



# BATAK

THE FIRST PEOPLE



# BATAK: THE FIRST PEOPLE

A photo-narrative of a vanishing culture from Palawan Island  
(The Philippines)

Dario Novellino

Confédération Française Démocratique du Travail (CFDT)  
Coalition Against Land Grabbing (CALG)  
Batak Federation (Bayaan it Batak kat Palawan – BBKP)

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Foreword by  
Laurent Berger

BATAK

Dario Novellino





## FOREWORD



Padaw, the last shaman

The Batak tribe lives on Palawan Island, on the western side of the Philippines Archipelago. Their way of life and forest habitat have been strongly impacted by the unsustainable development of industrial and economic activities. Biodiversity is also threatened because of deforestation and species becoming extinct.

Bataks only rarely benefit from economic activities developing in their territory. Their challenge is safeguarding forest areas and maintaining the diversity of local cultures without impeding the economic development of southern countries. Confronted with such a complex equation, CFDT has made Sustainable Development and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) one of its priorities. It aims at raising the awareness of all stakeholders on these major challenges.

To take part in this debate, our confederated cultural non-profit organisation, Espace Belleville, chose to showcase an installation, an exhibition and a screening of films presenting Batak legends and beliefs, as well as their way of life and ceremonies. It is one of our NGO's purposes to organise artistic events related to our union demands such as Sustainable Development and Human Rights.

The *Son de madera* (Sound of wood) project was submitted to- and approved by- the members of the Batak community. The canopy adorned with fifty thousand red flowers and the 4+ meter high Tree of Life are an invitation to discover both the jungle environment in which Bataks dwell, as well as their beliefs. According to them, this installation reflects the dialogue between the “world of above” and the “world of below”, the dialogue that takes place between the world of the people and the world of the spirits. It illustrates the Bataks’ understanding of nature’s language. Art and Culture are here inviting visitors to accept to be challenged and to become aware of different realities.

Laurent Berger  
General Secretary of CFDT



## INTRODUCTION

At the age of thirteen, my plan «to explore» uncontaminated territories and live with remote indigenous communities was already set in my mind. But it was only on October 11, 1982 that my plans began to materialise. I was nineteen at that time, and only held an under-graduate degree. Armed with a 35mm camera, less than 800,000 liras (about today's 400 euros) and a spirit of adventure I felt time was ripe to pursue my first experience with indigenous peoples. Mysteriously, life took me to Canada after a hitchhiking across Europe and North America. Here I lived for months with the Inuit of Paulatak, south of Victoria Island and learned about the struggle of proud people being cut between two different worlds with opposite values and, often, incommensurable lifestyles. I returned to Italy only two years later, treasuring my memories of the Inuit and now holding a deeper understanding of indigenous people's struggle for land rights and self-determination.

My first contact with hunter-gatherers of Southeast Asia only occurred in July 1986. I spent several days with a group of Batek Negrito in the state of Trengganu (Peninsula Malaysia). In September of the same year, I arrived to the Philippines. At that time, southern Palawan was a frontier province, with a breath-taking landscapes: long stretches of beach framed with tall coconuts palms, clouded mountains blanketed by lush vegetation, clean springs, waterfalls and outstanding limestone formations. I began to cross the remote interior on foot, relying on the help of the local indigenous inhabitants. Months passed by, living with isolated and self-sufficient Pala'wan indigenous communities; not knowing that I had become a key witness of a 'way of life' that was going to be disrupted radically in a matter of a few years.

I reached the Batak in April 1987, and later established a «blood-compact» (*sandugo*) relationship with Timbay, one of their leaders. This allowed me to become an affiliate member of the *Tanabag* group, and to become included in the local kinship relationships with the nickname «*panaw panaw*» (walking-walking). At that time, most of the men wore G-strings; some carried bows and arrows. Their settlement was in Calabayug more than 6 hours walk from the coast, and thus at a safe distance from lowland Filipino settlements. There was a logging company that had just began to encroach on their land, felling some of the *Agathis*

trees from which Batak extracted commercially valuable resin. The people had no financial means and no advocacy experience to counter logging operations. So I found myself assisting the Batak in the writing of a petition against the company. In May 1987, I set off for Manila, to submit the petition to the central office of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR). The outcome was positive. A DENR mission was sent to Palawan, and it established that the company had operated outside the limits of its concession. Soon after, the company's license was revoked. This was the cause of much happiness and relief for both Batak and myself, but also the beginning of new personal challenges. In fact, helping the Batak against unscrupulous businessmen and influential politicians had placed my own life at risk. With increasing caution, I continued to visit and live each year for several months with the Batak, while travelling to other parts of South East Asia to document the impact of deforestation and support the advocacy of vulnerable indigenous communities such as the Penan of Sarawak and the Sakai of Sumatra.

In 1990, while in Palawan, I received information that I had been blacklisted by the military as a suspected financier of the communist guerrilla. This was precisely the time when other NGO activists were being arrested on the island. I took the only reasonable course of action open to me, and fled the island. In 1992, I was stopped at Manila Airport and discovered that my name had been included in the list of «*persona non-grata*». My passport was confiscated. Likely, a friend lawyer who had strong connections with the DENR Secretary rescued me. As a result, I was allowed to stay in the Philippines for several months more. Because of these events, I came to the conclusion that the only way to remain in the country was to affiliate myself to an academic institution and enter the Philippines as a «researcher» rather than as a «tourist». Particularly, I felt it was important to gain some «academic credentials», to better pursue my mission and avoid «constructed accusations» about my alleged involvement with the New Peoples' Army (NPA) guerrilla. At the same time, I also wanted to acquire a different language to make sense of my experience with the Batak and to better document their practices and cultural transformation. Anthropology, I thought, was the answer. In 1993 I joined the Ateneo de Manila University as a Visiting

Research Associate of the Institute of Philippine Culture and, in 1994, enrolled for a Master Degree in Social Anthropology at the School of Oriental and African Study in London. My final objective was never to become an «academician», but only to find myself in a stronger position to challenge the big economic interests and lobbies that wanted to convert Palawan (the Philippine's last frontier) into mining sites and large-scale plantations.

Towards the end of the nineteen-nineties a series of events occurred that would have a powerful impact on the lives of the Batak and myself. The focus of these events was an escalation of epidemics and of contacts with outsiders (conservationists, missionaries, government agencies, immigrants, etc.) leading to population decline, decreasing social cohesion and radical changes in people's mobility and subsistence patterns. At the same time, big transformations were happening all over Palawan and the Philippines, with massive expanses of land being given away to mining firms and, more recently, to oil palm companies. By this time, it became clear in my mind that unless indigenous groups had constituted themselves into legally recognized organizations, it would have been difficult for them to withstand the pressure from business firms and politically well-connected entrepreneurs.

With this idea in mind, I continued to sustain local forms of peaceful resistance, while supporting the organization of locally grounded advocacy initiatives. This included the creation of strategic alliances between Palawan indigenous communities and global advocacy groups based in the West, such as Survival International. Finally, in 2015, this long and very complex process has resulted in the setting up of CALG (Coalition against Land Grabbing), an indigenous

peoples' organization now led by courageous and motivated individuals belonging to the three main ethnic groups (Tagbanua, Pala'wan and Batak). During all these challenging years, I also managed to complete my PhD. in Environmental Anthropology at the University Kent. But I did not pursue an academic career not to dilute my own involvement with advocacy.

My long-term engagement with the Batak has created the conditions for me to involve deeply with the dimension of Batak feelings and perceptual experience. This has entailed a total re-positioning of my own self to embrace Batak distinct perspective of looking at existence. Countless hours working in the swiddens - and walking through the forest - have shaped my own body and mind. Because of Batak, I have learned how to recognise the sound and marks of animals, to follow the barely visible pathways criss-crossing the vegetation, to perform in a shamanic séance, to make jokes using local metaphors, to live a simple and olsom life with little or no possession. All this knowledge remains tacit and implicit whenever I go and, as much as I can, I try to pass it on to my six years old twins Lavinia and Emilia, and to those who I love most.

This photo-book treasures and cristallizes some of my most vivid and meangful memories with the Batak. Although people' existence is becoming increasingly fragmented and tragically uncertain, this publication can still make Batak, and their future generations, even more proud of who they are; it might also encourage government agencies to appreciate and respect their culture more, while supporting Batak efforts to protect one of the most precious and best conserved forests in the Philippines.

Dario Novellino



«...at my arrival in Batak area in 1987. The photo portrays me while I am helping the Batak to collect their thumbmarks for the petition that served to stop the logging company which was destroying their forest.»





