

The word “Batak” is said to be an old Cuyunon term which means “mountain people.” The Spaniards used to refer to these people as “Tinitianes,” from a place called Tinitian on the coast north of Puerto Princesa. The Batak are the smallest of the three major Palawan groups. They also appear to be the most endangered, their population having progressively decreased over the years. In the early 1900s, they numbered around 600 (Miller 1905:183). By 1970 the number of Batak mother-tongue speakers had dwindled to 393 (Llamzon 1978:112). Batak or Binatak is the language spoken by this group. Unlike the two other groups, the Palawan and Tagbanua, the Batak have not adopted the ancient syllabary and script of Indic derivation, despite the fact that their ancestral territory adjoins the Tagbanua cultural area.

The Batak are the Aeta population of northcentral Palawan. According to Eder (1996: 27-28), their territory is approximately 1,200 square kilometers extending from the mouth of Babuyan River that flows from the slope of Mount Cleopatra’s Needle to north of the Quinaratan River. The smallest number among the Palawan indigenous communities. The Batak population in 1980 was 254. The part-Batak totaled 132 (Eder 1996:103-105). Cadelina (1985:33; 1996:63) also in 1980 cited “238 de facto Batak individuals.” The Summer Institute of Linguistics (Grimes 1996) listed 300 Batak speakers in 1984.

The Batak live mainly in small settlements near Puerto Princesa, close to the coastal villages of Babuyan, Tinitian, and Malcampo. Much of their traditional habitat is mountainous country, particularly the region north of Honda Bay. In recent times, they have lived in several river valleys which open out to the Sulu Sea. These are the valleys of Babuyan, Maoyon, Tanabag, Tarabanan, Laingogan, Tagnipa, Caramay, and Buayan. But this dispersed habitat only serves to underscore their scant population, since each Batak group would only have a maximum of 91 and a very low minimum of 10 members, with at least two of eight groups having more part-Batak members (unmarried offsprings of exogamous marriages) than full-Batak ones (Eder 1978:105). Batak territory includes a narrow plains area abutting into the north Sulu Sea, where the Batak come down to during the rainy season.

Because of their physical characteristics, the Batak have been classified as a Philippine Aeta group, or as having Aeta affinities (Eder 1977:12). An early account described the Batak as resembling somewhat the Aeta in other parts of the Philippines, but having more physical resemblances with the Semang and the Sakai of the Malay peninsula, with their long and kinky hair, hirsute faces and bodies, small stature but well-formed bodies (Miller 1905:183).

History

The exact origins of the Batak have not been determined. The popular belief assumed that the Batak comprise the remnants of a formerly numerous group of Aeta that settled in Palawan (Miller 1905:186). What is known is that for a long period, they were a nomadic group roaming vast areas in the north, settling in a place long enough to

find food, then moving on to other places to continue hunting and gathering. They were described in early accounts as a very timid and peaceable people, who avoided contact with foreigners. While the Batak have resided in coastal villages during certain periods, they lived exclusively in the interior upland of northern Palawan in the earlier days.

Despite contacts with other Palawan groups and settlers from other islands, Batak material culture has not changed from its seminomadic character. Only a few woven material and several basket types are produced by them. Although very much isolated, the Batak have had trading relations with outsiders, such as neighboring groups or the Christian settlers along the coast. Through these brief and intermittent contacts, the Batak have learned a little Cuyunon and Tagalog.

Batak society has been severely affected by disease and malnutrition due to poverty, by the continuing influx of settlers from Luzon and the Visayas who occupy an increasing area of Palawan's vast tracts of land, and by the opening of the northern mountain regions of Palawan to logging operations by capitalists and politicians. Their reduced population, and the altered ways of some members of their group due to acculturation or displacement, has been accompanied by a decline in the material conditions of life, as well as in the dynamism of whatever artistic expression they traditionally possessed.

As pointed out in a recent study of change in Batak society, the Batak—as in the case of all other Philippine Aeta groups—have been critically influenced and affected by contact with the outside world, and the effect has been noted in their “subsistence economy, socioterritorial organization, and ritual life,” with the ultimate consequence that Batak society has been sapped of its reproductive viability and robbed of its cultural distinctiveness. The conclusion is that “the Batak today are literally a disappearing people, and much that was unique in their traditional culture has been irretrievably lost” (Eder 1977:12).

