? Is there any relation? What would have been his aim or purpose? But, unlike the *Genesis* destruction carried away by the two *angels* in the record of the Araucanians the people of Tagua-Tagua were doomed: They all died and their settlement disappeared in the flood⁵.

And who were then these *angels* and even more, how could they have possibly known about the destruction/catastrophe? Just like in the destruction of Sodom the catastrophe was foreseen with almost *chronological* precision and it was simply inevitable. Was it the natural disaster of the *Clovis Comet Impact* or could it have been a planned mass destruction that the religious *Zeitgeist* in the Middle East as well as in Chile was covered by the Christian moral? A mass destruction in ancient times? And in this hypothetical case, what would have been the reason for the total annihilation?

Although the *angels* were strangers –with *clothes and facial features that have never been seen before*–, how did they manage, nevertheless, to communicate –assumably– in their language about the “Punishment of God”?

It is important to remark that in some Araucanian myths that were recorded by *cronistas*, missionaries and later by ethnologists during the 20th century the presence of these ‘messengers’ is also mentioned. For example one of these messengers was described as a

⁴ *Genesis*. 12:29.

⁵ Oral folklore refers that at the bottom of the Tagua-Tagua Lake there was a ‘majestic city’. In relation to the abundant folklore of the Tagua-Tagua area see the book *Geografía del mito y la leyenda chilenos* (“Geography of the Myth and Legend from Chile”, 1974) by Oreste Plath. Pages 124-125.

white man known as Trome and he has the size, face and hair like those of the Spaniards that arrived later. He announced the upcoming devastation and told the Araucanians that they should reach the high mountains called Treng-Treng. But very few people followed his indications and most drowned while others became stone!⁶

Anthropologist Rolf Foerster registered as well a similar mythical tradition –beyond some degree of tangible transculturation– in which two heavenly messengers warned the Araucanians about the coming destruction:

The Creator God, the Father-God (Chao Ngenechen), concerned about the destiny of his offspring sent two angels (Triapantu and Nigishima) who descended from heaven (Wenumapu [the Land of Heaven]) to earth (Mapu) in order to enchant the highest peak of the island known as Tren-Tren. From there they announced to the people of Huape [a place near Chillán, in the Region of Bío-Bío] the dangers and disgrace that were set upon them. In ancient times and due to the advices received by these angels the Mapuches [Araucanians] were able to survive a cosmic chaos: From the Flood:

“God sent Virtues, Angels to earth and because of this, in their land the Mapuches [Araucanians] knew that there will take a place the Flood. The angel that arrived first was Tripaiantu which means the ‘Rise of the Sun in the Mountain’. There were two angels; the other one was called Nigishma”⁷.

Were these two *angels* of Tagua-Tagua the same that southern Araucanians knew as Tripaiantu and Nigishma?

The nature of the messengers should not or better cannot be related to other local cultures as they were depicted as non-human beings: *In fact they were angels.*

In this regard, the record of De Rosales implies and provides a substantial crack in mainstream historiography: ***They two have been sent by the Lord of the Sky and Earth, the Sea, the Winds, the Sun, the Moon and the Stars.***

Could it be that these messengers were not ‘angels’ but rather extraterrestrials –just as suggested by Erich von Däniken in his book *Chariots of the Gods?* concerning the ‘angels’ of Sodom and Gomorrah– being this the explanation why they had *clothes and facial features that have never been seen before and of such admirable beauty and seriousness?*⁸

The amount of sources, myths and archaeological evidence found throughout the world about the ancient gods would reinforce this idea.

At the core of this myth remains –beyond the social and religious layers that accounted it, this is, the *Zeitgeist* or ‘Spirit of the Time’– a real fact which is that the area was devastated by a mega-cataclysm that was foreseen by two enigmatic figures.

It remains undetermined though how the transmission of the devastation of Tagua-Tagua and its people took place.

The destiny of these messengers became unknown after their announcement of the *Great Catastrophe* as the *angels*, the extraterrestrials, vanished in the timeless dimension of the legendary times.



The *angel* Trome announced to the Araucanians the coming catastrophe. Illustration by H. Rabello in the book *Leyendas y cuentos araucanos* (1938) by Blanca Santa Cruz.

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⁶ Santa Cruz O., B. *Leyendas y cuentos araucanos*. Pages 115-119.

⁷ Foerster, R. *Introducción a la religiosidad mapuche*. Page 78.

⁸ Erich von Däniken in the chapter 4. *Was God an astronaut?* Of his book *Chariots of the Gods?* (1968) has written that the two angels that destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah were in fact aliens, this is, extraterrestrials.



Left: The Chemamüll or ‘Wood-People’, this is, the sculptural representation of the Lituches, the survivors of the Deluge of the Araucanian culture (Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino). *Right:* An illustration of the Araucanians by ethnologist Giulio Ferrario (1827).



Left and right: Details of the Chemamüll, the representation of the Lituches or survivors of the Great Flood. The *Callanas* or ‘hats’ they wear were used at the top of the Treng-Treng Mountain. Unlike the inhabitants of Tagua-Tagua, the ancient Araucanians survived the last world catastrophe (Museo Chileno de Arte Precolombino and Museo de Historia Nacional de Santiago, respectively).

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