«The house is in the field, the field is in the forest,  
the forest is our home.»

«Balay men kat uma, du'un kat talun. Talun a matuud  
itu tu balay men.»







«Two more crosses upriver and we'll be home.»

«Duan dipag mana, kat balay mabut na »

«I told my child:  
go and harvest the bananas when they are still  
green, otherwise the monkey will finish them.»

«Nagtaeg aku kat anak ku:  
pisien mu tu punti da'gwa maka inug ay  
pagka'nen bakes»







«They run and played with their puppies all day. Together on the bamboo floor (*datag*) they fell asleep».

«Naglukbu lukbu sira, iat naggera' gera' tu manga anak, kabaya tu pai'deng pininlayan sira, kabaya tu pai'deng nagedepna kat datag.»



«Today my father will sell our rattan on the coast. A candy, a little cake he'll bring to me as a present.»

«Sumanian aldaw si ama' mamalang it uay, pagdateng ya may pisi' ya kendy, may tinapay para kanaken.»



«The dry season has arrived. No rain, clear blue sky, on the river edges we camp.»

«Ma'abut na to kuaresima, maliwanag tu kalibutan, da'gwa lebeg, magda'es na kami kat enay.»





«I saw a monkey stilling maize from our field.  
My little brother saw it too.»

«Nagle'ganan ku tu bakes nagtakaw it mais  
men, ituldu ku kat are' ko para magle'ganan ya  
maka.»



«The sound of my guitar meets the  
birds' songs...together we play.»

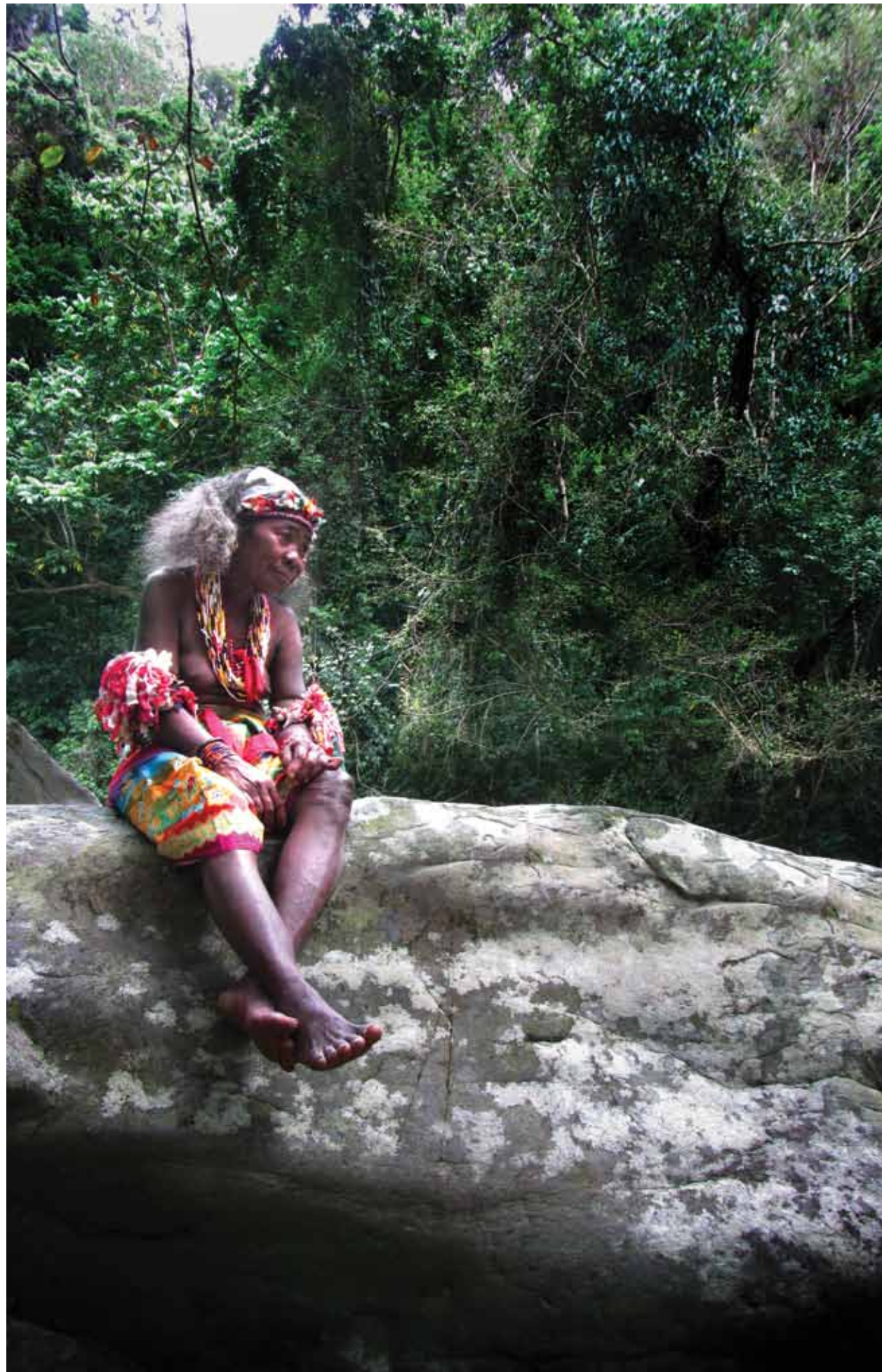
«Tunug it gitara ku magkatunu  
du'un kat la'ula'ung it manmanuk,  
nagsabay sira.»



«When my father returned home  
from the hunt, he would just leave  
the dead pig on the ground. Other  
people would clean it, cut it into  
pieces and prepare the portions to  
be shared amongst us all».

«Nagga'aret si ama, pagka'abut na  
kat balay may babuy ibtang du'un  
kat mayag, agetna tu magdulis,  
agetna magpasda', parti'parti'en  
kat tanan.»





«Watching my grandchildren splashing into the water fills my heart with joy.»

«Magle'ganan ku tu apu ku magkarawat kat danum, malipay tu isip ku .»



«I jump from the big boulder and let the river drag me down.»

«Magtapal aku kat dakula' a batu, mapabelbeg aku kat danum.»





«Don't hurt animals without a reason...  
don't tease them, their «masters» may get  
offended and take revenge on you.»

«Ayaw pagsipala'an ay tu ayep, ayaw  
pagkarawat'an ay, maiseg tu magepet, mamales.»

«The female pig running, the little one after her.  
We shot the mother  
and kept the child as a pet.»

«Naglukbu tu mura'ud, nagbaya tu beyek  
ya, nagpusil tu ina' ya, nadakep tu anak ya,  
inuputan.»





«It was early in the morning when we set out to harvest the *lawas* bamboo. Each of us collected a bundle; on the river edges we rested.»

«Pakatimparanu nagpanaw kami kat ma'lawasen, na'angepas it lawas. Bawat sankababayan may tungng a lawas. Nagpanari kami kat sapa.»







«Darkening the bamboos with smoke, splitting and slicing them to weave fine baskets. This is women's job.»



«Magsala, magbesak, magbaek, tapus magkawakawa na begias, ay itu tu ubra it babae.»



«They are the *taraman* (the master weavers), the makers of the forbidden baskets and of all designs. Only when their eyes will be too old to see, then they'll stop weaving.»

«Sira tu taraman, tanan it begias magkatu'un. In da'gwa magleganan sira, du'un tu manari it buat it begias.»







