



## **“KABATAKAN”**

# **The Ancestral Territory of the Tanabag Batak on Palawan Island, Philippines**



by

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## Executive Summary

Because of its rich diversity of animal and plant species, the entire province of Palawan, in the Philippines, is the target of a land management plan under the Philippines Republic Act 7611, also known as the Strategic Environmental Plan (SEP). Due to its unique features, UNESCO declared Palawan as a biosphere reserve, and two of its sites as world heritage sites. All over the island, there are still ecologically valuable areas that have been sustainably managed since time immemorial by the local indigenous peoples. Today, because of escalating mining activities province-wide, most of these Community Conserved Areas (CCAs) are under serious threat. Compared to other municipalities, the City Government of Puerto Princesa has not allowed mining within the boundaries of its municipality, as a result the territory of the Tanabag Batak has the potential for remaining one of the best examples of community conserved areas in the entire Palawan. The people living in the area is 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 (probably around 45,000 – 50,000 years ago), and that are generically labeled as *Negritos*. Indeed, with an overall population of less than 300 individuals, the Batak of Palawan are amongst those most threatened indigenous community of South East Asia.

A community consultation to discuss a wide range of issues pertaining the ancestral territory of the Tanabag Batak was formally facilitates on August 24-25. The community consists of 31 households (153 persons) managing an area of about 5,000 hectares of which 3,458.70 hectares fall within a Community Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA) area. Most of the area is covered by a mosaic of different forests: old-growth Dipterocarp forest, Mountain Forest, Limestone Forest, patches of secondary forest, and forest regenerating in previously cultivated swiddens. The lower portions of the Batak territory are also intermitted with swiddens planted with rice and root-crops.

During the CCA discussion, Batak members pointed out that, over the years, they have been unable to fulfill most of their bureaucratic obligations pertaining their CBFMA agreement. Specifically, they did not submit their Annual Work Plan (AWP) and the Community Resource Management Framework (CRMF) to the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO). These reports, in fact, are to be written according to strict government standards and Batak, being illiterate, do not have the technical skill to prepare them. On one occasion, because Batak were unable to produce such reports, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources decided to withdraw the permits needed by the community to sell NTFPs. Recently, the buyers of *almaciga* resin and rattan, in order to have priority access to the Batak NTFPs products, have assisted them in completing the necessary paperwork.

The area managed by the Tanabag Batak is perceived by the local community as an integral portion of what they define as *Kabatakan*, the ancestral land of the Batak as it is narrated in the local foundation myths and narratives. According to the local mythology, the landscape was originally named by the ancestor *Esa'* during a hunting journey. He gave names to all places while following his dogs running after

wild pigs. So the landscape, as it is known today, was created through the movement of *Esa'* and, until now, it provides people with physical and emotional orientation. Therefore, it is the entire landscape with all its features (rather than selected 'sacred sites') that is endowed with 'sacredness' and thus needs to be well-managed and conserved. Through a balanced combination of foraging and farming, integrated with the collection of commercially valuable NTFPs, Batak have been able to manage their territory sustainably for a long time. Commonly, the Batak forage for seven species of mammal, two species of reptile, one amphibian, fifteen or more species of fish, four mollusks, three crustaceans, more than seven types of birds, and two types of honey.

Batak society is egalitarian and - as far as concerning environmental-based decisions - each individual is free to use the plant and animal resources available in the area for domestic consumption. The use of certain resources (eg. *agathis* resin) is generally regulated by the same individuals who, over the years, have acquired certain 'tapping' rights to the use of specific trees. Batak gatherers claim that their way of extracting the resin does not damage the tree, since the first cut is only *dua kamrut* (two fingers) wide, and tapping takes place no more than twice a month. Moreover, trees are tapped in such a way that the cut is protected from direct rain, and thus from fungi-related diseases. Other decisions for more 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*). Batak protection measures for rattan include the exclusion of good palm groves from swidden clearings, and the cutting of single stemmed rattans before the plant has produced fruits. All other matters, related to the exploitation of particular resources, either by community members or by outsiders, are dealt with by the community as a whole and implemented through the *kapitan*. Generally, the assistance of shamans as managers of natural resources is sought only during community rituals for the propitiation of rice, honey and, on some occasion, of freshwater resources.

The Tabag Batak also name and recognize over 70 landraces of upland rice, of which 44 are said to be *dati* (old) and *tunay* (original) to the area. Fields, once cultivated, are left to fallow for several years and are then replanted with rice, root crops and vegetables. Today, ongoing environmental changes, and adverse meteorological phenomena (e.g. El Niño and La Niña) are concurring to constrain Batak land-use options and to narrow down their repertoire of sustainable resource strategies. During the CCA discussion, it was pointed out that, because of government restrictions, the people are being prevented from clearing secondary forest that has grown back in their old swiddens. As a result, they have to apply short fallow periods (3/4 years) on their upland rice fields and this, in turn, jeopardizes the re-growth of natural forest and the full regeneration of soil nutrients. Therefore, one of the present challenges that people face within their CCA is how to restore the sustainable rotation of old fallow land, without the risk of being apprehended by forest guards (*bantay gubat*). The drastic reduction of agricultural production has also been caused by the combined effect of El Niño/La Niña. Ultimately, Batak members have little choice but to increase their collection of forest products for sale to compensate for the loss of crop-production. As of now, this has

not prevented Batak from applying sustainable tapping techniques to their *Agathis* trees.

Currently, there is no attempt from outsiders or recent migrants to settle inside the Tanabag Batak CCA, as a result a considerable portion of this territory is still in good ecological conditions. Differently from other more acculturated groups, Batak have no plan to transfer to nearby Barrios, nor to the capital City (e.g. to look for part-time jobs). In spite of the ongoing transformation and changes of values taking place within their community, the young generations are still deeply attached to their territory, and the latter continues to play an important role in their livelihood and cultural sustenance. On the other hand, the traditional role of shamans as 'custodians of the natural resources' is increasingly seen as an irrelevant instrument to face and deal with the new transformations. Especially for the young generations, imported technology and 'modern life' have an aesthetic force and a socializing dimension that largely overrides that of shamanic séances and traditional narratives. In spite of all this, the Tanabag 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 and the civil society as a whole – but, unfortunately – this is not happening. The people also plan to convert their CBFMA agreement into a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title under the Indigenous Peoples Right Act (IPRA) law. They believe that this change will provide the community with a stronger legal instrument to sustainably manage and defend their CCA.

Linking with other indigenous groups both nation-wide and internationally is seen by Batak as an additional opportunity to have their voices being heard. However, as they themselves have pointed out during the consultation, the creation of alliances with international indigenous peoples' organizations need to be based first on a strong commitment on the part of the community to strengthen its own association (*Samahan sa Kaunlaran ng mga Batak sa Tina*), thus improving solidarity and social cohesion internally.

## Introduction

A *sadong sadong* (community consultation) to discuss a wide range of issues pertaining the ancestral territory of the Tanabag Batak was formally facilitates on August 24 -25, 2008 by Dario Novellino, an anthropologist affiliated with the Centre



for Biocultural Diversity (University of Kent) and who has spent an overall period of seven years with the Batak, beginning in 1987. He is also a Visiting Researcher of the Institute of Philippine Culture (Ateneo de Manila University). The meeting was held at the community centre of the Kalakuasan settlement and at the house of Katibu' (Primitivo Hernando), chairman of the local Community Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA) area. At least 50 community members participated in the discussion including the *kapitan* (tribal chieftain), the shaman, women and youngsters of different age. The grass-root discussion was undertaken with the full approval and support of the chieftain, community representatives and members of the local organization "*Samahan sa Kaunlaran ng mga Batak sa Tina*". Furthermore, part of the meeting was audio-visually recorded by Gadong, a young community member who is receiving training in participatory video methodologies in the context of two ongoing projects supported by the Christensen Fund and by the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI Urgent Anthropology Grant).

### Palawan Island and its Biodiversity

Palawan, is the fifth largest province in the Philippines and has the highest percentage of forest cover - between 38% and 44% of the island surface (Serna 1990; Kummer 1992). It is located approximately at 363 nautical miles southwest of Manila, the capital of the Philippines. It lies between Mindoro island and Sabah (on the island of Borneo), surrounded by the South China Sea on the west and the Sulu Sea on the east. To the south, some thirty miles of open water separate Palawan from Sabah. The main



island is nearly 278 miles long (about 435 kilometers) and has a width of forty kilometers at its widest part - between Brooke's Point and Tarampitao - and only 8.5 kilometres at its narrowest near Bahile, in the north. The total land area is of 1,489.629 hectares, inclusive of the 1,767 islands and islets surrounding the main island having a surface area of 4,549 square miles. A mountain barrier rising to 6,800 feet at the highest point divides Palawan

into two narrow watersheds. Palawan has a tropical and monsoonal climate with a pronounced dry season from January to April and a wet/rain season from May to December. The highest rainfall is on the



**Palawan Eagle**





***The Palawan Bear Cat***

western flanks of the mountain spine where the annual total approximately exceeds 5,000 mm compared to the 1,600 mm of the east coast. Temperature is almost uniform throughout the year with a diurnal range of 22C-30C. Because of its rich diversity of animal and plant species, the entire province is the target of a land

management plan under the Philippines Republic Act 7611, also known as the Strategic Environmental Plan (SEP). A recent survey determined 1,672 species of higher plants on the island, discovering an additional 153 species. These are distributed within a mosaic of vegetation types including mangrove forest, beach forest, karst forest, lake margin forest, semi-deciduous lowland forest, forest on ultramafic soil, middle altitude evergreen forest and montane forests (Hunting Technical Services Limited et al. 1985). Prehistoric migration of Bornean and Malaysian fauna is proven by the presence of the mouse deer, the scaly anteater, the slow porcupine, the flying squirrel, the mangoes, the bearcat, the clawless otter, the Malay civet, and by several other species. It has been estimated that at least 11 of the 25 non-flying mammal species indigenous to the Sundaic region are endemic to Palawan, in addition to 14 bird species (Diamond and Gilpin 1983; Heaney 1986). Overall, at least thirty-one animal species found in the province are single-island endemic, and two of them (the Palawan pheasant and two species of swallowtail butterflies) are listed in the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red Data Book (Collins and Morris 1985). The Philippine crocodile still survives in small numbers along the estuaries of the main rivers. Overall, Palawan hosts 7 declared protected areas, 11 important bird areas and is one of the 10 sites of the Alliance for Zero Extinction (AZE) in the Philippines. It also holds 17 terrestrial key biodiversity areas (KBA). Because of its uniqueness, UNESCO declared Palawan as a biosphere reserve, and two of its sites (Tubbataha Reef Marine Park and Puerto-Princesa Subterranean River National Park) as world heritage sites.