Economy

The Batak are primarily food-gatherers, hunters, and horticulturists. The Batak traditionally exploited food resources in the forest, freshwater rivers and streams, and along the seashore (Eder 1993:33). They spent some considerable time in hunting. The wild pig is the most important game, for it is the focus of any ritual activity. These are hunted with dogs using spears, bows and arrows, and blowguns. In communal hunts, a group of women creating a loud noise by shouting and beating the bush drives the pig in the area towards the men waiting in ambush. Fishing is done by Batak men and women singly or in pairs. The techniques include basket traps, spears, hook and line, bows and arrows, damming the streams, and using poison.

In recent times, they have also been practicing a rudimentary form of agriculture, in the form of planting rice, root crops, and bananas, having learned this industry from the Christian settlers living nearby (Llamzon 1978:112). They use dogs in hunting wild pigs and deer. The hounds chase their quarry until the prey is cornered for the Batak

hunters to close in with their spears. The carcass may then be cut up and divided on the spot, or brought to their settlement for partition, every member being entitled to a share. They prepare the meat by roasting or boiling it. They have no way of preserving meat, although a kind of salt from ashes can be made. They also use bows and arrows, spears, and the familiar *sapukan* (blowgun) for hunting, as well as traps that can catch flying squirrels, birds, wild chicken, tree rats, and monkeys. They fish in inland streams by drying one side of a riverbed and catching the fish that get impounded or trapped. They do less fishing along the coast, although saltwater fishing is no longer strange to them, having acquired this skill in recent times. In earlier centuries, the Batak fished only in rivers and streams, since they hardly ever ventured out from their forest habitat. Another way to catch fish is to use natural plant poisons from vines such as the *tubli*, a practice known throughout Palawan and the Visayas.

Men and women dig wild yams and taro, collect succulent leaves, nuts, ferns, mushrooms, and fungi from the forest. They also catch edible insects, beetles, ants, and certain kinds of spiders, and gather the eggs of birds, turtles, and lizards, as well as the honey and the grubs from decaying trees and plants. Aside from wild food, the Batak collect forest products such as rattan and *bagtik* (almaciga resin). These items are used for exchanging with clothing material, salt, rice, or metal implements from the lowland traders.

The Batak learned the kaingin system of dry agriculture from neighboring groups in recent times, but their rice harvest has remained minimal, and thus they are always in need of this staple food. They have coconuts, breadfruit, and jackfruit. They also have small gardens planted to cassava, sweet potato, yams and other root crops, banana, squash, pepper, and tobacco. There is practical division of labor between men and women. The men hunt, build the houses, make mortars and pestles from wood, construct boats, cut trees or prepare the clearing, while the women plant the rice and do general domestic chores.

Trade between hunters and gatherers, swiddeners, and the lowland population have been a feature of their social interaction since prehistoric times. Forest products such as honey, beeswax, rattan, bamboo, and *copal de manila* provided ready cash to the indigenous peoples of Palawan. Proceeds from these transactions enabled them to acquire commodities such as textile, metal implements, beads and additional food supply.

Wage labor, tenancy, or servitude to migrant settlers have been increasing in recent years. By taking advantage of the unfamiliarity of the indigenous peoples with this kind of arrangement, many have been denied the true monetary or material value of their labor and ironically became deeply indebted instead to their employers. In Palawan, the arrival of tourists have opened new opportunities and availability of some goods for the Batak. Tourist establishments are utilizing Batak as guides. Baskets, mats, and other cultural materials produced by Palawan indigenous populations have become popular souvenirs among the tourists.