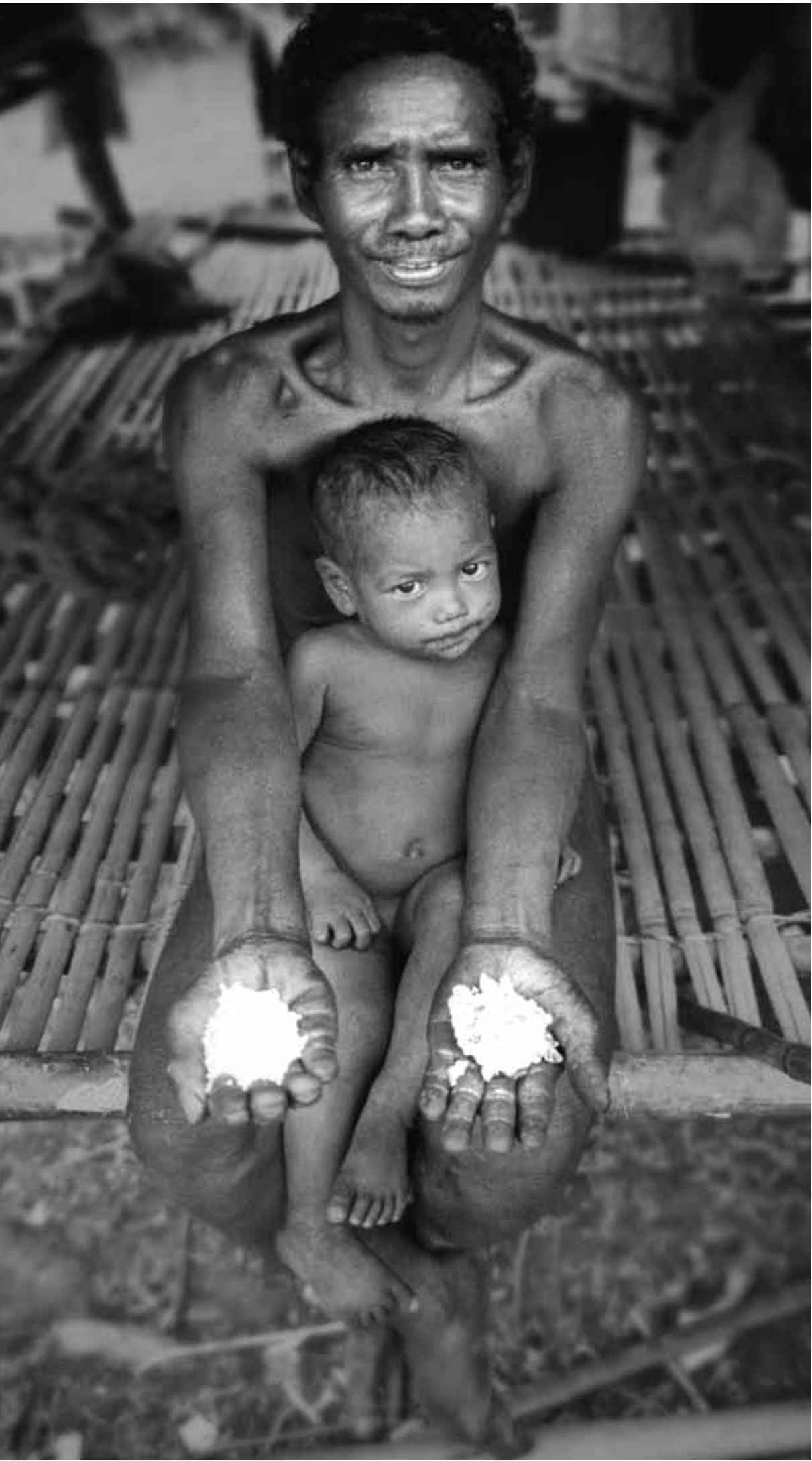
«The *bagtik* trees are like us, they need to rest. Before you harvest the resin again, let them rest and they'll give you more.»



«Pu'un tu bagtik awat maka tu taw, kailangan tu panari' para matilnu' tu tubud.»

«We sell the *bagtik* resin to buy rice, salt, sugar and some tobacco to chew and smoke.»

«Kami magpa'alang it bagtik du'un kat laud para maka'alang begas, asukar bau tabaku'.»





«Oh rattan backpack (*balula*), will  
you travel on my back from the  
mountains to the sea, from the sea  
to the mountains?»

«Ikaw a balula' keliag mu ibaiba ku  
pa laud, pa bukid, kaitu kat gurung  
ku? »



«When I was a child I used to eat a lot of  
seafood, today my children don't even know the  
names of that food, of the fish living in the sea.  
The mangrove forest is gone; the migrants  
(*diwan*) turned it into charcoal.»

«Tebag getiek pa aku, dakel pa tu luluwasen  
nakaen ku. Sumanian da'a matawan manga anak  
ku, apu ku, tu narang it luluwasen pati seda' kat  
taeb; ay narangga na tu bakaw, ay inuring na  
manga diwan.»





«Rafting and rafting on *Tanabag* river, roasting cassava on my raft (*balsa*).»

«Magteken teken aku tu balsa ku kat sapa Tanabag, mintaras magiaw it malambunga.»



«My dog was attacked by a wild pig and ran behind me. I took the spear to defend myself, but couldn't kill the pig.»

«Naganup aku, siningal tu kedeng ku, tiarabut tu babuy, napatagu kat gereng ku, dedefensa'an tu kedeng ku siabakaw tu babuy, da'a maka napsa' ku.»



«We pound the bark of the *magarawa* vine, we soak it into the river. Fish come up to the surface like stunned, a big *kasili* (river eel) twists itself into the water. I spear it and kill it with my *paida* (macete).»



«Kami a Batak magbangkul it magarawa, irimba' kat way, baleng tu sada' magpanaw kat liwan. Maglitad litad tu kasili, riandak it sarugitgit ku bau tinibasan ku, paida' ku.»





«Many trees are bearing fruits; the wild pigeons (*balud*) are fat now.  
Under the *baliti* tree I hide and wait for them.»



«Sumanian dake i bunga i kayu pati baliti, malinuk na tu balud.  
Makatagu aku kat madikut na baliti', magelat aku baled.»





«The *banebegan* tree is blossoming: let's wear flowers, scented herbs and squirrels' tails. Let's make ourselves beautiful. Soon we'll be dancing with bees.»

«Magburak na tu banebegan, magtaray na tu manga babae, amen garamiten pabanglu manga ilamenen, burak, bau ikug it biatat. Manaray kami para magpustura. Da'gwa mabuay magtarek na kami manga babae para may nigan.»











«In his dreams the shaman (*babalyan*) saw a huge beehive high up in the canopy. He told me where it was, and asked me to gather it for the *Lambay* ritual.»

«Kat taga'ipen it babalian nagleganan kanya tu paga kat dibwat na sanga. Nagtaeg kanya kanaken: sapu'un mu ay pisien mu kat lambayan.»







«At the *Lambay*, the first honeycomb is shared amongst us all, we eat it together and happily, like bees sipping from flowers.»

«Primeru sapu'un makabut kat Lambay sangget sanggeten, trimus na kami - magka'en. Tumanen ya tu putyukan magse'sep it burak it banebegan.»





«We can't get Aputa unless we catch the *kamansilay* first. It is a *panya'en* (superhuman entity), it's like a reddish stem sprouting out of a stone; it is the medicinal root of Aputa. The shaman must snatch it quickly when it comes out of the rock. It bleeds.»

«Kami Batak da'gwa mapisi' si Apu ta in da'gwa mapisi' tu kamansilay, panyaen kanya, gambat it Apu ta. Awat it gamut it kayu, pagsulput kanya kat batu kuitanan tu babalian, bigla' agereteng tu kamansilay, magtagek na kanya.»





«*Gunay Gunay* is found beyond the horizon, the house of Aputa and his wife Bayta (the Master of Rice) is there. All their children (bees and rice seeds) originate from that place.»

«Du'un kat riansadan it langit, du'un pa kat tebagan it gunaygunay, du'un magistar si Apu ta may si Bay ta, pati manga anak sira.»



«Let's play the percussions (*sabag*) and dance the *tarok*, let's throw the *banebegan* flowers into the sea. Aputa will come underwater, all the way from the *Gunay Gunay*.»

«Kami babae magsabag yat babalian magtarek, ilambay tu burak it banebegan kat ta'eb. Si Apu ta magpanaw kat seled it ta'eb, garing kanya kat gunaygunay, alawid a matuud.»





«Look up in the canopy, the children (bees) of  
Aputa (the Master of Bees) are gathering in  
big numbers on the trees' branches.»

«Dali' kamu, leganan mi kat tindal, kat sanga it  
kayu. Miabut na manga anak ni Apu ta, dake  
sira.»



«Aputa will come from there...  
Yes this is the way.»

«Du'un garing si Apu,  
kaitu tu dalan ya.»





«This *balasbas* (*licuala* palm) is owned by *panya'en*. We cut it into long strips, to make the hairs of Bayta (the Master of Rice).»

«Panya'en tu magepet it *balasbas*, kami babae magtulang it *balasbas*, bua' it Bai' ta itu.»



«Soon the *kampilan* (wooden swords) will vibrate into the air. All of us will dance in circles, having fun. Tonight the skirmish begins.»

«Da'gwa mabuay, inkayna delem, magimpisa tu karawat ta. Maglayug layug kat deres tu *kampilan*. Maglibutlibut na kami kat sambuang, ma'ambeng na a matuud .»



«The *pansa pansa* (miniature house of Aputa) must be beautifully decorated and covered with *kundiman* (red cloth). The Master of Bees will stay there, with us, until the *Lambay* ends.»