### **The Batak people**

In contrast to the Palawan and Tagbanua, the Batak do not originate from those ancient Mongoloid populations which reached the island around 5,000 BP. Rather, they 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 (probably around 45,000 – 50,000 years ago), and that are generically labeled as Negritos. The Negrito of the Philippines are represented by various ethnolinguistically distinct groups known as Agta, Ayta, Aeta, Ata or Ati, Batak and Mamanwa living in widely scattered regions in the mountainous areas of

southern and eastern Luzon, in Samar, Bohol, Negros, Panay island, Palawan and the eastern Mindanao Provinces.



The Batak of Palawan are found scattered in the central portion of Palawan. Eder (1987) estimated their population to be about 600-700 individuals in 1900, while his complete census in 1972 located only 272 with two Batak parents and 374 with one Batak parent (1987: 110). My provisional census in 2005 indicates that there are only 155 individuals with two Batak parents, a

decline in the Batak 'core' population of almost 57% within a period of thirty-three years. At the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, approximately 20 to 50 Batak families were associated with each of the nine river valleys that made up their territory (see Eder 1987). In the past, according to Batak elders, members of the different local groups visited each other, often traveling by raft along the seashore. At that time, the Batak were spending much time in the coastal areas, building their night-camps on the beach.

During the early sixties, due to the increasing immigrant pressure in the coastal areas, the Batak were forced to abandon their lowland settlements and retreat into the interior. Their local groups became geographically closer to the new migrant settlements and thus more isolated from each other. As a result, the people began to deal more frequently with the newcomers rather than with the Batak of the other river valleys.



The fragmentation of the Batak population has been one of the major elements causing the progressive decline of social-networks and exchange between local groups. Today, because of the lack of suitable partners, Batak are forced to intermarry with non-Bataks. Mixed marriages and Batak assimilation into Tagbanua and Filipino settlements have all contributed to the severance of social ties, with evident repercussions on individuals' ability to organize collective actions (Novellino 2007). Traditional group activities, such as collective hunting of wild pigs (*sagbay*) and initiation ceremonies (*umbay*), have been completely abandoned. These practices were characterized by a strong social emphasis and involved all community members.

Overall, Batak population continues to face demographic decline. During recent years, communication with representatives of national society (government officials, environmentalists, missionaries, tourists, etc.) has greatly increased. Today, Batak are the victims of debt bondage, patronage, land encroachment, culturally unsound measures for environmental protection and various forms of exploitation.

### **The Tanabag Batak and their Community Conserved Territory: a Brief Chronology of Key Events**

The settlements of Tanabag, Caramay and, to a lesser extent, Langogan, are still predominantly composed of Batak. The others (e.g. Mangapin, Tagnipa, Tagnaya, Timbuan) have been absorbed into Tagbanua settlements. The present report concerns the Batak community living in the territorial jurisdiction of Barangay Tanabag in the north-central portion of the island, and now settled in sitio Kalakuasan. The people originated from a large Batak local group traditionally found in the area of Sumurud (presently Barangay San Rafael). According to Warren, around 1910 the government of Palawan asked the Tanabag Batak to create a permanent settlement on the coastal plain near Sumurud (Warren 1964: 30-33). Around 1930, this and other Batak settlements on the coast were declared by the Bureau of Non-Christian Tribes to be reserved for the Batak's exclusive use (see Eder 1987). According to elders, Batak were already living in - and had a preference for lowland areas. For instance, I have been told that in the coastal 'tree-soil zone', generally referred to by Batak as *baled*, edible wild tubers are more abundant and easy to uproot, there is a better availability of areas suited for swidden cultivation, wild pigs were easily pushed towards the sea and speared in the water, and the nearby coral reefs and mangroves provided additional sources of protein. Nowadays, this coastal area is totally transformed and occupied by settlers, small shops and a restaurant. This transformation of the landscape has not only produced 'spatial disorientation' (Kirsh 2001: 249), but has also contributed to a dislocation of memories of the past. On the contrary, the uplands that the Tanabag Batak have been able to conserve and manage until now, are still in good ecological conditions and, given the pressure from mining in neighboring municipalities, it is likely that this place will become one of the last and best conserved examples of community conserved areas (CCA) for the entire province.

External migration to the Tanabag area seems to have begun around the latter part of the nineteenth century. These migrations did not have a major impact on Batak lifestyle. It was only after World War II that migration of Filipino settlers grew exponentially. No road entered the territory of Tanabag until 1956 but - during the 1950's - the government revoked all the Batak reservation decrees, enabling Filipino migrants to settle on indigenous land (Eder 1987: 61).



*The national road around Tanabag*



As a result, at the beginning of the sixties, the Batak community of Sumurud split up into two groups. One group settled in Kalakuanan, and another group in the nearby location of Magtibagen. Starting from the sixties and throughout the seventies, Filipino outsiders became even more interested in trade of non-timber forest products (especially *Agathis* resin) and they attempted to establish privileged relations with the Batak. As *barrios* and municipalities were established, legal concessions to extract forest resources (copal resin and rattan) were given to influential politicians. Unauthorized concessionaires also found their way into the forest business. In 1969, Batak communities (including the people from Tanabag) were requested by the local authorities to transfer to a resettlement site about 8-10 km from Kayasan, in order to learn wet-rice agricultural techniques and receive education. The program was launched by the PANAMIN (a government agency for the welfare of national minorities), which was established under the Marcos government for the alleged purpose of safeguarding traditional national minorities. The PANAMIN resettlement program soon turned out to be a failure. The Batak - kept in the resettlement area for months - were unable to carry out most of their traditional subsistence practices. A sudden turn of events took place when project funds began to run out, and food distribution was no longer possible. As a result, the Batak were asked to return to their villages and no compensation was provided. During the time spent in the resettlement camp, pests had destroyed practically all the seeds left in the village's granaries, and thus no more seeds were available for planting.

During the early seventies, the two groups originated from the split of the Sumurud community united again in Kalakuanan. In 1970, Kalakuanan was declared by the City Government of Puerto Princesa as the Batak's own territory, and the community began to spend longer periods in the area. They were requested to make permanent land improvements by planting perennial crops. A public school building was built for the Batak of Tanabag in 1975. After working for a year, the teacher decided to leave the area (Cadeliña 1985). A few years later, Kalakuanan was abandoned again by the people themselves due to serious incidents involving Batak and migrants. Before returning to Kalakuanan (around 1997/1998) the community has been residing upriver in the settlements of Tina, Kalabayug, Maysaray.

During the eighties, due to closer proximity to the coastal villages – the people had begun to establish more durable economic relations with the Filipino lowlanders.

The beginning of the nineties signals the encounter between the Batak of Tanabag and the Philippine environmental non-government organisations (NGOs). Between 1991 and 1992 a local Philippine NGO - Haribon-Palawan - implemented the P-BIRD (Palawan-Batak Integrated Rural Development) scheme in Tanabag. One of the project's goals was to establish food self-sufficiency by maximizing crop production through the implementation of backyard communal gardening, an irrigation system, pilot wet-rice plots, and sloping agricultural techniques. Community members were organized into groups to build contour lines. However, only some households decided to participate, and they did so on the condition that they would be compensated with a daily allowance of rice. A further twist of the tale

took place when those Batak who did not participate in contour farming went hungry due to seasonal food shortages. Thus they requested Haribon-Palawan to lend them portions of the rice provision intended to support those community members involved in the project. To avoid internal disputes, Haribon decided to distribute rice to the whole community. Rice was shared with those Batak who did not co-operate in the project, on the understanding that the amounts provided had to be paid back later. Inevitably, Haribon became trapped in a dole out system that was financially unsustainable. In fact, those Batak households borrowing large quantities of rice were never able to pay them back. In addition, after a few months, those individuals involved in the construction of the contour lines lost motivation because the project was unable to solve their immediate food needs. Although the contour lines were never finished, community members continued to look at Haribon as their major provider of rice.

Together with agricultural improvement, the P-BIRD aimed at providing marketing assistance for non-timber forest products, with the major objective of reducing the Batak's dependence on patrons and middlemen. The Batak of Tanabag were assisted and encouraged by Haribon-Palawan to suspend their commercial dealings with the local middlemen and patrons, and sell their forest products directly to the town dealers. In doing so, the Batak would have gained a higher profit from selling *Agathis* resin. A few months after its implementation, the Haribon project was fraught with difficulties. Middlemen and patrons felt excluded from the project and blamed Haribon for having curtailed their marketing activities without providing them with a suitable economic alternative. For their part, the Batak feared that an escalation of this conflict would have caused an irreparable severance of the relations between them and the neighboring lowlanders. In the end, the Batak felt that it was not worthwhile to give up the 'security' of their relationship with lowlanders just for a higher price for their forest products.