Political System

Being traditionally nomadic, there is no groupwide central authority in Batak society. The semblance of leadership is found in the band, which may be a hunting or food-gathering group of families, usually composed of members who may or may not be related to one another by blood. It has no fixed designated leader, except that the members are expected to be compatible in working together as a group. Several bands may comprise a settlement, especially during the wet season. There may be subgroups in smaller settlements, and all these social units have a chief called *kapitan*, a term apparently borrowed from the Spanish. The members recognize his authority to control or regulate the behavior of the community, supervise sanitation, determine the time for planting, coordinate the activities of work groups, and settle minor disputes. The kapitan is chosen by the adult members, based on leadership qualities and hunting or fighting.

An institution exists for the adjudication of cases which primarily concern the relations between men and women, such as matters arising from divorce, as well as polygamous or polyandrous relationships. This is the *surigiden*, a council of arbitrators composed of all resident adult males in a large local group. Each group would normally have a *masurigiden* (specialist on Batak custom law), but all decisions on cases brought to the council's attention are made by the surigiden as a collective body (Eder 1977:13).

Complications and conflicts have arisen in duties and functions, because the national government has instituted the barangay of local government. Matters related to "cultural preservation," issues related to the recognition and protection of indigenous people's rights and their ancestral domain, have been under the jurisdiction of government agencies concerned with the country's cultural communities.

Social Organization and Customs

Three social groups are recognizable in Batak society: the family, which may be nuclear or compound; the band, a hunting or food-gathering group composed of several families; and the settlement or camp of all the families who occupy a semipermanent site. While the Batak have been described as shy and peaceful, they were known in the past to have been feared by other groups as warriors skilled with the bow and arrow. The probable reason for this reputation of ferocity is that they might have been attacked several times by Malay groups, and driven out of their territory so that they were forced to fight back. This struggle in the past may have developed an attitude of peaceability among themselves.

Nevertheless, this social trait has not prevented the emergence of crime in Batak society, for which a system of justice is in place. Traditionally, the punishment of offenses and crimes less than murder and adultery was whipping (Miller 1905:187). Murder was punished by granting the brother, father, or other relatives the right to exact

retribution in kind, or else to demand a fine in currency from the wrongdoer.

Courtship is initiated by a Batak male who chooses the female he wants to marry. Upon her acceptance of his marriage proposal, the man and his family inform the parents of the woman about their decision, bringing with them an amount of money for the *bandi* or *kapangasawa* (bride-price). An *orako* (wedding ceremony) need not be held for a marital relationship to be recognized. The *orako*, when held, is presided over by a Batak elder, in the presence of a man and a woman acting as *tataksilan* (witnesses). Facing each other as they sit on the floor, the bride and the groom feed each other with cooked rice scooped by the hand. After they have done so, the *orako* pronounces them man and wife. In Batak society, polygamy and polyandry are allowed, but these do not often happen because of the financial obligations involved. The Batak seldom have cash on hand, and paying the bride-price, in addition to paying the first wife a certain amount of money for taking in a new wife, can often impoverish one completely.

In the past, divorce was unknown in Batak society, and not even adultery could dissolve a marriage (Miller 1905:187). In lieu of divorce, adultery was punishable by public whipping. Nevertheless, should the husband consent, his wife could go with the offending man upon payment by the latter of a certain amount in fines. Or, both men could live with the woman, with the second husband acting as no more than a servant for the first husband, who would exercise all authority and had the right not to work. At present, the practice is that if a man wants to divorce his wife, he calls for a *surigiden* (council of adult male arbitrators) to hear the case. Before this body, he lays down the reasons why he seeks a divorce. If the body rules in his favor and he is granted the divorce, he is required to pay the woman a certain amount of money in exchange for the separation. On the other hand, when a woman takes a second husband, the latter supports not only the woman but also her first husband, and all his children by her.

Aside from deciding cases involving relations between men and women, the *surigiden* is also expected to be present at all the ritual activities usually observed for the curing of illness. In these rituals, there is a *babaylan* (shaman or healer) who presides. Each group of Batak would have several such persons who specialize in curing various kinds of diseases, using either the *diwata* (a kind of song or incantation) or the *tarek* (dance), as well as the trance curing the afflicted.

In contrast with the neighboring Tagbanua, there are no women mediums, not even midwives, among the Batak, and no female members are allowed to participate in the decision-making process involving the council of elders.