«Yan pansapansa kailangan matilnu' akalawagan, ipatumung tu kundiman it pansapansa. Du'un magistar si Apu ta bau si Bai' ta, asta makatapus na it lambay ta.»





«During the *Lambay* ritual we construct the *pianbunglunan* (wooden beehive) and decorate it beautifully. The decoration *bianig* will make the beehives in the forest big like *panig* (slope of a roof) and the decoration *kiarumata'* will make honeycombs visible to the gatherers.»

«Kat lambay pabupaten pianbunglunan ay matilnu' a kalawagan. In ipalawag tu bianig magkeliag ampangen may a panig tu kabaelen it paga it putyukan. In ipalawag tu kiarumata' magkeliag ampangen madali' a paragan tu putyukan.»







«We play the percussions (*sabag*) to gather bees together, to bring them from the *Gunay Gunay*. If Aputa is pleased with the sound, he will disperse his children (bees). There will be much honey in the forest.»

«Magsabang kami para magtipun tu mugung garing kat gunaygunay. In ma'ambeng si Apu ta kat sabag men, dakel imapisi tu anak ya; dakel tu puyukan kat talun.»



«This is the *panagelsangel*: all of us, men, children and women running after each others, laughing and teasing each others, sticking rice into each-others mouths. Bees do the same, they will run and suck from one flower to the other.»

«Ia'itu pagawaten panangelsangel: kami tanan manga lalaki, manga babae, manga anak ma'ambeng ay magintrimis. Ibetang tu umay kat ba'ba' it ibaiba mo, iat kanya ibetang kat ba'ba' mu. Ian pagtumanen tu putiyukan. Magtipun sira, magsalbed sira at mag se'sep sira kat burak.»





«Under the light of *salong* (resin torches) the games  
start. Joyful screams up to the stars.  
We run in circle with *kampilan* (wooden swords) to  
make Aputa happy.»

«In magleganan mu magdekar tu saleng, du'un  
magimpisa tu karawat. Abut na kat langit tu gera' it  
taw. Maglibutlibut na kami kat sambuang, magkuitan  
kami tu kampilan para ma'ambeng si Apu ta.»







«Dancing with *balasbas*...swarming like bees. My soul (*kiaruwa'*)  
is flying high.»

«Pakayapen ku tu putiyiukan mapamasagab aku tu *balasbas*,  
alawid na tu *kiaruwa'* ku.»







## The Myth of Kawali and the Foundation of the Lambay Ceremony

As narrated by Padaw, the shaman.

This is how our «grandfather» (*apu*) Kawali was taken by the *putiukan* bees (*Apis dorsata*).

He spent a full day «searching for honey» (*lebet*), but he could «not see the hives» (*dagwa miarag*). While searching for the hives, he came close to a *lampanag* (*large flat stone in a creek*). There, at the *lampanag*, a group of *putiukan* had gather together to drink.

- *Abe'* (*exclamation of wonder*) said Apu Kawali, it is really yourself drinking there! Where do you live?

The *putiukan* answered:

- what are you looking for? (*unu paguiman*).

- Look at me (*said Kawali*), I am trying to find some honey but I cannot find any.

- *Au* (*exclamation of understanding equivalent to 'oh'*) said the *putiukan* – although you are searching for hives, you will be unable to see them there. We are here to fetch water and, after this, we'll return to *gunay gunay* (*the mythical place of concentration for both bees and rice*). Meanwhile, all of you (*referred to people in general*) must continue searching for honey until you see us again. When you see us – follow us.

- How can I follow ? (*asked Kawali*).

- We (*the bees*) «will hold each other together» (*daramit tamî*), we'll grab you, and carry you with us.

So the bees begin to clench to each other – hold Kawali by his arms and legs – and, all together, they fly to the *gunay gunay*.

After landing, Apu Kawali finds himself in front of the house of Aputa (*the Master of the bees*). There are beehives everywhere, below the floor, and along the pole of the house.

- Father, there is a man here, he has followed us (*the bees are addressing Aputa*).

- Where is he ? (*asks Aputa*).

- He is here father ! (*the bees reply*).

- Please, climb up ! (*an invitation to enter the house*).

- So Kawali enters – there are beehives everywhere; *niguan* (*Apis cerana* or *A. florea*) and *putiukan* bees «are swarming in and out from their nests» (*magsalbut*).

Aputa says :

- well our guest is here let us prepare food for him – and he invites Kawali to sit down (make himself comfortable).

Aputa is bald-headed and has a long beard.

Aputa asks :

- Are you hungry ?.

- Yes I am hungry (*Kawali answers*).

- Tell me what would you like to eat (*Aputa speaking*), so that I can please you with haste. Would you like to try my *arubang* (*nasal mucus*) ?.

Kawali answers :

- whatever you offer me, I will be pleased to accept it.

So Aputa asks the bees to bring him a plate, then he blows his mucus until the plate is full. When Kawali finishes to eat the *arubang*, *Ungaw* (*the Master of Bees' proper name*) asks him :



- would you like to eat my faeces ?

Again Kawali answers :

- whatever you offer me, I will be pleased to accept it.

Aputa begins to like Kawali for his politeness and good manners. So he orders the bees to bring more food, and he asks Kawali :

- what would you like for *sada'an* (side dish) : chicken, pig, fish or vegetables ?

Kawali answers :

- I only like vegetables.

Aputa really appreciates Kawali's answer ! (*it is forbidden to eat animals at the gunay gunay*).

So the food is served. After eating, Kawali says :

- well, it is time for me to go.

Apu answers :

- bring these things with you, I give you the *pamumlakan* (*a ritual stone used during the Lambay*), it is spotted (*just like the beehives*).

Then he gives him the *uli* [*a mixture of parina resin (an Araliaceae tree) and other materials*] and he says :

- you must use this when you cannot see the hives, you must rub it on the *pablu'ed* (*the region of the eyebrows*), so that you will be able to see the hives.

Then Aputa adds :

- bring all these things with you. Although you have no knowledge of the *tarok* dance – you must follow these instructions : fasten these things (the *uli* and the *pamumlakan*) to a stick of *bagu* (*Gnetum gnemon*), and then ask your wife to play the *sabag* ( *a type of percussion*). After that, you must dance the *tarok* and you will see my children (*the bees*).

So Kawali leaves (*returns to his community*), and begins to follow all the instructions







given to him by Aputa. He instructs his wife on how to play the sabag and he begins to dance. Before he starts, he pronounces these words : Apu, I am now beginning to dance.

The next day he goes to the forest and spends a full day searching for hives. He is late and the wife thinks that he has lost his way home but – before the day ends – here he comes carrying a jar on his back !. He places the jar on the floor, it is full of honey !

(Later) the *biras* of Kawali (A kinship term here referred to name the husband of his wife's sister) returns from the forest after harvesting rattan. He informs Kawali that the forest is full of beehives. They are everywhere, also along the margins of the *uma* (the swidden field), as well as on the trees' lowest branches. The *biras* tells Kawali that he had kept harvesting honey for two consecutive days and now there are no more hives left in the forest.

On the third day, the *biras* returns to the forest to collect more honey. He walks a full day in vain without seeing a single beehive. Then, just when he is loosing all hopes, he spots a group of bees one on top of the other (*tumpuk*) drinking form a *na'as* (a pool of water at the end of a creek).

- Oh it is really yourself there ! says the *biras*.

The bees reply :

- we do not reside here but in the house of our father (i.e. they want to stress that they came from a far-away place).

The *biras* adds :

- It does not matter how far is your place, just bring me with you.

So the bees come very close to each other, they hold the *biras* safely, and fly away with him like in a squad.

They land near the house of the Master of Bees, he sees the *biras* of Kawali and he asks the bees :

- Who is he ?

The bees reply :

- There is a man here.

Then Aputa asks to the *biras* :

- Have you eaten already ? Would you like to try my nasal mucus ?

- Certainly, not ! (*adi aku*) replies the *biras*.

- Perhaps, you like to try my faeces.

- No way ! (*iappai da aku*), answers the *biras*.

- Let's cook for my friend ! orders Aputa to the bees.

- Grandson, (*Aputa speaking*) I like to ask you : is there a side dish that you fancy most ? Pig, chicken, fish or vegetables?

- Yes, chicken is really what I want !

The *biras* begins to eat with great voracity. When he finishes he says :

- It is late, I will go now.

Aputa answers :

- No way ! you are not going anywhere – you are my chicken now !

So Aputa pulls his neck and devours him.