In March 1994, the same NGO, Haribon Palawan, received technical assistance from the World Conservation Union (IUCN) to carry out a conservation-development project among the Tanabag Batak. The major objective of the project during Phase one was to stop unsustainable forest use, by developing and testing a system of sustainable harvesting, production and marketing of NTFPs in two pilot areas. In 1995 the community was encouraged to develop two hectares of paddy rice. However, according to Batak, the soil lacked sufficient water retention, and was thus inadequate for paddy cultivation. Batak complained bitterly that the amount of rice provided by the project in exchange for their labor (construction and maintenance of the paddy fields) was insufficient to support them. In addition to this, the project introduced three species for reforestation that were of no relevance at all to the community. A Technical Evaluation of the Haribon/IUCN project was carried out by a consultant between January and February 1997, with financial assistance from the Commission of the European Communities. The evaluation report suggested that lack of legal recognition over Batak resources was a major cause of low motivation among the beneficiaries. The report further stated that "as long as the local communities do not have control of the NTFP resources, other planned project activities such as Community Based Sustainable Resource Management (CBSRM), processing and marketing are interesting (theoretical) studies but remain

meaningless” (Bech 1997: 10). It further adds that the project failed to carry out the needed research into the levels of sustainable harvests, processing, marketing, price fluctuation, etc. of NTFPs. As a result, its ultimate objective to “establish a system for the ecologically sustainable and economically viable use of NTFPs” was never fulfilled. Ultimately, the project failed to meet its targets and it was ended on May 1996.

Since 1998 the Batak of Kalakuanan are the legitimate holders of a Community Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA) signed between them and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The CBFMA area consists of 3,458.70 hectares of forest land. It covers the hinterlands of Barangay Tanabag from the Tiabuyan area (where the Kapuyan and the Kapisan creeks meet the Tanab river) to the ridges of the Puyus peak (Cleopatra Needle), in the location known as Lugna/Paganupen, crossed by the Ariras creek to the East and by the Kabalanukan creek to the West. The area extends on both sides of the Tanabag river and it is crossed by at least 40 minor creek drainages. It presents a rough topography, with very narrow valleys between steep mountain ridges. Most of the area is covered by lush vegetation, mainly consisting of patches of primary, secondary lowland and upland forest. There are also small areas under swidden cultivation, mainly located in the ‘soil/tree zones’ classified by the Batak as *pangras* (the area found below the mountainous soil-tree zone known as *kabuludan*). Swidden fields located in the *pangras*, have been utilized cyclically and sustainably by the Batak from the time of their ancestors. This has ensured the preservation of unique varieties of upland rice and ancient crops. The community of Kalakuanan, where most of the Batak CBFMA holders reside, is located at about five kilometers from Barangay Tanabag. The hinterlands of Kalakuanan can only be visited on foot. From the community’s centre it takes about ten hours on foot to reach the northern boundaries of the people’s CCA.

### **Origin of the CCA: Between Mythology and Worldviews**

The area managed by the Tanabag Batak is perceived by the local community as an integral portion of what they define as *Kabatakan*, the ancestral land of the Batak as it is narrated in the local foundation myths and narratives. Even before following their parents to the forest, children begin to experience the landscape discursively through hunting stories and the narration of memorable events. According to the local mythology, the landscape was originally named by the ancestor *Esa’* during a hunting journey.

He gave names to all places while following his dogs running after wild pigs. So the landscape, as it is known today, was created through the movement of *Esa’*



and, until now, it provides people with physical and emotional orientation (Novellino 2003). *Talun* (the forest), on the other hand, is the all-encompassing environment surrounding the village, with its plants, animals, rocks, rivers, patches of fields under follow. Often, trees are embedded with social relations both in terms of genealogies and settlements' histories. Therefore, it is the entire landscape with all its features (rather than selected 'sacred sites') that is endowed with 'sacredness' and thus deserves to be well-managed and conserved. On the other hand, the *Kabatakan*, from a Batak understanding, is also part and parcel of the terrestrial portion of the Universe, the so called 'middle layer'. The Batak, in fact, envision a cosmos of seven 'layers' (*lukap*) consisting of a central tier (the fourth) surrounded by ocean and inhabited by humans, animals, plants, super-human beings and aggressive entities. *Puyus*, the highest mountain in 'Batak land' (an integral portion of their CCA), is regarded as the original place of all malevolent *panya'en*.

The *gunay gunay*, at the edge of the universe, is perceived has the place of origin of the Master of Rice (the female deity *Baybay*) and of the Master of Bees (*Ungaw*) who are believed to be husband and wife.

In traditional Batak society shamanism is the prerogative of male specialists known as *babalian*. Shamans contact spirits during trance, predict future events and are said to possess the gift of clairvoyance. They administer therapeutic remedies and supervise collective subsistence practices, as well as ceremonies to re-

establish the cosmological balance.

In this respect, their role as managers of natural resources is of great relevance. Certain wilds trees, such as the providers of pollen for the bees, the providers of resins and medicine, etc. as well as different animal species are believed to be under the control of mystical entities (*panya'en*). Such entities are



**A Batak shaman performing the tarok dance**

also regarded by Batak as *taw* (persons), in the sense that they are said to possess a human consciousness and, thus, the ability to establish meaningful interaction with everyday people. It would seem that the relationships between shamans and the super-human entities in charge of animals is perceived by Batak as an interaction between resource managers. These resource managers are all shamans in their own right. Thus access to the most important resources (honey, wild pigs, medicinal plants, fish, rice, etc) needs to be negotiated with them. This is clearly explained by Pawat:



“Let’s say that I own an animal, I am in charge of a chicken – I mean - the chicken is mine, I am the one taking care of it. If somebody likes my chicken, they must look for me, for the person in charge- they cannot just take it without asking me. It is the same for the wild pigs. We cannot just take them unless they are given to us. We should make an offering to *Kiudalan* and *Napantaran*, they are the persons in charge of forest pigs”.

Also wild trees, such as the providers of pollen for the bees, the providers of resins and medicine, etc. are under the control of super-human entities. Says Pawat:

“Our ancestors were not responsible for planting forest trees. Grasses and trees are being taken care of by someone else. Without trees we would die, we would have no place to hide. But God had a solution for us, he planted trees for us to stay alive, for our breath to remain fresh. He gave us grasses and trees to build our shelters, and to protect ourselves from rain. However, we have no control over these plants”.

In turn, over-hunting and over-harvesting are said to offend the custodians of game animals and plants. Overall, Batak do not regard environmental degradation as an object of managerial solutions per se. Emphasis is placed, instead, on the social dynamics that have led to environmental damage. This is blamed not only on people inadequate technologies or destructive subsistence practices, but also on their incapacity to maintain appropriate relationships with other non-human agents (Novellino 2003a). With respect to this, Batak elders agree that, nowadays, it is difficult to re-establish the balance between communities and their environment, because certain forest resources are now treated as ‘commodities’. This concept is clearly expressed by the shaman Padaw:

“Since the time of our ancestors all the products from the forest were for our consumption, not for sale. God gave all these things to us, so that we could be alive, and never starve. Then we began to sell the meat of the wild pig, the wild honey, and other things of the forest, so the Custodians of pigs and bees became upset. It was then that our *culture* began to be destroyed”.

### **Tanabag Batak Land and Resource Management Strategies**

The Batak of Tanabag occupy various micro-ecological zones within their ecosystem: fields under fallow, secondary forest; patches of primary forest; and formerly seashores, mangroves and coral reefs. Changes in foraging strategies over the years depend also on the loss or disturbance of one or more traditional food-zones. The Batak continue to develop new responses as micro-ecological zones are transformed or lost because of migrants’ encroachment, and due to various forms of exploitation by outsiders. Ongoing environmental changes, and adverse meteorological phenomena (e.g. El Niño and La Niña) also concur to

constrain Batak land-use options and to narrow down their repertoire of sustainable resource strategies. The new trend today is towards increased collection of valuable non-timber forest products.

### Swidden cultivation

Contrary to the standard description of Batak as 'pure' hunters and gatherers the people do engage in upland farming. The Tanabag Batak have a very complex and detailed mythology dealing with rice and elaborated swidden rituals. Numerous legends trace the origin of rice way back to people's remote past. They name and recognise over 70 landraces of upland rice, of which 44 are said to be *dati* (old) and *tunay* (original) to the area. Fields, once cultivated, are left to fallow for several years and are then replanted with rice, root crops and vegetables. During the fallow cycle, nutrients are returned to the soil mainly as ashes from the burnt cover-crop forest. Batak know how to control and prevent fire from spreading from the burned fields to the surrounding 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 centimeters. Batak fallow forest produces food resources that, generally, do



not grow in other zones. The Tanabag Batak farming and mobility patterns that I observed in 1986/1987 were similar to those described by Cadeliña in 1981/1982. However, today swidden cultivation, as Batak have further stressed during the CCA consultation, is experiencing declining productivity and an overall loss of traditional varieties and root-crops. It is interesting to note that soil samples taken by Cadeliña (1985: 25) from Batak unfarmed forest in the hilltops, slope and valleys indicate that, in 1981, Batak swiddens cut from secondary forest were successfully regaining their natural fertility after a period of 7

**Batak girls harvesting upland rice**

to 18 years on average. Fields were cultivated for one year only. Cadeliña's descriptions confirm my own observation in 1987 according to which Batak rice fields were intercropped with various cultivars, some of which become productive after rice harvest. *Colocasia esculenta*, *Dioscorea* spp., cassava (*Manihot esculenta*) and various cucurbits were planted in the swidden. *Colocasia*, *Dioscorea*, *kalabasa* (*Cucurbita maxima*), as well as *luya* (*Zingiber officinale*) would thrive particularly well at the base of stumps, dead logs and fallen tree branches, where soil has a good moisture content and is rich in ashes.