Religious Beliefs and Practices

Like other Aeta groups in the Philippines, the Batak are an animist group. They believe in good and bad spirits who dwell in trees, rocks, and mountains. Some of these spirits are *Batungbayanin*, spirit of the mountains; *Paglimusan*, spirit of the small stones;

Bulungbunganin, spirit of the almaciga trees; and Sulingbunganin, spirit of the big rocks. In Batak cosmogony, there are gods who are to be feared, because of the retribution they can inflict upon mortals; there are also gods to be thanked for the many favors they give to people. In old Batak lore, there was a god named Maguimba, who in remotest times lived among the people, having been summoned by a powerful babaylan, and he supplied all the necessities of Batak life, as well as all the cures for illnesses. He even had the power to bring the dead back to life.

The Batak believe that good deities guide them in their hunt, provide them with good harvests, and keep them in good health. Foremost of these benevolent gods is Diwata, who provides for the needs of men and women, and gives out rewards for good deeds. A deity named Angoro lives in *basad*, a place beyond this world where the souls of the dead go, and it is there where they come to know if they are to proceed to *lampanag* (heaven) or be cast into the depths of the basad, where fire and boiling water await these hapless ones. The malevolent deities cause sickness, bodily harm, crop failures, misfortunes, and even death, to those who disobey their will or transgress upon their places of abode. There are also lesser gods in the Batak pantheon, some of whom are Siabuanan, Bankakah, Paraen, Buengelen, and Baybayen, deities of great strength.

The Batak believe in a principal soul which resides in the head of a person, and four other minor ones. During sickness, the soul leaves the body, and it is only the shaman, performing the necessary rituals, who can recall the soul and bring back the man to health and life.

Because they are beholden to their deities, who must be placated, supplicated, or invoked in whatever life activity they are engaged in, the Batak perform rites and ceremonies that maintain the links between their natural and social world, and the world of the spirits. They have rituals which may be considered smaller-scale versions of the Tagbanua's *diwata* or *inim*, and it is likely that it was from the latter group that they learned such a practice. They make use of incantations, and depend on a male babaylan who performs ritual dances. Music is provided by female instrumentalists who pound on rudimentary drums, and strike bamboo tubes with sticks.

Sanbay is a ritual in honor of Diwata, who is asked by the people to bless them with generous harvests of *palay* (unhusked rice) and honey. This ritual takes place inside a forest, about 2-3 kilometers from the beach. Two huts are constructed for the ritual. Palay is placed in one of these huts. A replica of a beehive, meanwhile, is situated in another small hut. Prayers are recited to Diwata by the babaylan, after which the people in attendance gather together in festive eating, drinking, and dancing.

In considering the natural environment as the abode of spirits, the Batak have adopted certain attitudes towards objects. For instance, no Batak will cut down a balete tree without first asking the spirit who lives in the tree if it is quite willing to transfer to another tree. To ascertain the spirit's response, a stick is leaned against the tree. The following day, the Batak come back for the spirit's answer. A stick lying on the ground means no, the spirit cannot move out and therefore the tree cannot be felled, while a

stick still upright against the trunk means yes, the spirit has moved on and the Batak have its permission to cut down the balet tree (Llamzon 1978:113).

Architecture and Community Planning

Most Batak settlements are found in river valleys, between the mountain regions and the seacoast of northeastern Palawan. Each settlement tends to be permanently associated with a particular river and its watershed (Eder 1977:13). Within the settlement, the Batak have built their simple dwellings which are patterned after those of neighboring groups such as the Tagbanua. In earlier times, several families lived in a single large nipa hut, divided only by lines or sticks on the floor to mark the limits allotted for each memberfamily of the household (Miller 1905:183).