According to another version of the myth, narrated by Busingen, the types of materials to be used during the *Lambay* were revealed directly by Aputa to Bagu (another mythical ancestor). In one portion of the myth, Bagu addresses Aputa with the following question :

- What kind of thing is the *Lambay* ?

And Aputa replies :

- It's about dancing the *tarok* at the sound of the *sabagan*

And then he gives more details on the material to be used :

- For constructing the *sabag* (the beating sticks) you need to use the woods of *karumata*, *malinapug* and *balinaud*, and for the *sabagan* (the wooden pole) you must use the wood of *sanda'en*.

Look at my house carefully, because you will have to copy it, try to remember it, so that me and my children we'll come to see you when we'll hear the sound of the *sabagan*.

Then look at Bayta (the wife of Aputa), her hairs are the *balasbas* (bunches of dried palm leaves used for dancing) and the *lice* (*kuto*), inside the hairs, are the rice seeds. When you perform the *Lambay* you must take the rice seeds directly from her hairs – you must pick her lice, these are the real seeds!

According to the narrator, the sound of the *sabagan* will be interpreted by Aputa as a sign (*tanda'an*) indicating that people have no food available. So he will disperse (*wasag*) his children (*thee bees*), and they will construct new hives in the forest.

#### Comments on the Myth:

As the myth suggests, beehives are not regarded as fixed supply of raw material that can be turned to for help, or other purposes when required. On the contrary, bees (and their products) are not perceived by Batak simply as «things that are found in the environment», but rather as something which needs to be negotiated through appropriated behaviours and ceremonies. Clearly, the attitude of Kawali is not that of somebody seeking mastery over nature, but it is characterised by the necessity of keeping in constant «consultation» with the Master of Bees. One fundamental feature of this negotiation is the acquisition of knowledge through socialisation and direct engagement. Moreover, the relationship between people and the Master of Bees and the Master of Rice must be restored constantly through the *Lambay* ceremony.

In the myth, Kawali and the husband of his wife's sister (*biras*) come to represent the best and worst traits. The latter is the breaker of taboos and customary norms, the epitome of inappropriate behaviour. He is punished by Aputa for his greed and boldness. This myth places emphasis on limited resources and condemns over-exploitation.



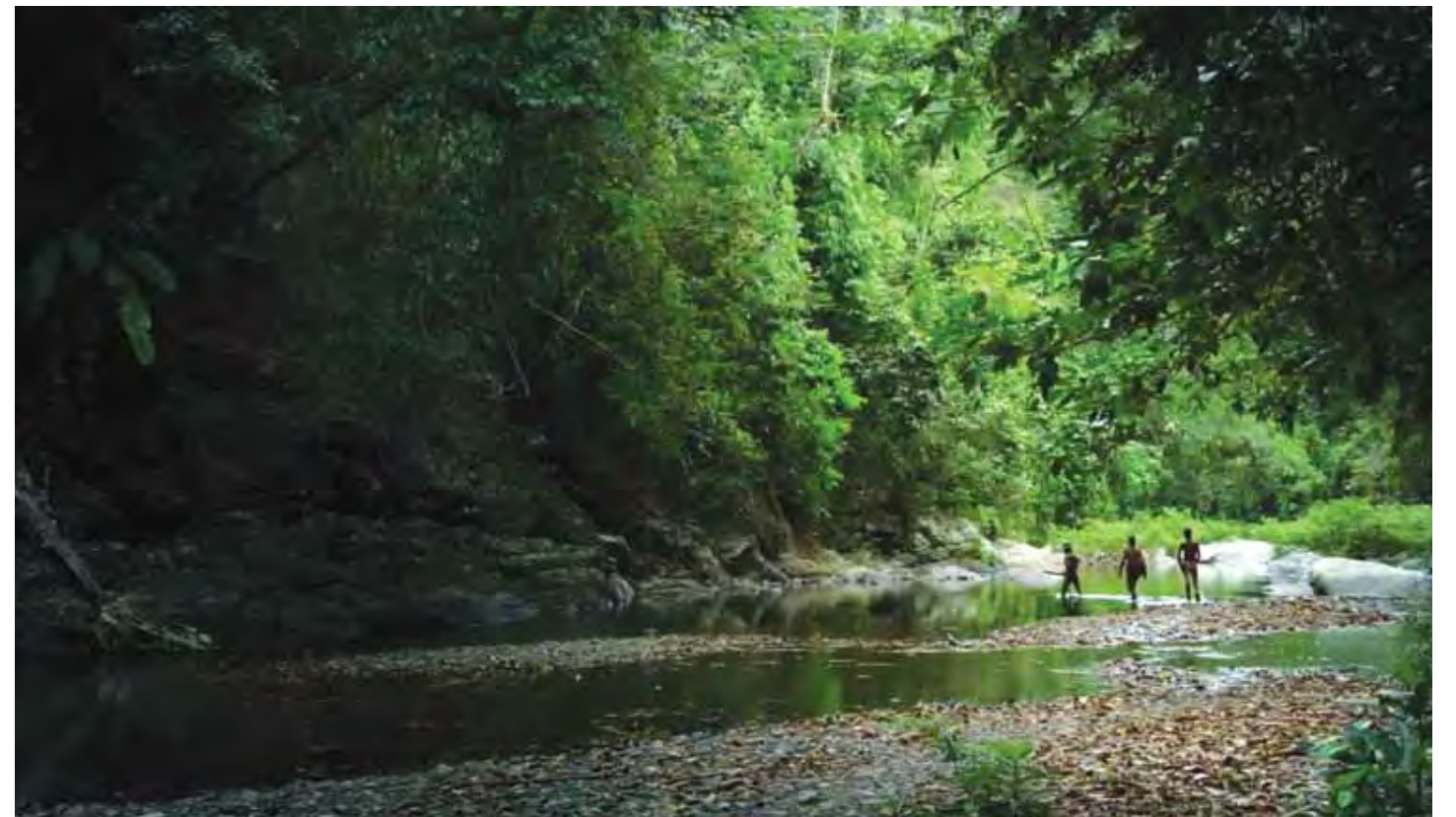
*Pansa Pansa*, miniature house of Aputa







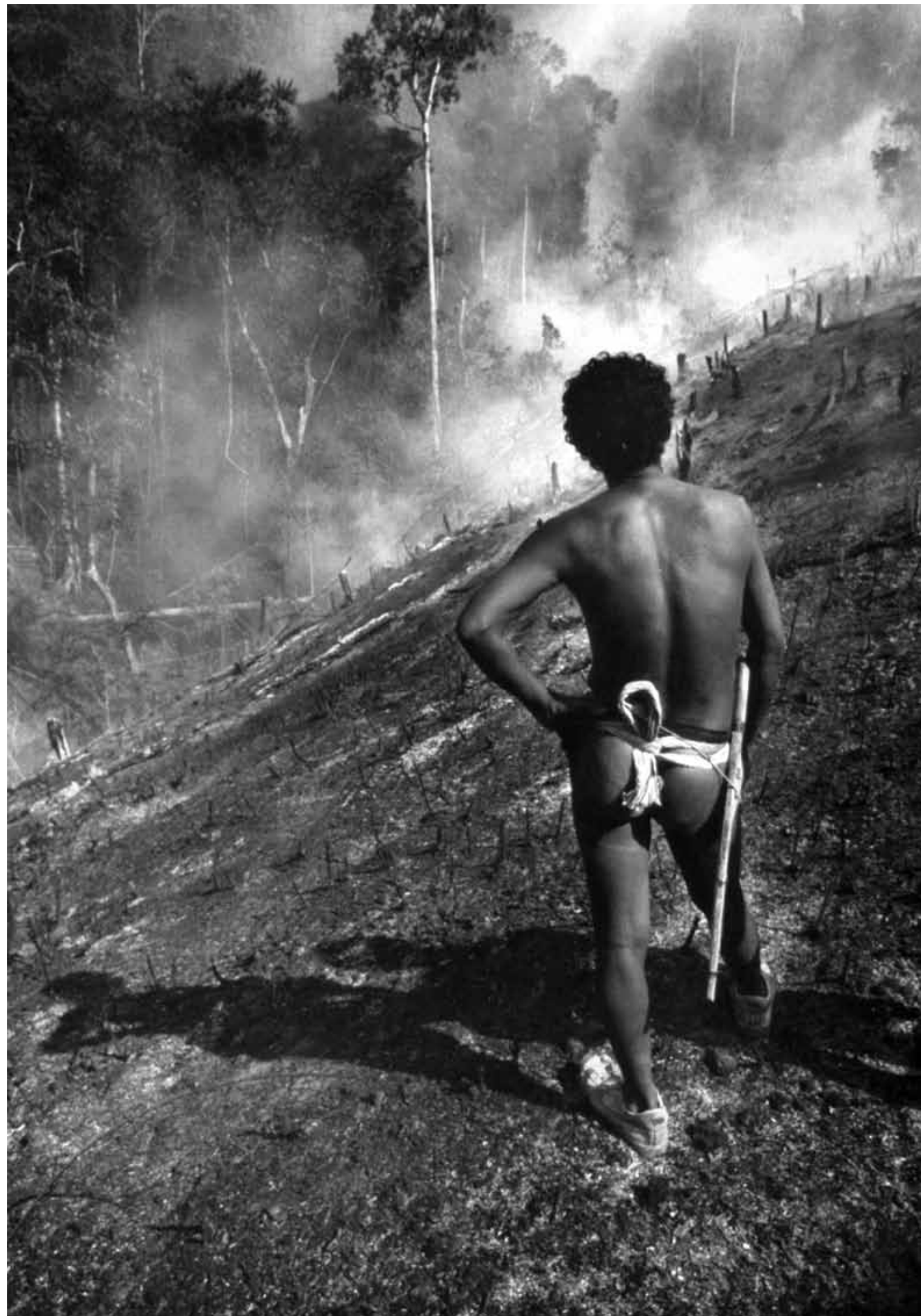
«When we no longer wear the *Lambay's* clothes, when we can't sing the spirit songs and mention the names of the Master of Rice, it means that this is *pali*, the prohibition period after the *kudom* (*lambay's* second cycle). We now move to a new place.»