**A group of women dibblers planting rice**

Root crops were either planted after underbrush clearing, before burning the field (a practice locally known as *pagara'*) or after the burning of the dead vegetation (a technique called *padalus*). Cassava was planted around the margins of the field and in the swiddens, about 20 days after rice planting. Corn and upland rice were planted almost at the same time, the former maturing in about

three months. Poaceae such as *Andropogon sorghum* and *Sorghum vulgare* were planted concurrently with rice, forming individual patches across the agricultural field, or broken lines around its edges. *Setaria italica* (Italian millet) was sowed at least one week before rice. Beans and squash were harvested in the month of November until March. A few sugar canes (*Saccharum officinarum*) were planted at the edge of the rice field or around the swidden house. Sweet potatoes were usually planted in the centre of the rice field or, most commonly, were introduced into the swidden after re-clearing it in October. This practice is locally known as *dab-dab*. It must be pointed out that *dab-dab* is particularly successful in those areas cut from virgin or old fallow forest, that are less susceptible to weeds. Therefore, after planting, sweet potatoes require minimal maintenance. These tubers are also harvested in December, when tree cutting begins, and represent an essential caloric intake when men are busy cutting trees for the next planting season (cf. Cadeliña 1985: 69). Coconut palms, bananas, fruit trees such as papaya, leguminous plants such as *Cajanus cajan*, and *Capsicum frutescens* were also grown in suitable locations inside or around the field, or in the immediate vicinity of the swidden house. In the mid 1980s, a considerable diversity of traditional rice landraces and other crops could be found in people's swiddens. At that time, about eleven varieties of sweet potatoes, nine of *Colocasia esculenta*, seven of cassava and of domestic *Dioscorea*, three types of maize, two types of millet and sorghum could be found in the community. In addition to this the people still planted at least nine different aromatic plants used by women for personal beautification, most of these belonging to the Lamiaceae family. Cadeliña's findings indicate that, in the



early 1980s, a well-maintained Batak field of about one hectare could produce a yield comparable to that proposed in the green revolution with its high technological input requirements (1985: 125). Cadeliña estimated that by pooling labor from relatives, a household, on the average, could clear around one-third of a hectare for a swidden plot, and that a one-hectare Batak swiddens, under various levels of maintenance, produced around 3,900 kilograms of husked rice. A field with excellent maintenance (weeds completely removed) produced almost 5,000 kilograms, while a moderately maintained one (between 30 to 50 percent of the field weeded) produced around 4,000 kilograms. A very poorly maintained field (below 30 percent of the field weeded) made around 2,000 kilograms.

As it will be discussed in this report, government options for environmental conservation such as the City Mayor's shifting cultivation ban, in addition to other natural causes (climatic change, etc.), have contributed to drastically change Batak swidden patterns within their CCA.

### Use of wild animal and plant resources

Commonly, the Batak 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. The hunting of certain animals, traditionally eaten by the people, is now forbidden by the law. Such species include the flying squirrel, the blue-naped parrot, the green imperial pigeon, the peasant peacock, wild chicken, hornbill, and the bear-cat (see table 1). 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. The Tanabag Batak also 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*) *Kudut* (*Dioscorea*

**Pawat holding a kasili (river eel)**

leaves, about thirty species (mainly trees), with edible fruits and eight named species of edible wild tubers such as *Abagan* (*Dioscorea luzonensis*) *Kudut* (*Dioscorea*

**A Batak with a catch of flying squirrels →**





*hispidia*) (see table 2). 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 for their edible hearts. *Calamus spp.* and *Daemonorops spp.* yield very little, but *Arenga spp.* and *Oncosperma spp.* might provide buds up to two to three kilos.

## THE GATHERING OF COMMERCIALY VALUABLE NTFPS

Products like resin from *Agathis philippinensis* (*bagtik*), rattan canes (semi-woody climbers of *Calamus*, *Daemonorops* and *Korthalsia* species), wild honey are gathered to be sold for cash.



### *Agathis philippinensis* (Warb) resin

The gathering of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) is an activity with a very long history in Palawan, but interviews with Batak elders reveal that the tapping of *Agathis* trees was not traditionally practiced. Domestically, resin from *Agathis philippinensis* (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. In the past, resin was gathered from tree branches in the high canopy, or collected from the ground. Resin collected from tree branches is considered to be of superior quality and is extracted at longer intervals of time (approximately every five years). According to Batak, if this period is respected, a mature tree can produce between three and seven sacks of high-grade resin weighting 30 to 40 kilos each. Instead, the practice of tapping seems to have been introduced with the commercialization of forest products, probably after the Second World War. Batak gatherers claim that their way of extracting the resin does not damage the tree, since the first cut is only *dua kamrut* (two fingers) wide, and tapping takes place no more than twice a month. Moreover, trees are tapped in such a way that the cut is protected from direct rain, and thus from fungi-related diseases. On the contrary, they complain about the destructive tapping techniques employed by Filipino gatherers (Novellino 1999).

Each Batak individual is in charge of a certain number of trees, which are not utilized by other gatherers, unless permission is obtained. Batak gatherers from the

uplands of Tanabag agree that a well-managed old *Agathis* tree can provide up to four sacks of resin per month during the dry season, and about one sack during the wet season. However, according to one informant, if trees are of a small size “you need four of them to get the same amount of resin”.



### **Rattan canes**

The stems of the climbing rattan palms are of significant commercial value in Palawan, as elsewhere in South East Asia. Both large and small diameter rattans are gathered by the Batak, with the former being much prized for furniture making, and thus exported internationally. Batak protection measures for rattan include the exclusion of good palm groves from swidden clearings, and the cutting of single stemmed rattans before the plant has produced fruits (cf. Wakker 1993: 38). In addition, Batak are aware that when rattan is harvested, a portion of the palm's cane should be left attached to the plant, in order to allow the growth of the young stems. They also avoid frequent harvesting from the same plant and the

cutting of small diameter canes.

### **Wild honey**

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. Small varieties of bees, such as *antuti*, build very small nests containing



a negligible quantity of honey. The gathering of *putiukan* beehives is risky and requires considerable skill. The basic equipment consists of a rope, a smoking torch of dried leaves or of other materials, and a bush-knife. The gatherer climbs the vines encircling the trunk, until he reaches the canopy. The bees

are driven away by smoking the nest. Then the hive is cut and wrapped up in leaves, placed in a container and lowered down with a rope. The honey from the small *niguan* bees is harvested by enlarging the hole found in the tree trunk, either by means of an axe or a bush-knife. Apart from honey, hives contain bee larvae representing an additional source of protein. Despite its high energy content (100 grams of honey contain more than 280 calories), nowadays, honey is used sparingly in domestic consumption, and it is largely sold to buy rice and other prime commodities.

Efforts to attract swarms may include the preparation of shelters for encouraging bees to construct their hives. These activities consist in the clearing of suitable tree branches, hollow logs, etc. Natural objects (an empty log or a concave stone) may be cleaned from dust, soil, spider webs, etc. to attract swarms of *niguan* bees. Often, after the harvesting of *niguan* honey, a stone is used to close the cut that has been produced by the gatherer in order to extract the honey from the tree trunk. Only a little opening is left for the bees to enter and re-build their nests inside the trunk.

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). The blossoming of *banebegan* (*Pterocymbium tinctorium*) signals the arrival of the honey season, as well as the beginning of *lambay*. This is an annual event involving shamans and the whole community in the propitiation of honey and rice. During the *lambay*, the life-force (*kiaruwá*) of the shaman is believed to travel all the way to the *gunay gunay* (the mythical location of both rice and bees, found at the edge of the universe) and it remains there until he finds a way to enter the granary of *Baybay* (the Master of rice) and take some of the stored seeds. Such seeds will be brought back to the ritual area by the shaman, and will be released during trance. Overall, Batak envisage a kind of cyclical system in which the seasonal production of honey and rice depends upon the flow of bees and of *kiaruwá* of rice from *gunay gunay*. Thus, access to bees and rice, depends on the Batak ability to enhance their dispersal through 'magical' practices involving the use of ritual objects and bodily movements often combined with words and musical sound.

**TABLE 1. ANIMAL RESOURCES COMMONLY USED BY THE TANABAG BATAK**

Scientific name	Local and English name	Uses and other information	Habitats
<b>Mammals</b>			
<i>Hylomys nigripes</i>	<i>Biata</i> , flying squirrel	Edible; tails used to decorate women's necklaces; trapped by smoking the nest-hole in tree trunks.	Middle altitude and mountain forests.
<i>Maceca philippinensis</i>	<i>Bakes</i> , macaque	Shot with air guns/home-made muzzle guns, or trapped. Young animals kept as pets.	Lowland and upland secondary and primary forests.
<i>Sus palawanensis</i>	<i>Babuy</i> , wild pig	Popular game animal in Palawan. Killed by means of spring traps. Hunted with	Primary and secondary forest, swidden fields.