Their houses have remained basically the same: thatch, bamboo, and wood, with a short staircase made from bamboo poles, whose rungs are smaller and shorter lengths of bamboo fixed in slots along the parallel poles. A handrail made of bamboo runs from a post at the foot of the staircase up to the doorway of the house. Medium-sized wooden posts, sometimes supported by smaller, shorter lengths of wood diagonally thrust from the ground, hold up the main frame of the house. The thatched roof has a rather high pitch. The fireplace where food is cooked is located underneath the house, and consists of stones where fire is kindled and the food cooked. The fireplace is sometimes positioned under the edge of the house floor which is raised some 1.5 meters above the ground, or under the center of the living area, depending upon its function—either for cooking or for warmth at night. The raised floor provides a clearing under the house which becomes a storage space for an assortment of tools and equipment. These include a large water container, which is a long piece of bamboo with several nodes punched out through the bore, except for the bottom. A smaller container functions as an intermediate type of water container. There is also a wooden mortar and pestle for pounding rice. The mortar lies on the ground and the pestle usually stands or leans against one of the house supports.

A fence fashioned from tall, thin reeds or bamboo poles lashed together is sometimes built around the house. This and the house itself comprise the more permanent structures that the settled Batak build. There are also the temporary shelters, which are usually found some distance from the dwellings, and contain no more than the items and provisions needed by the Batak in their hunting and gathering activities in the forest. These items include rattan poles, packs of resin, containers of honey, and baskets filled with edible tubers.**Visual Arts and Crafts**

The traditional costume of the Batak is simple, consisting mainly of bark cloth which they prepare from a species of mulberry tree. For the lower-body covering of the men, long strips of bark are cut, the outer portion removed, and the fibrous part pounded until it becomes a soft fluffy material. The men wear it by winding it around their waistline, down between the legs and back, with the loose ends tucked in and allowed to hang out. The Batak male usually has two sets of bark cloth. One is for everyday use,

and is undecorated. The other is decorated and colored, usually yellow and red, colors extracted from vegetable dyes. Tied to his bark cloth is a small rattan or bamboo container for tobacco and betel nut. He wears his hair long and uncombed, and occasionally winds a headband around his hair. Another accoutrement on his body is a bamboo pouch which contains the necessary fire-making elements of flint and steel and, sometimes, tobacco. He is not usually given to ornamentation, although he sometimes puts on narrow bracelets, armbands, and small rings. Often, he would be sporting a tattoo on his chest or arms.

The women fashion their lower body covering out of the same kind of material, except that being skirtlike, their bark cloth is wider and wound around their lower body, and loosened in front. Some have acquired cotton cloth which is then cut into a variation of the tapis (wraparound). Like the menfolk, Batak women do not cover their upper torso. Adult women usually strap a band around their waist, made of several rings of colored rattan strips. To their tapis belt is tied a container for their betel chew and tobacco leaves. During special occasions such as feasts, Batak women put decorations on their hair, usually colored bands festooned with flowers, colored leaves, and grasses. They may also tuck fragrant roots into their waistline. Rattan ringlets and metal anklets are worn around their wrists and ankles respectively, while red-and-black seed necklaces with attached squirrel's tails hanging from the back (see logo of this article) are also sported (Orosa-Goquingco 1980:113). At the age of seven, Batak women start shaving their heads about 5 centimeters from the hairline of the forehead, in a semicircle from one ear to the other.

A few Batak men have retained the practice of body tattooing. The tattoo design is called *sipra* or *marka* (from the Spanish *marca*, "mark"). The tattoo is applied to the skin of the arm or chest with a sharp pointed piece of bamboo or a needle, which has been dipped in soot obtained from the smoke of burning oil or fat. Tattooing is a painful process, but Batak men who sport them undergo the process as a ritual of manhood, and for the beauty of the designs. The Batak have a fetish called *tapa*, an object which they believe possesses the power to ward off evil. About 20 centimeters long, it could be made from roots, herbs, and cotton ball tassels.