«In kami magugad kat ibang puwestu men, in magtagu tu tararayan men, in da'gwa kami mageta' tu amfang it Apu ta, keliag sugiden impisa na tu palii .»







«Ashes make the soil  
fat; with dibble sticks  
the rice we plant.  
Oh soul of rice, please  
make my plants  
green and bountiful,  
standing strong  
against the wind.»

«In matama' tu abu,  
malusug tu lugta maski  
paray. Aten garamiten  
tugda para magluak it  
paray. Ikaw kiaruwa' it  
paray begayan it keseg  
tu paray ku para dakel tu  
mapisi' ku, para da'gwa  
igeneb it deres.»







«The games and music of the *diwan* (outsiders) are with us now. We play them, we like them too.»

«Karawat it manga diwan abut na kaitu' kat Kabatakan, magatu'un kami asta keliag men maka.»



«Times are gone when wild pig meat was freely shared. Now you must pay for it; even to your own relatives you will sell it. This is the sign that our culture, our traditions are slowly breaking apart.»

«Da'gwa awat it tebag, in may babuy parti'partien kat tanan. Sumanian in da'gwa tu kuarta mu, da'gwa ikaw pagka'en, maski rugud mu alangen maka sira tu karni it babuy mo. Aypa du'un narangga tu ugali it Batak .»



«Today, clean water reaches our village through plastic pipes...but life in *Kalakuasan* (a permanent settlement) is not always easy, you must walk far to look for food.»

«Sumanian abut na kat Kalakuasan limpiu tu danum garing kat tubu, piru makuri' maka tu pangaegen it taw, ay alawid na tu paglugitem men.»





«When the road was constructed, settlers arrived in big numbers. They asked us: “Do you have a paper to prove that this is really your land?”. We were afraid, we abandoned our coconuts, we left the *baled* (coastal area), we lost it for ever.»

«Pakabut tu karsada kanaten duuru manga diwan nagseled kat amen. Naginkut tu manga diwan in may titulu kat lugta’ men. Nagtakut na kami, inindi tu maniugun men. Lugta’ men kat baled nalipat na. Nagpanaw kami kat bukid.»

«Click, click and click... the tourists love to take pictures of us when we wear *ba’ag* (bark-clothes), they don’t like us when we use trousers and plastic. They want to see the «real Batak’» Are we not «real» when we use plastic and wear trousers?»

«Pindut, pindut, pindut...turista magkeliag maglitratu kanamen in makataray, in may ba’ag. Da’gwa magkeliag sira magleganen tu saruar bau plastik. Pagsagiapen nira Batak a matuud, makaba’ag. Anu keliag sira sugiden, in magsaruar kami, in magepet na kami tu berebtangan plastik belag kami Batak?»





«Today our children spend more time in school than in the forest. The missionaries said: we'll teach you how to sing the national anthem, to read and write, to worship God in the proper way.»

«Sumanian mas dakula' aldaw tu anak men kat iskwela'an, getiek na tu uras nira kat talun. la'itu tu ampong it misiunariu kanaten: ako magtuldu kanimiu tu pambansang awit, magba'asa, magsurat, asta tamang ampong it Ampu.»



«I teach my children the 'Batak way' but they must also learn the «Filipino way», because threats to our culture come from the outside. Unless we understand the law of the government, the language of the politicians, we'll never be able to defend ourselves, our forest.»

«Tulduan ku kat anak ku tu kultura it Batak, piru tulduan ku maka tu ugali it Pilipinu, dael patakut kanaten garing kat diwan. In da'gwa kami magatu'un tu batas it gubernu, in da'gwa kami magatu'un ampong it pulitiku, keliag sugiden, makuri magtabang ta tu taw men y makuri maka magbantay ta tu lugta' men.»



«

I tell to my people don't call me just when you need me, come to me also to learn the sacred knowledge, the spirit songs and the *tarok* dances. Time will come that I will no longer be here, in this world. Who will cure the sick people, who will initiate the *Lambay*, who will talk to the Master of Bees and to the Masters of game animals?

»

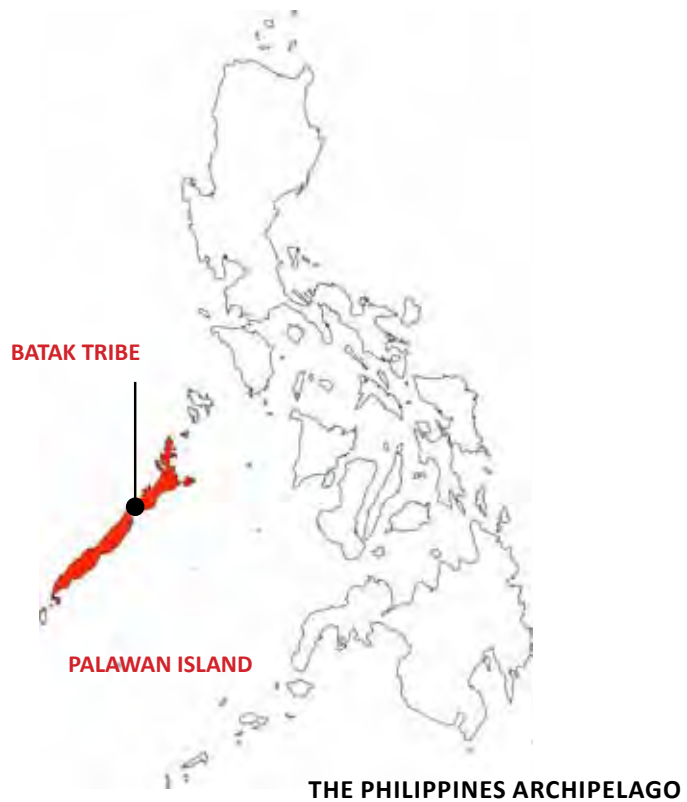
the shaman Padaw







## APPENDIX: THE BATAK OF PALAWAN



THE PHILIPPINES ARCHIPELAGO

### THE BATAK PEOPLE

The Batak are believed to be descended from the first wave of Australoid populations which crossed the land bridges connecting the Philippine Archipelago with the mainland of Asia, and that are generically labelled as Negritos. It is likely that migrations of Batak ancestors (Australoid populations) took place during the Upper Pleistocene, probably around 45,000 – 50,000 years ago.

The Batak of Palawan are found scattered in the central portion of Palawan. At the close of the 19th century, approximately 20 to 50 Batak families were associated with each of the nine river valleys that made up their territory.

Eder's complete census in 1972 located only 272 with two Batak parents and 374 with one Batak parent.

Novellino's census in 2005 indicates that there were only 155 individuals with two Batak parents over a population of less than 300 people: a decline in the Batak «core» population of almost 57% within a period of thirty-three years.

### PRACTICES OF LIVELIHOOD

#### Hunting and Gathering

Batak have a heterogeneous mode of food procurement, mainly centred on swidden cultivation integrated with hunting, gathering and commercial collection of non-timber forest products.