		dogs and spears, hand-made guns and so called 'pig-bombs'.	
<i>Thecurus pumilus</i>	<i>Dugjan</i> , porcupine	Killed by means of spring traps.	Secondary forest, fields under follow.
<i>Tupara palawanensis</i>	<i>Kamay</i> , Tree shrew	Hunted with air-guns or trapped with snares.	Secondary and primary forests.
<i>Calloscirus</i> sp.	<i>Bising</i> , Squirrel	Hunted with air-guns or trapped with snares.	Secondary and primary forests
<i>Anthracoceros marchei</i>	<i>Bayungan</i> , Palawan Hornbill	Meat regarded as a delicacy. Occasionally hunted with airgun.	Middle altitude secondary and primary forests. Occasionally found at the edge of swidden fields.
<i>Chaleophaps indica</i>	<i>Limukun</i> , Dove	Trapped by means of snares.	Secondary forest.
<b>Birds</b>			
<i>Dacula aenea</i>	<i>Balud</i> , Green Imperial pigeon	Meat regarded as a delicacy. Hunted with snares or with airgun.	Primary forest.
<i>Gallus gallus</i>	<i>Katian</i> , Wild chicken.	Trapped with snares. Usually tamed and hybridized with domestic chickens.	Abundant in middle altitude and mountain forests.
<i>Gracula religiosa</i>	<i>Tiaw</i> , Talking Myna.	Hunted with air-guns. The nestling might be sold.	Primary and secondary forests.
<i>Polyplectron emphanum</i>	<i>Tandikan</i> , Pheasant Peacock	The meat is considered a delicacy. Trapped by means of snares.	Mountain and middle altitude forests.
<b>Other Species</b>			
<i>Python reticulatus</i>	<i>Maraniug</i> , Python	Edible.	Primary forest
<i>Puntius binotatus</i>	<i>Pait</i> , fresh water carp	Fished with hook and line or with conical wicker-work trap.	Lowland and upland streams.
	<i>Kasili</i> , River eel.	The most valuable freshwater fish. Fished with harpoons after being stunned with plant poison.	Lowland and upland streams
	<i>Kaiuku</i> , small river crabs.	Captured by hands or by means of scoop nets.	Lowland and upland streams
	<i>Karundang</i> , river shrimps	Captured by means of scoop nets.	Lowland and upland streams



Monovalve shells	<i>Be'gay</i>	Collected by hand	Lowland and upland streams
Helicoidal shaped gastropods	<i>Susu</i>	Collected by hand	Lowland and upland streams

**TABLE 2. PLANT RESOURCES COMMONLY USED BY THE TANABAG BATAK**

Scientific name	Local name	Uses and other information	Habitats
<b>Trees</b>			
<i>Agathis philippinensis</i>	<i>Bagtik</i>	Trees are regularly tapped. Resin sold or exchanged for food.	Mountain forest around and above 1000 metres a.s.l.
<i>Alstonia scholaris</i>	<i>Lagdaun</i>	The wood is ductile and suited for musical instruments.	Dense and open forest, lower and medium elevations.
<i>Artocarpus sericicarpus</i>	<i>Namuan</i>	Bark pounded to make loin-clothes.	Secondary lowland and upland forest.
<i>Barringtonia racemosa</i>	<i>Balisankad</i>	Fruits used for fish poison.	Secondary forest, residual forest, fields under fallow.
<i>Canarium aspersum</i>	<i>Saleng</i>	The source of a popular resin to make house-torches.	Secondary and primary upland forests.
<b>Palms</b>			
<i>Caryota mitis</i>	<i>Baruk</i>	'Bad' edible. Traditionally, pith used to make the head of blowpipe's darts.	Secondary and primary upland forests.
<i>Licuala spinosa</i>	<i>Balasbas</i>	Leaves have ritual value.	Upland forest and coastal areas.
<i>Oncosperma spp.</i>	<i>Anibung</i>	Edible 'bud'. Wood used for dibble sticks, flooring, second class material for the bow .	Primary, secondary and mountain forests.
<i>Orania paraguensis</i>	<i>Bangá</i>	Dibble stick, house poles and flooring.	Primary forest, often near streams.

<b>Other species</b>			
<i>Amarantus viridis</i>	<i>Samsam</i>	A common side-dish	Swidden fields, open areas and stream banks.
<i>Athyrium esculentum</i>	<i>Pakupaku</i>	The tip of this fern is cooked and eaten with rice and cassava.	Near streams and river beds
<i>Derris elliptica</i>	<i>Tuba</i>	Root used for fish poison.	Secondary forest – originally planted, and also growing wild in some areas.
<i>Gnetum gnornon</i>	<i>Bagu</i>	Edible young leaves and fruits. Bark used for ropes.	Secondary forest
<i>Hibiscus surattensis</i>	<i>Pasulsug</i>	Edible young leaves.	Fields under fallow.
<i>Poikilospermum suaveolens</i>	<i>Anupul</i>	Edible young leaves.	Near streams and rivers.
<i>Dioscorea Hispida</i>	<i>Kudut</i>	Detoxification process needed to make the tubers edible.	Lowland forest, secondary forest, follow fields.
<i>Dioscorea luzoniensis</i>	<i>Abagan</i>	Edible tubers.	Low-middle altitude primary/secondary forest.
<b>Bamboo</b>			
<i>Bambusa blumeana</i>	<i>Kawayan</i>	Used for musical instruments, containers, water pipes and flooring.	Coastal open areas, fields under fallow.
<i>Shizostachyum lumampao.</i>	<i>Lawas</i>	Used in weaving and for other purposes.	Fallow fields, degraded forests.
<i>Dinochloa palawanensis</i>	<i>Sabsaban</i>	Essential material for basket making	Fields under fallow, open lowland areas, degraded forests.

## Local Issues and current challenges

- ***The city government ban***

In 1994, a ban against shifting cultivation was enforced by Edward Hagedorn, the City Mayor of Puerto Princesa municipality. On the same year, the rice yields of Batak and Tagbanua communities fell dramatically and the people began to face severe hardship. The ban had altered the whole indigenous agricultural system, local rice varieties became rare or even extinct. Ultimately, indigenous communities

had little choice but to increase their collection of forest products for sale to compensate for the loss of agricultural production, leading to the depletion of their own NTF resources (Novellino 1999, 2007).

In reality, the ban flagrantly violated both and entirely the major tenets of the 'Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997' (IPRA or Republic Act No. 8371) recognizing, protecting and promoting the rights of indigenous cultural communities. Surprisingly, most the local NGOs did not take a strong position against the City Government Ordinance. It was only then that the international organization Survival International decided to launch a campaign, resulting in a partial lifting of the ban. Unfortunately, in spite of its positive impact, the campaign itself was never picked up by local NGOs, that – indeed – were questioned by Hagedorn on whether they were behind the campaign and, in response, they denied any involvement with it. In a letter to Survival International dated 28 March 1996, the City Mayor admits that *"the farmers (including the tribal groups)...were adversely affected by the policy"*. On the other hand, he claims that necessary support and assistance are being provided to soften the impact of the ban. We learn that such remedies consist of *"cash-for-work program and rice subsidies, and permanent mechanisms such as the carabao (water buffalo) and tractor pools, the provision of seedlings, and introduction of various livelihood opportunities including training and initial capitalisation grants"* and the introduction of alternative farming methods. However, according to the affected communities the promised rice supplies had not come through, and hundreds of people were forced to increase exponentially the collection of rattan, *almaciga* resin and honey. As of now, the impact of the ban can still be felt in the Batak CCA. The people, for instance, are being prevented from clearing secondary forest that has grown back in their old swiddens during long fallow periods. As a result, they have to apply short fallow periods (3/4 years) on their upland rice fields and this, in turn, jeopardizes the re-growth of natural forest and the full regeneration of soil nutrients. Therefore, one of the present challenges that people face within their CCA is how to restore the sustainable rotation of old fallow land, without the risk of being apprehended by forest guards (*bantay gubat*).

- ***Climate changes***

The most recent years have been characterized by climatic changes and unpredictable seasonal fluctuations having a dramatic impact on people's livelihood. For instance during the El Niño event of 1998/1999, pollen producing vines and trees did not bear flowers, and honey production collapsed. Also upland rice production dropped dramatically. In these years the collection of commercially valuable NTFPs could not compensate for the overall decline in food production. La Niña immediately followed El Niño, and was felt until late April 1999 and again in the year 2000. Because of continuous rain, the gatherers were unable to dry rattan lengths. The latter were damaged by fungus and thus could no be marketed. Moreover, due to excessive rain, Batak were able to burn only small portions of their swiddens. The final outcome was crop failure. For the first time, to cope with the new food crisis, Batak became involved in alternative livelihood strategies such as the collection and sale of small trees to be used in charcoal-making (ten pieces were sold for 100 pesos, less than 2 US\$).

In the early 2000s, the drastic reduction of agricultural production caused by the combined effect of El Niño/La Niña, the sudden collapse of copra (dried coconut endocarp) prices in the national and international market, followed by the economic uncertainties of the Asian financial crisis - forced lowland migrants and coastal residents to increase collection of NTFPs on the Batak CCA. As result, between 2001 and 2002 an increasing number of illegal gatherers began to enter the Batak CBFM (Community-Based Forest Management) area. The Batak complained about destructive tapping techniques employed by Filipino gatherers, which involved cuts exceeding the thickness of the bark, resulting in the destruction of the *cambium* (the thin layer in between the wood and the bark) thus exposing the tree to attacks from termites and fungi (Callo 1995, Novellino 1999). Due to unsustainable tapping regimes many *Agathis* trees became unproductive and died, and the most important source of Batak income (*almaciga*) was severely depleted. All this was happening at a time when agricultural production had collapsed after years of City Government prohibition on swidden cultivation. Today, the Tanabag Batak have finally regained control over the use of their NTFPs. However, the entry of illegal gatherers in their CCA could take place again in the future, or as soon as 'poverty' hits the coastal area again.

- ***The Community-based Forest Management Agreements (CBFMAs)***

On August 21 1999, a forester from the Department of Environment and Natural resources visited the Batak community of Kalakuasan to obtain local consent for a number of livelihood and forest protection activities to be carried out in connection with their Community Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA). CBFMA is a policy of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) that allows local communities to manage forests that have been converted to non-timber uses. One of its objectives is to develop self-sustaining production systems in the uplands by replacing indigenous swidden practices with permanent forms of agriculture.