Hardly any cloth weaving is done, since they import most of their clothing material from outside, but basketry has similarities in execution and design with those of the better-known basketcraft of the Palawan and the Tagbanua. For their basic basket-making materials, the Batak use lawas (bamboo), arurung (rattan vine), kulagbaw and balingasaw (kinds of leaves), and bagtik (almaciga sap or resin), while their two basic tools are a big knife called *payda*, and a smaller one called *sundang* (Calderon 1986:130). The Batak make their baskets by weaving one set of blackened bamboo strips (the weavers) through another set of browned bamboo strips (the spokes) in various ways to produce a wide range of designs. The basket weavers have certain beliefs and customs related to the craft of basketry. For instance, the weavers are reluctant to give the name of the design of the basket when it is being woven, and simply calls the unfinished basket a *kawa-kawa* (like a frying pan), even when the specific design or shape has already become discernible. This is because the basket

makers do not plan the designs in advance; it is only when the basket is half-finished that the weavers realize the design into which the basket will eventually be shaped (Calderon 1986:132). Batak women acquire the knowledge of basketry from childhood from the older weavers. Among the Batak, the baskets are considered to be owned by the individual, rather than by the family.

There are six basic designs in Batak basketry: *kawa-kawa*, “like a frying pan”, which means “of unfinished shape”; *kerumata*, *libo-libo*, *timogrok*, *bianig*, or *inaupan*, “many eyes”; *tinlo pinalagsanan*, “alternately” crossing one over the other”; *liangub* or *langub*, “like the swell of waves”; *putak-putak*, “the falling of the rain”; and *tiakdan*, *piakdan*, “like the steps of the staircase.” According to Calderon, these different designations have something to do with the Batak’s communal activities and perceptions of objects around them. The transformation of the Batak from a purely mountain-dwelling group to periodic commuters between mountain and coastal plains is reflected in these designations. While the sea may not be part of their daily and customary environment, the Batak nevertheless have patterns depicting both low tide and the welling up of the waves. Apparently, their once-a-month trip to the coast for trading purposes have thoroughly familiarized them with this new environment.

Different kinds of baskets are woven for different purposes. The most common, the *bugyas* baskets, are made for carrying seedlings to be planted, rice stalks that have been harvested, and the palay itself for storing. They range from 15-28 centimeters in height, and 18-31 centimeters in diameter. Similar to the popular southern Palawan variety, the *bugyas* basket has a square base but is topped off with a round rim. It uses the over-two, under-two weaving technique with superimpositions through the weave of black contrasting strips, sometimes producing geometric designs.

Since they are and have always been marginal agriculturists, the Batak now weave carrying baskets much bigger than earlier ones and with wider rims to accommodate bigger loads of agricultural crops from the fields to the house, or to carry honey and almaciga sap to the town market nearby to sell for cash (Calderon 1986:135).

Another kind of basket is the *tilagsa*, used for storing personal effects. This is from 14-15-centimeter high and 15-17-centimeter wide. It has a slightly concave square base, topped off with a round rim. A cloth sling is attached to it for ease of carrying. There are smaller baskets woven to hold seedlings, as well as freshwater shells and fish collected from the rivers and streams.

The common Batak field basket used for carrying products is said to be similar to the harvest basket traditionally made in the Calamianes, the northernmost islands of Palawan, as well as to some baskets of the Mindoro Mangyan, because of decorations such as overlays of split nito, and the use of soft-strip buri, or a seagrass with a nito overlay on it. The dwindling number of Batak, which is the most immediate and basic problem encountered by this group, means in practical terms fewer baskets and basket makers (Lane 1986:146).

Aside from baskets, the Batak also make the following items: the apogan, a lime container made from cone shells; the tangal, a container for lime and tobacco, which is a small bamboo tube with a matching bamboo cover that has a coiled sling knotted through its two sides; a blowpipe used for fanning embers, basically a small bamboo tube; a basket sheath for the bolo, woven in the same way as the bugyas, cylindrical in form but flattened at the base which is of carved wood, with a braided rattan strap fastened to the sides; the kiyalandagan, a rectangular mat made from pandan leaves, of herringbone weave design; a container for tuba (coconut wine), made from a large bamboo intemode, with a carved wooden handle lashed to the body with rattan bands; the kereban, a quiver for carrying darts for the hunter's blowgun, tied to the waist during a hunting foray; the balata or darts made of palm with spurs fashioned from pith of palm midribs; the sapukan or blowgun made from two lengths of bamboo joined together by means of resin sealant; the ugyong or arrows made from long palm reed rod with alternating decorative bands, with arrowheads of bamboo attached to the rod with nito strips; the busog or bow, made from wood of palm, with a bowstring of rattan whose ends are tied to the bow ends with nito strips; and the pasil, a top used by children as a toy, which is pointed oval in shape, with a knob on the upper end.