The people recognize and utilize at least twenty wild plant species with edible leaves, about thirty species (mainly trees) with edible fruits and eight named species of edible wild tubers such as *Abagan* (*Dioscorea luzonensis*) and *Kudut* (*Dioscorea hispida*). The latter is toxic and needs to be processed before being eaten.

Mushrooms represent an additional source of food, especially during the rainy season, and the people can identify at least 14 edible species.

The Batak have traditionally harvested wild palms such as *Arenga* spp. and *Oncosperma* spp. for their edible «buds». Commonly, the Batak also forage for seven species of mammal, two species of reptile, one amphibian, fifteen or more species of fish, four molluscs, three crustaceans, more than seven types of birds, and two types of honey. Wild pig (*Sus barbatus palawanensis*) is the preferred game. Fishing with hooks and line and collection of fresh water molluscs are women's activities, but stunning fish with vegetable poison involves all members of the household, and often the whole community. The Batak utilize at least five different vegetable species for fish-poisoning: *magarawa* and *suluy* (both vines); *balbag* (*Derris elliptica*); *balingasag* (*Barringtonia racemosa*); *karampi* (*Leguminosae*). *Kudut* (*Dioscorea hispida*) is also used to make poisoned fish baits.

#### Commercial gathering of NTFPs

Products like resin from *Agathis philippinensis* (*bagtik*), rattan canes (semi-woody climbers of *Calamus*, *Daemonorops* and *Korthalsia* species), wild honey are gathered and sold for cash. Domestically, *Agathis* resin (locally known as *almaciga*) is utilized by





the Batak as fuel for house torches. Industrially, the resin is used to manufacture high quality varnish and paints, linoleum, adhesives, waterproof compositions, etc.

The stems of the climbing rattan palms are of significant commercial value. Both large and small diameter rattans are gathered by the Batak, with the former being much prized for furniture making, and thus exported internationally.

The most popular honey-producing bee is locally known as *putiukan* (*Apis dorsata*). *Nigwan* is a smaller honeybee (probably *Apis florea* or *Apis indica*) building hives in tree trunks. The gathering of *putiukan* beehives is risky and requires considerable skill. Honey collection is seasonal, and particularly favourable between March and May. This period coincides with the worst months of food scarcity (the people are waiting for the new rice harvest and the cassava supply is nearly or entirely exhausted).

## Agriculture

Contrary to the standard description of Batak as «pure» hunters and gatherers, people's farming knowledge is rather complex and elaborated. Through the identification of botanical species, the Batak are able to make accurate guesses about the suitability of a particular area for the cultivation of upland rice and other crops. Overall Batak agricultural practices take place in *pangras* (mid-uplands), and originally in *baled* (coastal areas), but very rarely in *kabuludan* (mountainous highlands). After cultivation, fallow land (*lumun*) is allowed to rest for several years before it can be reconverted into a cultivated field (*uma*), which is planted for one year only and until it completely regenerates. Plant species found in Batak fallows often include a higher number of useful species than those found in primary forest.

Batak do practice effective fire-control methods and, during the fallow cycle, nutrients are returned to the soil mainly as ashes from the burnt cover-crop forest. Planting techniques are also ecologically sound since the dibble stick does not disturb the fragile forest soil to more than a depth of a few centimetres. Basically, there are six stages in the swidden cycle: underbrush cutting, felling the forest, burning the dead vegetation, planting or sowing the seeds, weeding the field and harvesting. Swiddens are burned in March, at the peak of the dry season, and planting begins in April. Harvesting takes place in mid-August and often continues through October.

The Batak have a very complex and detailed mythology concerning rice. Numerous legends trace the origin of rice to a human sacrifice. There are various versions of this myth, but the most popular one tells of a time long ago when humans planted only *kalabasa* (*Cucurbita maxima*). Then, one day, during a dream,

a man received an order to kill his only child. He also received instructions to disperse the blood and various parts of the child's body all over a swidden field. The legend says that, after three days, the blood, skin and flesh of the sacrificed child transformed into different varieties of rice, as well as other crops.

Batak also name and recognise about 72 landraces of upland rice, of which 44 are said to be *dati* (old) and *tunay* (original) to the area. Aside from upland rice, the Batak also plant other species of poaceae such as *Andropogon sorghum*, *Sorghum vulgare*, *Setaria italica*, sugar cane (*Saccharum officinarum*), leguminous plants such as *Cajanus cajan*, *Zingiberaceae* and *Capsicum frutescent*, as well as fruit trees such as bananas, papaya, coconut palms, etc. They also name more than three varieties of maize, fifteen of sweet potato, seven varieties of *Colocasia esculenta*, one variety of *Alocasia esculenta*, eleven of *Dioscorea alata*, eight sugarcane varieties and seventeen different kinds of banana, not to speak of different vegetables such as various Cucurbitaceae.

## Batak basketry

Amongst all Batak artefacts, baskets are those that are more finely decorated with different types of weaves/designs. All bichromatic twilled plaiting uses two species of bamboo, *lawas* (*Schizostachyum lumampao*), and *sabsaban* (*Dinorchloa palawanensis*), and one rattan species: *lipi* (*Daemonorops margaritae* var. *palawanensis*). Overall, Batak distinguish at least 12 kinds of basketry objects, but only the carrying basket, known as *begias*, is associated with more than 22 key motifs, some of which may refer to particular aspects of animal morphology and naturalistic abstractions.

The most elaborate patterns require the twilling of more fibres such as three-fibre weave (*tilnu*) rather than two-fibre weave (*tiagadua*). The first basket woven by a novice is an indicator that the girl has achieved a status within the group of women as well as a new sense of identity. Thus the capacity to produce fine baskets is not only a sign of competence, but a significant step towards adulthood.

## SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

Batak society is egalitarian. Traditionally, each Batak local group was under the guidance of an elderly figure (*pabulungen*), respected for his good personality and virtues. He had no power of coercion and was consulted for most of the problems involving the community.

Today, Batak leadership system resembles that of the *Barangay* (the smallest political unit in



Batak baskets



Husking rice



Collecting rattan canes

the Philippines). Leaders are still elected and acquire the titular position of *kapitan*. The *kapitan* may have several subordinates helping him in the performance of his duties.

As far as concerning everyday environmental-based decisions, each individual is free to use the plant and animal resources available in the area for domestic consumption.

Other decisions concerning the large-scale exploitation of resources (e.g. commercial gathering of rattan) are taken in the course of consultative meetings headed by the community elected chieftain (*kapitan*).

Cases such as divorce, stealing, adultery or the abduction of married women are settled by the council of elders (*surugiden*) and are usually resolved through the payment of a fine.

## WORLDVIEW

The Batak envision a cosmos of seven layers consisting of a central tier, inhabited by humans, animals, plants, super-human beings and aggressive entities, layered between an upper world and a lower world. The central layer is shaped as a large disk, surrounded by sea and sky. Stars and the moon are imagined to be steady in the sky. Often, stars are said to be the roots' tips of a shining tree growing in the seven upper level.

*Puyus*, the highest mountain in «Batak land», is regarded as the original place of many super-natural entities.

The upper layer of the universe is the domain of other immortal and benevolent super-human beings (*diwata*).

The *gunay gunay*, at the edge of the universe, is the place of origin of the master of rice, the female deity *Bay Bay*, and that of the master of bees, *Ungaw*, who are believed to be husband and wife.

*Diwata* (such as the masters of animal games) are also regarded by Batak as *taw* (persons), in the sense that they are said to possess a human consciousness and a «life force» (*kiauwá*) thus, the ability to establish meaningful interaction with everyday people.

The Batak also associate the notion of *kiauwá* with all living things. In this case, *kiauwá* is the vital principle enlivening plants and animals and everything seen as animate. On another level, *kiauwá* is described as a miniature of the body that retains the same features of the physical person; it is the source of consciousness, volition, and agency. People's personal experience is actually the experience of the *kiauwá* filtered through the sensory modalities of the body. In fact, the Batak talk about the life-force not so much in terms of a bodily image, but rather as a particular expression of bodily practices.

Access to the most important resources (honey, wild pigs, medicinal plants, fish, rice, etc.) needs to be negotiated with the master of animal game and plants. In turn, over-hunting and over-harvesting are said to offend such custodians of the natural world. The continuity of co-operative behaviour and reciprocal exchange, the





maintenance of good relationships with the other entities are all associated by the people to what is perceived as a «correct» use of the environment.