In spite of their benignant definitions, CBFM agreements appear to violate indigenous people's rights to their ancestral land, while reducing the role of local communities to that of stewards of the public land. Specifically, in the agreement entered between PENRO (Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Office) and the Association of Batak of Tina, it is specified that the indigenous beneficiaries should: "immediately assume responsibility for the protection of the entire forest-land within the CBFM area against illegal logging and other unauthorized extraction of forest products, slash and burn agriculture (*kaingin*), forest and grassland fires, and other forms of forest destruction, and assist DENR in the prosecution of violators of forestry and environmental laws."

Clearly, the contract requires that the Batak themselves must guard their area from their own practices, such as swidden cultivation. CBFMA does nothing to recognize the claims of indigenous communities over their ancestral domain, rather, it places indigenous forest management under government control, and uses the people as subcontractors of the DENR

Over the years, the Tanabag Batak have been unable to fulfill most of their bureaucratic obligations in relation to their CBFMA agreement. Specifically, they did



not submit their Annual Work Plan (AWP) and the Community Resource Management Framework (CRMF) to the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO). It should be pointed out that these reports are to be written according to strict government standards and Batak, being illiterate, do not have the technical skill to prepare them. Because Batak were unable to produce such reports, the DENR decided to withdraw the permits needed by the community to sell NTFPs (Novellino 2007). Recently, the buyers of *almaciga* resin and rattan, in order to have priority access to the Batak NTFPs products, have assisted them in completing the necessary paperwork. As a result, the Batak can legally harvest and sell their NTFPs. In turn, buyers will store and accumulate large quantities of such NTFPs for export.

### Local Management and Rules Governing the CCA

Batak society is egalitarian. 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. The use of certain resources (e.g. *agathis* resin) is generally regulated by the same individuals who, over the years, have acquired certain 'tapping' rights to the use of specific trees. Other decisions concerning the large-scale exploitation of resources (e.g. commercial gathering of rattan), as well as agreements with buyers, middlemen, etc. are taken in the course of consultative meetings headed by the community elected chieftain (*kapitan*). All other matters relating to the exploitation of particular resources, either by community members or by outsiders, are dealt with by the community as a whole and implemented through the *kapitan*. Generally, the assistance of shamans, as managers of natural resources, is sought only during community rituals for the propitiation of rice, honey and, on some occasion,



of freshwater resources. Other decisions not related to the management of natural resources can be dealt with various degrees of flexibility, depending on the circumstances. On some occasions, the *kapitan* may have one or several subordinates (*vice-kapitan*) helping him in the performance of his duties, but – overall - he has no power of coercion. His assistance may be requested to settle internal disputes, to discuss the transferring of the community to temporary locations, the building of new houses, the location of swidden fields, the organization of certain festivities. He may be in charge of coordinating group labor for the maintenance of village infrastructures and trails and of representing community needs to government agencies. Cases such as divorce, stealing, adultery or the

←Katalino with his load of *almaciga* resin

abduction of married women are settled by the council of elders (*surugiden*) and are usually resolved through the payment of a fine. Under particular conditions, adulterous spouses and those responsible for stealing may be requested to leave their community. The assistance of the local Filipino police is sought to solve severe cases of physical violence and aggression, especially between Batak and outsiders (although such episodes are very rare).

### **Value, Effectiveness and Sustainability of the CCA**

Currently, there is no attempt from outsiders or recent migrants to settle inside the Tanabag Batak CCA, as a result a considerable portion of their upland ancestral territory remains still intact. Members of neighboring non-indigenous communities may still enter the Batak CCA to collect rattan and *almaciga* resin, but only during periods of food-shortage. However, since the early 2000's there has been a significant decrease of such episodes, probably due to the increase of job opportunities in the lowland barangays (e.g. road construction and maintenance, etc.).

There is no doubt that the future of the Tanabag Batak is closely tied to a long-term sustainable management of their CCA. Differently from other more acculturated groups, Batak have no plan to transfer to nearby Barrios, nor to the capital City (e.g. to look for part-time jobs). In spite of the ongoing transformation and changes of values taking place within their community, the young generations are still deeply attached to their territory, and the latter continues to play an important role in their livelihood and cultural sustenance. Therefore, it is very likely, that the CCA will continue to play a central role in their future. On the other hand, the oral tradition of the Tanabag Batak made up of 'diwata' chants and narratives (*tuturan/kasaysayan*) is today under serious threat. There are only two shamans left who still possess this old knowledge and they are the only one who can initiate the *lambay* ceremony and perform curing songs and dances. Sadly, their knowledge is not flourishing, since the young generations have little interest in learning these skills.

Several factors, however, have been identified by the community that will help them further strengthening their ability to manage and control their resources within the CCA.

- The change in status of their CBFMA area to Community Ancestral Land Title (CALT) was identified as one the most important factors that could lead to increasing and long-term security over their territory. As of now, the community has filed a petition to the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) for Identification, Delineation and Recognition of Ancestral Domain Claim and for the Issuance of Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title. Following this initial step, a Work and Financial Plan will have to be submitted to the NCIP, together with an itemized budget related to the following activities: Social Preparation, Research, Establishment of Project Control, Perimeter Survey, Data Processing and Preparation of Reports, Publication, Project Monitoring,

Finalization/Compilation of Claim book, CADT Deliberation, Registration to Register of Deeds, Awarding of CADT. The necessary financial resources will have to be identified in order to sustain the entire process as it unravels.

- As of now, in collaboration with Dario Novellino (Centre for Biocultural Diversity – University of Kent), the Tanabag Batak have been able to produce a participatory map of their CCA. At the same time, all legends and life-histories related to specific locations found in the map have been recorded on tape, and this information will become part and parcel of the



cultural documentation required in order to apply for Community Ancestral Land Titles (CALT). Ideally, if funds are made available, the participatory map could be technically improved through the use of GIS technology and finally substituted with a more elaborated '3-D

modeling map'.

### Challenges and Threats to the CCA

There are no mining or commercial logging activities threatening the Tanabag Batak CCA. Nevertheless, just outside the boundaries of their CBFMA area, there is a small-scale project for gravel extraction, and this will certainly affect the life of fresh-water resources, on a specific segment of the Tanabag river.

Illegal logging is not rampant, but on particular occasions the cutting of hardwood trees by outsiders has been reported.

Decreasing agricultural production is a problem shared by all members of the Tanabag Batak community. In some portions of their CCA, rice plants look stunted and frail because of the combined effect of limited rain, in addition to nitrogen and phosphorous deficiency. Several families complain that their fields are now *maniwang* (thin), in the sense of being infertile, with poor yields and some field producing less than 400 kilograms per hectare. Because of government restrictions, the people rely mainly on soils that have not regained their nutrients, and thus are quickly colonized by shrubs and weeds of dominant species such as *agunuy* (*Chromolaena odorata*), *muyumuyu* (*Lantana camara*) and *karangian* (*Trema orientalis*).



←A sample of short-fallow swidden

According to Ubad (the eldest in Tanabag): *“today the people clear their swiddens again after 3/5 years, when trees have not even reached the size of a leg. When you burn them, little ashes are produced - not enough to make your rice healthy”*. In other words, because of culturally insensitive and ecologically unsound laws, the Batak can no longer respect long-rotations periods for the re-cultivation of their fields, this – in turn – have an impact on forest regeneration. Thus attempt should be made to inform the local government about the ecological advantages of clearing old-fallow fields rather than short-fallow fields. As of now, local authorities in Palawan have limited or no understanding of how fire and fallow periods contribute to the creation of highly diverse and biologically valuable ecosystems with thriving plant and animal species that could not survive in ‘natural’ forest (see Margalef 1968, Brosius 1981, Rai 1982).

However, it will require detailed scientific studies to determine whether and to what extent the conditions for optimal long fallows are still present in the Batak CCA. In turn, such studies are difficult to carry out, and require a long-term commitment. Part of the problem lies in the evolving demography, and in the economic changes taking place within lowland peasant societies. In recent years, urbanization rates in Palawan have been high. Therefore it would be a mistake to take for granted that, in a near future, the rural population of Puerto Princesa municipality will colonize additional portions of the Batak upland territory, by opening more swiddens in their CCA. Indeed, the young Filipino generations of the coastal settlements do not find shifting cultivation an appealing option, and tend to consider it as a backward practice. Conversely, the majority of young people aim at educational attainments and, often, they look for off-farm employment opportunities in the capital city. On the other hand, Batak continue to be anchored to their land, while experiencing a progressive demographic decline. We may speculate that, compared to other neighboring indigenous communities, the Tanabag Batak would still enjoy a favorable land ratio in the coming decades. On the other hand, the community has been placed in a position that does not allow them to replicate the traditional farming regime characterized by long-fallow periods. Too many socio-political contingencies and environmental changes have occurred since then. Remarkably, Batak are still able to recover fertility in fallowed sites but, to do so, they have to cut secondary fallow forest ‘illegally’, facing the risk of being apprehended and fined. Perhaps, what is most needed is government recognition of the differences between indigenous and migrant’s practices of shifting cultivation. Until now, such differences have been ignored by decision makers. A positive move forward would be an Administrative Order clarifying the conditions under which



indigenous communities might be exempt from the prohibition on shifting cultivation. The order should spell out the distinction between 'degraded areas' (those that are unlikely to revert into forest) and indigenous fallow fields. This entails that indigenous communities should be allowed to use their swiddens rotationally. Clearly, this is just the opposite of what government foresters are doing: they warn Batak not to expand their swiddens, at the same time as they encourage them to cultivate them continuously.

