

anthropozoologica

2021 • 56 • 9

LES SUIDÉS EN CONTEXTE RITUEL À L'ÉPOQUE CONTEMPORAINE

Édité par Frédéric LAUGRAND, Lionel SIMON & Séverine LAGNEAUX

Pigs and ritual-hunting
among the highland Tau-Buhid
in Mounts Iglit-Baco natural park, Philippines

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art. 56 (9) — Published on 25 June 2021
www.anthropozoologica.com

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Anthropozoologica est une revue en flux continu publiée par les Publications scientifiques du Muséum, Paris, avec le soutien du CNRS.

Anthropozoologica is a fast track journal published by the Museum Science Press, Paris, with the support of the CNRS.

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CP 41 – 57 rue Cuvier F-75231 Paris cedex 05 (France)

Tél.: 33 (0)1 40 79 48 05 / Fax: 33 (0)1 40 79 38 40

diff.pub@mnhn.fr / <https://sciencepress.mnhn.fr>

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ISSN (imprimé / *print*): 0761-3032 / ISSN (électronique / *electronic*): 2107-08817

Pigs and ritual-hunting among the highland Tau-Buhid in Mounts Iglit-Baco natural park, Philippines

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Submitted on 6 December 2020 | Accepted on 17 March 2021 | Published on 25 June 2021

Rosales C. A. 2021. — Pigs and ritual-hunting among the highland Tau-Buhid in Mounts Iglit-Baco natural park, Philippines, in Laugrand F., Simon L. & Lagneaux S. (eds), Les suidés en contexte rituel à l'époque contemporaine. *Anthropozoologica* 56 (9): 137-151. <https://doi.org/10.5252/anthropozoologica2021v56a9>. <http://anthropozoologica.com/56/9>

ABSTRACT

Ethnographic accounts demonstrate that hunting rituals for many Indigenous Peoples are meant to ensure the abundance and availability of game animals. This article shows that, among the Tau-Buhid, hunting itself is a ritual where human-spirit relationships are fundamental to their lifeworld. "Ritual-hunting" puts the need for meat secondary to humans' relationship with the spirit world. Ritual-hunting cannot be realized without sacrificing pigs. Domesticated pigs (*Sus domesticus* Erxleben, 1777) in particular are held as "spirit-less" and hence the only kind of pigs that can mediate between the Tau-Buhid and the spirits. Wild pigs (*Sus scrofa* Linnaeus, 1758), on the other hand, are forbidden to be killed for this purpose because they are held as an "animal-forming spirit", protected by magic sanctions. Thus, while pig domestication seems practical to address the need for pigs, it is legally prohibited in the highlands. This constraint puts pressure on the Tau-Buhid to procure pigs from the lowlands. As a result, the Tau-Buhid are forced to produce goods beyond what their local economic system could provide to procure pigs from the lowland. Through a combined multispecies ethnography and political ontology, this article shows that the Tau-Buhid's relationship with domesticated pigs is reflective of a political struggle to maintain their sociality while negotiating relationship with the lowlands.

KEY WORDS

Ritual,
domestication,
exchange.

RÉSUMÉ

Porcs et chasse rituelle chez les montagnards Tau-Buhid du parc naturel d'Iglit-Baco, Philippines.

Dans de nombreux groupes autochtones, les rituels de chasse sont souvent présentés comme visant à assurer l'abondance et un accès au gibier. Cet article montre que chez les Tau-Buhid, la chasse est un rituel en soi, dans lequel la relation spirituelle est fondamentale au mode d'être au monde. La « chasse rituelle », comme sa description opérationnelle, montre que le besoin de viande n'occupe qu'une place secondaire, la relation au monde des esprits demeurant primordiale. Fait remarquable, une telle notion de chasse ne peut être réalisée sans sacrifier des porcs. Les porcs domestiques (*Sus domesticus* Erxleben, 1777), en particulier, sont considérés comme des êtres « sans esprit », et donc comme des animaux qui peuvent servir de médiateurs entre les Tau-Buhid et les esprits. En revanche, il est interdit à leurs homologues que sont les cochons sauvages (*Sus scrofa* Linnaeus, 1758) d'être tués à cette fin, car ils sont considérés comme « des animaux qui forment des esprits », protégés par des sanctions magiques. Ainsi, si la domestication des porcs semble pratique pour répondre aux besoins en porcs, elle est légalement interdite dans les hautes terres. Cette contrainte génère une pression sur cette population qui doit donc se procurer des porcs auprès des populations des plaines. En conséquence, les Tau-Buhid sont contraints de produire des biens au-delà de ce que leur système économique local peut fournir. À travers une ethnographie multi-espèces et sur la base des travaux en ontologie politique, cet article montre que la relation des Tau-Buhid avec les porcs domestiques reflète une lutte politique pour maintenir leur socialité tout en négociant des relations avec les populations des basses terres.

MOTS CLÉS

Rituel,
domestication,
échange.