Literary Arts

Batak oral tradition is a compendium of various forms of folk speech containing traditional wit, humor, and knowledge, as well as stories about the world of people and the world of spirits. The first includes *liwad-liwad* (jokes) and *paigumun* (riddles). The presence of the native term for riddles lends evidence to their existence, but they seem to be confined to the children as no Batak adult would admit knowing them. Hence, no Batak riddles have yet been recorded (Warren 1964:113).

The stories have varied types: *tuturan*, a generic term for all kinds of stories told among the people; *tultul*, humorous but untrue stories about unknown people; *kwinto* (from the Spanish *cuento*, meaning "story"), an imaginary story about some person; *panyaen*, stories about evil spirits; *diwata*, stories about medicinal herbs and the art of curing; and *surublian*, stories about inheritance.

Some tultul represent a kind of origin myth, often recounted by old men in the evening when work has stopped and the members of the hunting-gathering band are assembled around the fire. Curiously, stories about the origin of the Batak have a self-deprecating tone and theme unraveled in a humorous manner.

Representative of the tultul is one which explains the origin of the Batak. Once there was a father and a mother who had four sons. One day, while the parents were sleeping, the four children played outside the house. When they were through playing, the children went inside. The eldest, who went in first, saw that his mother was asleep. He lifted up her skirt and laughed at her nakedness. The second son also laughed, but not very much. The third did not laugh at all. The fourth son covered his mother with a piece of cloth. Actually, the parents were only pretending to be asleep. They were

watching the behavior of their children. Then the father rose and called the children to him. To the eldest, he gave a stick used to beat bark for making cloth. To the second, a piece of torn cloth. To the third, a piece of new cloth. And to the youngest, he gave a piece of iron. The father said there was to be no punishment. These objects were theirs to play with. He advised them to take good care of the objects and to pass these on to their children. To the eldest, he said that if his younger brothers did not help him, he would not be able to get along. To the youngest, he said that he would not have to work as hard as his brother, since he possessed the iron rod, which could make his work much easier. From the oldest son came the Batak people; from the second emerged the Tagbanua; from the third, the Moro; and from the fourth, the Spaniards.

Another origin story similar to the first ends with an explanation of how fire came to the Batak. Once there was an old man who had two sons. One day, the old man fell asleep, and as he did so, his penis was exposed. Seeing this, the younger son began laughing. The older son reprimanded him, saying, "Why are you laughing?" and he proceeded to cover up his sleeping father with a piece of cloth. The father soon woke up, and simply said to his younger son, "You shall become a Batak," and the boy turned into an ugly man wearing a loincloth. He had become the first Batak. On the other hand, the older son grew up to become a wise and wealthy man. Then the old man said to the son who had turned into a Batak: "If you cannot find a stone, a piece of steel, and tinder, it will be impossible for you to build a fire." Hearing these words, the son went to the river to look for a stone. Then he went to the forest where he found tinder, and after some more searching, he found a piece of steel. He struck the stone with the steel while holding them both close to the tinder. This is how the first fire was made by the first Batak.

According to Batak folklore, woman did not come from man but man became woman. Once there was an old man with two sons. He sent them out to the fields to watch over his trees, warning them not to eat the fruits of those trees. But the younger son disobeyed. He ate some of the fruits, and after some time, grew breasts on his body. When the older son saw what was happening, he was surprised, but liked what he saw. Later, he married the woman who used to be his brother. And this was the first marriage.

Like other groups which have rice as staple, the Batak have a very interesting story about the origin of rice which, curiously enough, explains the origin of plates. There was a man and a woman in the earliest days. They had a child. Food was hard to come by. One night in a dream, the man was told to kill their child and plant it in the field. As soon as he awoke, the man proceeded to cut up his child into tiny pieces. He scattered the pieces of flesh all over the field. In time the pieces began to sprout, and the first palay of the Batak came forth. Then the man gathered the bones of the child and scattered them all over the field, where they turned into bandi (plates). And so the Batak came to own plates, which they would use to pay for fines or the bride-price.