In short, laws should move away from coercion towards a legislation that provide incentives to indigenous cultivators to make their swidden practices more productive and sustainable. This law should be paralleled by serious efforts to offer technical, credit institutional and other support services, in order to increase and stabilize indigenous farming outputs. In places where swidden practices have become irreversibly unsustainable, specific strategies should be developed in close coordination with the client communities, rather than imposing top-down technical solutions. Another major challenge is to document and evaluate Batak upland farming strategies through an integrated and interactive long-term process of research and development. This process should identify indigenous best farming practices, understanding them and the contexts in which they are used.

Today, because of decreasing agricultural production, Batak themselves are increasing pressure on selected resources that, customarily, were only used for domestic consumption. For instance, the meat of wild pig is no longer shared amongst community members; rather it is sold to the coastal restaurant. On the other hand, the bow and arrow complex has been replaced entirely by muzzle-guns. In addition to this, pigs are also killed through the use of 'home-made' explosive devices hidden inside cassava or other types of bites. This practice was learned through contacts with Filipino migrants several decades ago, but has now been fully acquired by Batak. While the existence of this practice is confirmed by personal witnesses, there is no resource inventory or any reliable data to establish if and to what extent the use of this hunting device is contributing to the decline of wild pigs within the Batak CCA area.

## **Opportunities**

The formal recognition of an Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) is part of a process than may take several years before being completed. Under the IPRA law (Indigenous People's Right Act of 1997), once the title is approved, the Indigenous Community can enforce their own traditional resource management systems as defined by their own Ancestral Domain Sustainable Development and Protection Plan (ADSDPP). On the other hand, the Tanabag Batak – as of now – do not possess the technical knowledge and skill for fulfilling such bureaucratic procedures. It is therefore necessary to ensure that sufficient training and capacity building be extended to the community in order to empower them to best manage their own affairs. As of now, most of the NGOs-promoted trainings 'to empower local communities' continue to be held in the city rather than in the field. Intensive two/three days training sessions on multiple issues are seldom followed up by refreshing training, as a result the information provided are rarely remembered by

the indigenous participants and even more rarely transferred from trainees to trainees. Not surprisingly, in spite of years of NGOs promoted trainings in financial management and legal rights, the technical capacity of most communities to manage their own 'affairs' remains largely inadequate.

Other opportunities can be summarized as it follows:

- **Strengthening the Batak Association.** The Tanabag Batak association is legally registered under the Philippines Security and Exchange Commission. However, the people still needs additional training before they can learn how to mobilize sufficient support and develop new skills through their own institution. In the early 1990s, a Federation formed by the different Batak local groups was organized with the assistance of the Haribon Palawan, a local environmental movement based in Puerto Princesa. The objective of the Haribon was to help gathering together different Batak communities which have been totally or relatively separated during the past decades, so that they could meet on a monthly basis in order to socialize and discuss their problems. However, the Federation heavily depended on the support of Haribon for covering traveling costs – as a result - when the funds for these activities were exhausted, Batak had no capacity to keep the process ongoing. The Federation still has its own president who resides in Kalakuasan. He and other community members feel that networking and linking not only with other Batak groups but also with other IPs in Palawan will give them a better opportunity for exchanging their experiences with others, thus refining their strategy for safeguarding bio-cultural diversity in the CCA. The revival and strengthening of their Federation is one of the initiatives that Batak would like to pursue in the medium-long term.
- **International Networking.** As part of the process of empowering the Tabag Batak by linking them to global advocacy networks, a community based process has recently being carried out in Tanabag. In the course of such meeting, Batak members have been informed about the mission and strategic approach of WAMIP (World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples), particularly with reference to the principle of mobility in the use of natural resources through customary leadership. At the end of the meeting - the people decided to fill the membership application for joining WAMIP, mainly as a 'community' (this entails the inclusions of all 153 members, children, women, etc.). By joining the Alliance, the Tanabag Batak hope to bring their plight to the attention of the international community and to have a stronger voice when lobbying for the protection of their CCA.
- **Producing Digital Cultural Archives.** In the context of two ongoing projects by the Centre for Biocultural Diversity (CBCD) of the University of Kent, with the support of the Christensen Fund and the Royal Anthropological Institute (RAI) respectively, the Tabag Batak are being involved in processes of recovery, sharing and exchanging information on

biocultural diversity both internally, as well as with environmental managers and policy makers. As of now, video-documentation of Batak ecological knowledge and practices has been generated in total coordination with the people themselves. In the project's second phase, additional efforts will be invested in developing capacities among the Tanabag to produce and edit their own video materials. Some young people have already shown a strong interest in learning these techniques and in producing their own videos. Overall, the video-documentation strives to give Batak families an improved information base on which to make critical decisions regarding key environmental and social issues within their CCA, as well as to conserve memories of the past. While the medium-long term impact of these family archives needs to be evaluated, the outcomes and experiences so far highlight a number of important aspects, such as an increasing sense of ownership and a regained sense of pride in *'being a Batak'*.



***Batak watching at their digital archive***

The process of creating digital biocultural archives is expected to have a significant impact, not only in terms of what they communicate among the Batak families and to others, but also in terms of the social processes generated through their production. My experience, so far, confirms that people's awareness of video-documentation being returned to them has created in them a sense of trustworthiness and a strong motivation to have all families' activities filmed and recorded. It is anticipated that Batak knowledge about the natural environment and ecological processes if reordered in a digital archive, could support both legal and ecological arguments for local peoples to take

a leading role in environmental management and economic development of their CCA. For instance, it could help to demonstrate that, through their local livelihood strategies and traditional forms of tenure, local people are often better equipped to manage biodiversity than park authorities through the implementation of protected areas. It should add further support to the idea that anthropogenic influence is not necessarily incompatible with conservation, and that exclusion of traditional stewards from environmental management can further accelerate degradation of biocultural diversity.

- **Revitalizing Batak Artistic Expressions**

Batak women can produce intricately decorated baskets. All bichromatic twilled plaiting is undertaken using two species of bamboo growing in their CCA: *lawas* (*Schizostachyum lumampao*) and *sabsaban* (*Dinochloa palawanensis*). Such fibers are particularly suited for weaving baskets (*begias*), *nigu* (flat winnowing trays) and different kinds of containers (e.g. *maramakan*) for the betel chewing ingredients (Novellino, D. 2007a).



*Begias* are diagonally worked baskets: weaving begins in the centre of the base until the desired size is achieved, then the weaver turns the corner and works upwards and around. Traditionally, the first basket woven by a novice was an indicator that the girl had achieved a status within the group of women, as well as a new sense of identity. Thus the capacity of producing fine baskets was a sign of

competence as well as a significant step towards adulthood. Nowadays, women are no longer expected to know, remember and reproduce non-material items (e.g. myths and narratives) associated with particular items. Furthermore, prestige and social recognition play an increasingly less important role in the maintenance of basket weaving knowledge. Basket designs are obtained by intertwining uncolored and blackened bamboo fibers.



A poultice of pounded leaves or bark is rubbed against some of the selected pieces of bamboo which are blackened with the soot produced by burning the resin of *bagtik* (*Agathis philippinensis*) or *saleng* (*Canarium asperum*). The process of rubbing and blackening is repeated three consecutive times to ensure that the soot adheres firmly on the bamboo surface.

Aside from bamboo used in basketry, two species of wild *Pandanus* are also used by the Batak to weave sleeping mats. Fine rattan strips are also woven into arm

bracelets. In 2004, the Tanabag Batak participated with enthusiasm in a project aimed at fostering the transmission of their traditional weaving knowledge. The project was supported by the European Social Research Council (UK), the Wenner Gren Foundation (US) and by ASIA (Association for International Solidarity in Asia). While the project was ongoing, several young women were motivated to learn. Overall, through the production of such artifacts, the people themselves have been able to reassess important aspects of their own cultural heritage and symbolism, and to transmit important information to the young generations. During the CCA consultation, the Batak have expressed an interest in engaging in projects of this kind and in revitalizing also other important aspects of their material and spiritual culture.

### **Formal Recognition**

Technically, a significant portion of the Tanabag Batak *Kabatakan* lies within the boundaries of their Community Based Forest Management Agreement Area. CBFM agreements have a duration of 25 years and can be renewed. However, the Batak do not regard their CBFMA as an ideal instrument to make sense of how they perceive and manage their own environment. On the contrary, the Batak feel that the approval of the CADT will resolve many pending issues related to their claims to the use of traditional land and resources, as it will give them a stronger and more powerful form of legal recognition

### **Conclusions**

This report suggests that Batak land and resources management strategies are not insulated from politics and, overall, from conservation strategies and government development programs whose aims and objectives are often conflicting and/or incompatible with one another.

Clearly as it appears, legally sanctioned rights (as those listed in CBFM agreements) are worthless unless the beneficiaries become sufficiently empowered to defend such rights within their territories. Evidence indicates that, on several occasions, in spite of being the legitimate signatory of a CBFM agreement, the Tanabag Batak have been unable to control the entry of illegal gatherers in their land. Moreover, they have no operating financial capital, nor experience to deal with buyers on equal grounds, and thus they tend to receive lower remuneration for their NTFPs.

Similarly, top-down technical approaches to stabilizing shifting cultivation and the imposition of so called 'livelihood alternatives' have further contributed to disempower Batak community, forcing them to rely more and more on the collection of NTFPs to purchase retail rice and other food commodities. A typical Batak household, where men are most of the time busy in commercial gathering, is generally unable to mobilize sufficient labor internally to increase agricultural production. Moreover, as the case study indicates, upland rice and root-crop production is also decreasing as a result of unreasonable government conservation measures such as the City government ban on shifting cultivation. Recently, in order to comply with government demands for permanent cultivation, some Batak members



have decided to convert their swiddens (or portions of it) into agroforestry. However, those fields planted with tree crops, because of poor tending and no pruning do not generate any significant extra-income. One possible scenario can be envisaged: since forest is not increasing, the conversion of some swiddens into permanent orchards may reduce the number of fallow fields under rotation, and this may lead to further decrease in the length of fallow periods, which may lead to further decline in yields.