Particularly relevant to shamanic practices of «healing the world» (re-establishing the socio-cosmological balance) is the *burungan*. It is believed to be located in the central layer of the universe, and it is also defined as «heart of the sea» or as «root» or «base» of the sea, from which water is expelled into the world. When storms and floods ravage the world, this is because the *burungan* is «open» and thus water flows out freely and abundantly. Two enormous stones are believed to regulate the flow of water at the *burungan* entrance. The more such stones are distant from each other, the more intense the flow of water will be. When the stones touch each other, the *burungan* is «closed», and the world is blessed with sunshine and good weather. According to Batak, a chicken «big like a house» rests on a huge metal bar, on top of the *burungan* opening, and an enormous dragon, known as *tandayag*, dwells in the deep sea. When incest and other improper sexual behaviours are committed, the *tandayag*-dragon will wake up, beginning to shake; then, if no proper rituals are performed, it will initiate its search for the incestuous couple. The shaking of the *tandayag* will cause the water to overflow from the *burungan* and to reach the terrestrial portion of the world, in the form of flood. The outflow of the water will make the metal bar wet and, as a result, the rooster will slip off the bar, losing its balance and flapping its wings. Shamans claim that should the rooster slip off the bar completely, the entire universe will collapse and disappear. To prevent this, shamanic intervention and appropriate rituals are required.

The major Batak annual ceremony is called *Lambay*, and it aims to enhance the dispersal of rice seeds and bees from *gunay gunay* (their cosmological place of concentration). The *Lambay* ritual starts in March, when honey gathering begins, followed by the burning of the new swiddens and the planting of rice and other crops in April. The blossoming of *banebegan* (*Pterocymbium tinctorium*) signals the arrival of the honey season, as well as the beginning of *Lambay*. The ritual is based on two cycles over two years. The first cycle lasts seven days and the second cycle, performed on the following year, lasts fourteen days. According to the Batak, at the beginning of the *Lambay* ritual, the «Master of Bees» and his children (bees) leave the *gunay gunay* and, after a long underwater journey, reach the shores of the Batak territory. Hence *Lambay* activities begin downstream. By changing ritual locations from the coast to the hinterlands, the community intends to

gather together different species of bees, making sure that the former will follow the people through the various ritual stages and locations.

## CHANGES AND THREATS

Too many socio-political contingencies and environmental changes have occurred in Batak territory since the late fifties/early sixties, when pressure from landless farmers forced Batak to abandon their lowland settlements and retreat into the interior. As a result, their local groups became geographically closer to the new migrant settlements and thus more isolated from each other. The fragmentation of Batak population has been one of the major elements causing the progressive deterioration of social networks and exchange between local groups. As of now, Batak population continues to face demographic decline and is also the victim of debt bondage, patronage, land encroachment, culturally unsound measures for environmental protection and various forms of exploitation.

In some portions of the Batak territory illegal gold mining has contributed to the pollution of waterways, while gravel extraction has had negative repercussion on the natural water flow of rivers as well as on fresh- water resources. Illegal logging also takes place, but Batak are guarding and protecting their forest, at the best of their capacities. Despite this, the people have been unable to control the entry of illegal gatherers of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) in their land and they are the victims of unscrupulous businessmen.

Because of government restrictions on shifting cultivation, Batak have been placed in a position that does not allow them to replicate the traditional farming regime characterized by sustainable long-fallow periods and, thus, are forced to rely on soils that have undergone short fallow periods and have not yet regained their nutrients. Specifically, Batak are requested by government «forest guards» (*bantay gubat*) not to use their swiddens rotationally, not to clear secondary forest that has grown back in their old swiddens, but rather to cultivate their fields continuously. This, in turn, is causing the progressive depletion of nutrients in Batak fields and the colonization of these by cogun grass (*Imperata cylindrica*), a natural indicator of poor soil fertility.

Ultimately, because of decreasing agricultural production, Batak have little choice but to increase their collection of Non-timber forest products for

**“There has been much destruction in these mountains, now the land is wounded. If a person is wounded, the blood comes out of the body, and he becomes weaker and weaker. ...The rocks are the bones of the land, the trees are the hairs. When the rocks became exposed, it is like when human bones are exposed... If there is a wound in the world, also rice will not grow. “**

Murinä

sale to compensate for the loss of crop-production. Also the meat of wild pig is no longer shared amongst community members, rather it is sold to the coastal restaurants to buy rice and other basic commodities.

Batak are also experiencing a reduced diversity in their diet, and widespread malnutrition. They have become increasingly dependent on purchased rice, while traditional consumption of cultivated root crops (cassava, sweet potatoes, *dioscorea* and *colocasia*) is of lesser significance today than it was in the past.

Nowadays, the traditional role of shamans as «custodians of the natural resources» is increasingly seen by Batak as an irrelevant instrument to face and deal with the new transformations that are confronting them. Members of the young generations are not learning the old shamanic practices and when Padaw (the last surviving shaman) will die, most of this knowledge will be lost forever.

In spite of this, the Batak are still very committed to protect and guard their territory from which, their very existence depends. The people, in fact, would like to see their role as traditional custodians of the forest duly recognized by government agencies. This is why Dario Novellino and CALG (Coalition against Land Grabbing) are working hand in hand with Batak to secure their legal rights to forest and natural resources by applying for Certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles (CADTs) under the IPRA law (Indigenous Peoples Rights Act), as well as to have their territories being declared and recognized as ICCAs (Indigenous peoples' and community conserved territories and areas). ICCAs, in fact, can also be registered with the ICCA Registry of the United Nations Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC).

Hopefully, these two instruments combined (CALT and ICCA registration) will provide Batak with new and more powerful tools to sustainably manage and defend their ancestral domains.



Student demonstration in Brooke's Point - Palawan against mining activities in the region



# SON DE MADERA

LE SON DE LA FÔRET

EXPOSITION | INSTALLATION

LES  
**BATAK**  
DERNIERS GARDIENS DE LA TERRE

ÎLE DE PALAWAN | PHILIPPINES

DU 16 JANVIER AU 4 AVRIL 2018  
**ESPACE BELLEVILLE**  
4 BOULEVARD DE LA VILLETTE - 75019 PARIS

photo: LUIGI FALORNI



## «Son de Madera»

The artistic installation entitled «Son de Madera» (Sound of Wood) is dedicated to the cause of the Batak tribe. Bataks are among the last guardians of Palawan Island's forests.

This project, launched by Ponts du Monde, and created by 32 ART STUDIO, is hosted at the CFDT's Espace Belleville. It is the result of a lengthy and close collaboration with anthropologist Dario Novellino and the representatives of the Batak Federation.

The canopy, adorned with 50,000 red flowers and the 4+ meter high *Tree of Life* illustrate the mystical plant-based environment in which Bataks dwell.

A photo and video exhibition showcasing the Bataks' daily life as well as the challenges jeopardizing their future is presented alongside this installation.

Therefore, the exhibition as a whole allows visitors to better understand the hazardous situation in which Bataks find themselves and invites visitors to defend their interests.

«Son De Madera» is inspired by one of the tribe's numerous legends: "the Myth of Kawali".

In a nutshell, this legend expresses the need for Bataks to consult with Nature's Masters rather than trying to dominate Nature.

The mythology of the Palawan indigenous people, as is the case for many aboriginal people throughout the world, refers to a mythical "Golden Age" in which Human Beings and Gods used to share the same land.

These myths recount how Humans' sins suddenly put an end to a Divine Era, during which resources were inexhaustible and human beings were immortal.

These legends remind us of the fragility of the world in which we live, and of the urgent need to stop abusively exploiting our natural resources.

«Son de Madera» not only expresses the sounds of the jungle where the Bataks have been dwelling for millennia, but most importantly it allows their voice to resonate and be heard here; the installation invites visitors to lend an ear and listen, and –even better – to help relay the increasingly vulnerable voices of the forests. Forests are the heart, the very essence of this installation.

Poster for the exhibition «*Son de madera*»  
Paris, 2018, by 32 Art Studio





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My deeper affection goes to my Batak relatives and to the Shamans Padaw and Bari who introduced me to their sacred knowledge and allowed me to perform during the lambay ritual.

My love also goes to my deceased blood-brother Timbay. He knew every centimetre of the landscape, where the mushrooms grew, where the wild boars came to eat fruits, where wild tubers could be easily dug out, and this knowledge became mine through asking and sharing. Because of him the towering forest of Palawan is now a familiar place, a second home.



... with my Master, the shaman Padaw,  
28 years after my first encounter with the Batak







# BATAK

To support the Batak cause, please visit the NGO  
CALG (Coalition Against Land Grabbing) website

[www.calg.com](http://www.calg.com)

[calgpalawan@gmail.com](mailto:calgpalawan@gmail.com)