Another story explains the origin of certain customs, in this case one associated with wakes for the dead. There was a man who died. His relative placed his corpse on the

floor of the house and began mourning. For two days they mourned, and on the second night the corpse began to move. It suddenly sat and then stood up, and proceeded to eat the people attending his wake. A man was able to escape. He ran outside and shouted for help. He dashed back inside, grabbed a pole, and hit the corpse with it. The corpse, who was still devouring the people, suddenly went dead again. More people arrived and they tied down the corpse to the floor, and placed the pole across its chest. The corpse never moved again. To this day, the Batak still tie a pestle across the body of a dead person.

Performing Arts

In placating and supplicating the divinities of the spirit world, the Batak use incantations, music, and dance in ritual performances. For these, they depend on a male babaylan who performs *magdiwata* (ritual songs) and *magtarek* (dances). Music is provided by female instrumentalists who pound on rudimentary drums, and strike bamboo tubes with sticks. The drums called *kalag*, are usually made from dried animal skin drawn tight over a piece of hollowed wood, and lashed to it by means of a coiled rattan ring. Other musical instruments used are the *tipano*, a 47-centimeter long flute with six fingerholes, made from a small diameter bamboo internode; the *sabagan*, a piece of *li-it* softwood about 3 meters long, played by means of drumstick-shaped pieces of wood; and the *lampung*, also a wooden instrument suspended from the house beams like the *sabagan*. There is also mention of the *guimbal*, *agong*, and *bobandil* instruments in relation to the *magdiwata* ritual. Moreover, the Batak have three special instruments: the *lantoy*, a nose flute with two holes; the *kodian*, which is about 1.8 meters long with two barks of fiber, and used as the traditional accompaniments in the singing of the “Abellano”; and the *budlong*, a guitarlike two-stringed instrument. The set tunes of the *magdiwata* songs are euphonic; for instance:

A-u-na,
A-i-yo,
A-ye-a,
A-e-na.

During the healing rites, the babaylan goes into a trance by lying flat on the ground and singing the *sukilan*, the *wawaen*, and the *runduman*. In this state he dances with vigor and power. At one point, he stands still, almost motionless; then he starts to shake and tremble, taking small steps at a time as he continues on to bigger and more strenuous steps. Dancing stops only when he falls exhausted and out of breath. He then announces the best cure for the ailing person. This usually entails an animal sacrifice, and the recitation of prayers to appease the offended *diwata*. Another healing dance is called the *kendar*, which is also performed by a male shaman while in a trance. Sometimes the *kendar* is performed during the rice harvest rituals.

The *tarek* is another traditional dance performed by a farmer and his family as part of a preplanting ritual to ask the *diwata* of the fields to guard the newly opened fields and to

bring a good harvest. Before the tarek is danced, food and animal offerings are placed on field altars set up for the ritual. Both the kendar and the tarek as well as dances called *leyan-leyan* and *sadonkaya* are performed by the babaylan. The women do not participate in ceremonial dances although they are familiar with the routines.

Three dances exemplify the present Batak hierarchy of dances: the *sarunkay*, the first dance executed by the healer during the healing ritual; the *bugsay-bugsay*, an enjoyable dance for one or more persons; and the patarusan, considered the highest in the hierarchy as it is the fastest and most exciting but perhaps the easiest to learn. These dances can be complex, with much stomping of the feet while the arms hang loosely at the dancer's side or are crossed at the back or even raised from the elbow (as in an inverted T position).

The prototheatrical rituals of the Batak are represented by the magdiwata and magtarek, performed to appease spirits through song and dance; *kuma*, the group reidentification ritual; *runsay*, the group ancestral spirit worship ritual; *kambay*, the thanksgiving ritual; and *sagda*, the vengeance ceremony (Warren 1964). There are also dance enactments of the bees search for honey, battle scenes and courtship episodes. A common version of the latter is that in which the girl pretends to spurn the advances of her suitor, a comical piece mostly improvised. • E. Maranan/Reviewed by S.G. Padilla Jr.

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