As this report has pointed out, climatic changes (e.g. El Niño and La Niña) have also altered or reduced the availability of NTFPs, as well as that of agricultural production (e.g. upland rice). In 2005 to cope with food-scarcity, some members of the Tanabag Batak began to integrate the collection of rattan and *almaciga* with the harvesting of timber forest

products such as wood for charcoal making. This suggests that, under particular circumstances, the Batak might be forced to contravene their own sustainable patterns of NTFPs extraction, as well as those 'customary norms' associated with a 'correct use' of natural resources (e.g. the maintenance of good relationships with



the mystical custodians of animals and plants). Indeed, according to Padaw, one of the two surviving shamans, commercialization of previously non-sellable resources: (e.g. wild pig meat and honey) has already affected the relationship between human and non-human entities, with negative repercussions not only on the social stability of the group, but also on the availability of vital resources. Today, threats to the forest environment come unexpectedly from everywhere, and shamans feel that it is impossible for them to re-establish the cosmic balance, especially when the sources of 'imbalances' (e.g. climatic changes) are neither known nor immediately detectable. In short, shamans claim to

*Playing the traditional five-strings guitar*

have no power to correct the 'ecological imbalances' of which outsiders are primarily responsible and which cause the anger of the mystical custodians of animals and plants. Furthermore, nowadays, shamanism is increasingly seen as an irrelevant instrument to face and deal with the new transformations. Especially for the young generations, imported technology and 'modern life' have an aesthetic force and a socializing dimension that largely overrides that of shamanic séances and traditional narratives.

In spite of all these challenges (that are also common to other indigenous peoples in transition) the Tanabag 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 and the civil society as a whole – but, unfortunately – this is not happening. The people also plan to convert their CBFMA agreement into a Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title under the IPRA law. They believe that this change will provide the community with a stronger legal instrument to sustainably manage and defend their CCA. On the other hand, the whole process will require much financial resources, and thus the assistance of foreign donors.

Linking with other indigenous groups both nation-wide and internationally is seen by Batak as an additional opportunity to have their voices being heard. However, as they themselves have pointed out during the consultation of 24/25 August, the creation of alliances with international indigenous peoples organizations need to be based first on a strong commitment on the part of the community to improve solidarity and social cohesion internally. In relation to this some steps will have to be taken to empower the local association "Samahan sa Kaunlaran ng mga Batak sa Tina", so that it could become the legal entity on which Batak can rely and appeal to during their negotiations with government authorities, NGOs and foreign institutions.

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## Annex 1: Basic data

Site Name : the Tanabag *Kabatakan* (the Batak land of Tanabag) or '*lugta it amulakat Tanabag*' (the land of the ancestors in Tanabag). Tanabag is the local name of the main river crossing the Batak CCA, and is also the name of the coastal barangay.

1. Country: Philippines  
Municipality of Puerto Princesa  
Palawan Province
2. Area encompassed by the CCA (specify unit of measurement) : about 5,000 hectares of which 3,458.70 hectares fall within the CBFMA area.
3. GIS Coordinates (not available)
4. Whether it includes sea areas : No
5. Whether it includes freshwater : Yes
6. Marine: No
7. Concerned community: Kalakuanan community - 31 households (153 persons)
8. Is the community considering itself an indigenous people? Yes. The Batak, however they also intermarry with Tagbanua, a neighboring indigenous group.
9. Is the community considering itself a minority? Yes
10. Is the community permanently settled? They keep moving between the Kalakuanan permanent settlement and their upland swidden huts
11. Is the community local per capita income inferior, basically the same or superior to national value?

Answer: Yes – it's inferior

12. Is the CCA recognized as a protected area by the governmental agencies?

Portions of the Batak CCA are considered core or restricted use zones under the Strategic Environmental Plan for Palawan (SEP or RA 7611) and its Environmentally Critical Areas Network (ECAN) guidelines. It would appear, that those portions of their CCA that are close to the Puyus mountain (also known as Cleopatra Needle) might have been incorporated into the expansion of St. Paul Subterranean National Park. This process, however, was carried out with no consultation with the local community. The CCA is also part of a 25 years

renewable Community Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA) area signed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and the Tanabag Batak.

13. Conflicts with land tenure, natural resource use? Not on permanent basis, but they might arise during specific periods of food-shortage and financial crises.

14. What is the main management objective (e.g. livelihood, cultural, spiritual...)  
Answer: none of the selected terminology would be adequate. It should be said that the area is customarily managed by the community since time immemorial and provides the cultural foundation and livelihood dimension on which their whole society depends.

15. By definition, a CA fulfils a management objective. To which IUCN management category do you consider it would best fit (this does not imply that the management objective is consciously pursued by the concerned community, but that it is actually achieved):

Category VI: Protected area with sustainable use of natural resources

### **Additional qualitative information**

#### 1. Main ecosystem type

Evergreen Dipterocarp Forest

#### 2. Description of local ethnic groups and languages spoken:

Some of the local neighboring groups are not indigenous in the real sense but they do speak a local language/dialect: they are the Cuyonin. The closest indigenous communities leaving around the Batak area are the Tagbanua. Migrants, instead, come from different provinces, all speak the national language (Tagalog) as well as their own language/dialect (Visaya, Cebuano, Bicolano, etc).

#### 3. Broad historical context of the CCA

See report

#### 4. Governance structure for the CCA (who takes management decisions, how?)

As far as concerning environmental-based decisions, each individual is free to use the plant and animal resources available in the area for domestic consumption. The use of certain resources (e.g. *agathis* resin) is generally regulated by the same individuals who, over the years, have acquired certain 'tapping' rights to the use of specific trees. Other decisions for more large-scale exploitation of resources (eg. commercial gathering of rattan), as well as agreements with buyers, middlemen, etc. are taken in the course of consultative meetings headed by the community elected chieftain (*kapitan*). All other matters relating to the exploitation of particular

resources, either by community members or by outsiders, are dealt with by the community as a whole and implemented through the *kapitan*. Generally, the assistance of shamans as managers of natural resources is sought only during community rituals for the propitiation of rice, honey and, on some occasion, of freshwater resources. Other decisions not related to the management of natural resources can be dealt with various degrees of flexibility, depending on the circumstances. On some occasions, the *kapitan* may have one or several subordinates (*vice-kapitan*) helping him in the performance of his duties, but – overall - he has no power of coercion. His assistance may be requested to settle internal disputes, to discuss the transferring of the community to temporary locations, the building of new houses, the location of swidden fields, the organization of certain festivities. He may be in charge of co-ordinating group labor for the maintenance of village infrastructures and trails and of representing community needs to government agencies. 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. Under particular conditions, adulterous spouses and those responsible for stealing, may be requested to leave their community.

5. Length of time the governance model has been in place

Management roles have changed over the years. Until 1960, a community elder was consulted about the everyday affairs of the community. Any residential aggregate had one of such leaders, unanimously selected by the people for his 'good personality' and other virtues. The people consulted the leader to resolve personal grievances or for any other problem involving the community. Today, elders seldom play a leading role, and leaders (generally of mid-age) are elected (every three years) and acquire the titular position of *kapitan*

6. Land and resource ownership in the CCA

Customary communal ownership,

7. Type of land use in the CCA

Primary forest, secondary forest, mountain forest, swidden fields and follow land.

8. Existence of written or oral management plans and specific rules for the use of natural resources in the CCA

Information on the traditional uses of resources is transmitted orally and there are no old texts containing such prescriptions. On the contrary, with reference to their CBFMAs contractual obligations, Batak need to submit an Annual Work Plan (AWP) and a Community Resource Management Framework (CRMF) to the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (CENRO). Such plans contain information on the yearly quantity of



NTFPs that people intends (or anticipates) to collect, as well as on the location where such resources are found. It should be pointed out that these reports are to be written according to strict government standards and Batak, being illiterate, do not have the technical skill to prepare them. Because Batak are unable to produce such reports, the buyers of NTFPs - who have vested interests in the use of certain resources found within the Batak CCA - are now producing such reports – and because of their political connections – they are generally capable of having such documents approved.

Some examples of Batak ‘non-textual’ prescriptions for the management of specific resources.

- **Tapping**

Batak gatherers claim that their way of extracting the resin does not damage the Agathis tree, since the first cut is only *dua kamrut* (two fingers) wide, and tapping takes place no more than twice a month. Moreover, trees are tapped in such a way that the cut is protected from direct rain, and thus from fungi-related diseases. On the contrary, they complain about the destructive tapping techniques employed by Filipino gatherers. Each Batak individual is in charge of a certain number of trees, which are not utilized by other gatherers, unless permission is obtained.

- **Rattan harvesting**

Batak protection measures for rattan include the exclusion of good palm groves from swidden clearings, and the cutting of single stemmed rattans before the plant has produced fruits. In addition, Batak are aware that when rattan is harvested, a portion of the palm’s cane should be left attached to the plant, in order to allow the growth of the young stems. They also avoid frequent harvesting from the same plant and the cutting of small diameter canes.

- **Checking traps**

Traps should be checked regularly to avoid that the trapped animal will get rotten and, thus, its meat will no longer be edible. The killing of game animals that are not consumed for food is said to upset the master of such animals (e.g. Napantaran – the Master of Pigs).

9. Map and zoning of the CCA (please attach if available and relevant)

10. Relevant pictures with captions (please attach if available)

11. Major threats to biodiversity and/or the CCA governance system

12. Local CCA-relevant features, stories, names, rules and practice

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