INTRODUCTION

The Tau-Buhid are a Mangyan ethnic community in the Philippines¹. Like many Mangyan communities, they resided in the greater mountain regions of Mindoro until recent history forced most of them to settle in the lowlands (Pennoyer & Stow 1977; Miyamoto 1988; Gibson 2015; Rosales 2020). Like many Indigenous cultural communities (ICCs), their subsistence economy includes swidden cultivation (*gamasan*), hunting, and foraging (Padilla 1991; Bacalzo 1996; Bawagan 2012). Internally, they divide themselves according to geographic location, with those who live uphill considered living “original culture”. They use the term *kultura* (culture) to describe their internal polarity (Novellino 2000), for the highlanders, those who reside mid-land, down with lowlanders (*siganon*), no longer live according to their “culture”. The overarching characteristic of what the highlanders hold as “original culture” is subscription to an “animistic belief” (Durkheim 1965) where all life is governed by spirits – not dependent upon an all-powerful god, as the lowlanders believe. Because of such views, lowlanders occasionally call the highlanders the “Batangan” – a derogatory term to describe a people feared because of their alleged malevolent magic abilities.

Despite this division, highland and lowland Tau-Buhid alike are all headed by an overall chief called the Punong Tribo, who resides in a lowland community called Tamisan. Highlanders are further governed by a *fufuama* (grandfather, elder), who is known to *siganon* as “Butodaol”. His name is a coinage of two words from Ilocano, *buto*, and Tau-Buhid, *daol*, which could literally mean “huge penis”. Although his lowland name is derogatory, his real name for many Tau-Buhid cannot be mentioned, for it might invoke what they believe is his malevolent sorcery power known as *amurit* (Rosales 2019).

In 1969, the dictator Ferdinand Marcos declared portions of the highlands a game refuge and bird sanctuary, which then became a protected area (PA) and Mounts Iglit-Baco National Park (MIBNP) in 1970 (Republic of the Philippines 1969, 1970). Parts of the park overlap with the Tau-Buhid’s ancestral domain. MIBNP is a habitat of the tamaraw (*Bubalus mindorensis* (Heude, 1888)), a critically endangered species, which the Tau-Buhid have traditionally hunted. The Tau-Buhid continue to hunt tamaraw, and as of April 2019, the animals numbered approximately 480 in the park area².

Traditional life inside the PA is challenged by Philippine laws, especially the Expanded National Integrated Protected Areas System Act of 2018 (Republic of the Philippines 2018) and Wildlife Resources Conservation and Protection Act (Republic of the Philippines 2001). Although these laws do not prohibit traditional hunting outright, they make regular hunting difficult as the Tau-Buhid fear legal repercussions. The Tau-Buhid’s right to hunt is guaranteed under The Indigenous Peoples’ Rights Act of 1997 (Republic of the Philippines 1997),

but they are unable to exercise this right in the PA because of legal complexities and conflicts, which can be resolved only through technical and specialist interpretation. In 2018, the MIBNP, formerly a national park, was reclassified as “natural” park, which resulted in more restricted hunting regulations. Its reclassification also increased infrastructure construction, such as the bridge shown in Figure 1, which the State built as part of its MIBNP modernization plan to make the designated area a world-class park. For the State, modernization would also eventually make hunting an obsolete economic activity.

To encourage the Tau-Buhid to abandon their hunting activities, the State provided them with lowland *talukan* (rice fields) and other ways to maintain a livelihood such as beekeeping, hog farming, and agroforestry (Li 2014). But the highlanders persist in hunting, and reject these alternative economic programs.

Unlike the lowlanders, who view hunting only as procurement of meat, the highlanders see hunting more as a ritual of mediation between the physical world and the spirit realm. In this article, I refer to this idea and practice as “ritual-hunting” (Pennoyer 1975, 1976, 1980; Hamberger 2014). In short, Tau-Buhid hunting practices are a ritual that reinforces notions about their relationship with animals and spirits. Animals are conceived as “conscious beings”, led by their own “agency” or their spirit keepers to provide meat to humans (Kohn 2013; Giraldo Herrera & Palson 2014). This notion, mediated by customary law and magic, provides insights on the Tau-Buhid’s sociality (Bennagen & Lucas-Fernan 1996; Greenwood 2005, 2009) – a sociality that is not only about humans but includes all life known in their cosmology or “world system”, a popular concept among many ICCs (e.g., Mosko 2017).

However, in the Tau-Buhid context, such notions can be enacted only with the use of sacrificial pigs. In other words, pigs are a non-negotiable necessity of ritual-hunting. And just as ritual-hunting is integral in Tau-Buhid life, its absence is equivalent to an ethnic collapse, because, without this practice, all spirit connections with the physical world disappear. The notion that existence is impossible without all the networks of life intact, as affirmed in annual ritual-hunting, forms the basis of their “cosmogony” or universe (see Scott 2015 for a broader discussion of this term). In the past, pigs were kept for ritual purposes, but the creation of the MIBNP prohibited pig raising in the highlands. According to the State, this prohibition was meant to protect the Mindoro warty pigs (*Sus oliveri* Groves, 1997 [Groves 1997; see also Oliver 1993]) from breeding with the domesticated ones.

A few years ago, informants told me that the State, through the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and partner organizations at MIBNP, launched a massive hog raising program aimed at providing an alternative to wild meat. But because of an existing prohibition against pig raising in the highlands, the program met a catastrophic consequence when most of the highland representatives freely gave their piglets to lowland communities. The pigs were not put in *ulbo* (enclosure/pigpen, Tagalog term), and because of a lack of commercial food for them, they were allowed to roam

1. Indigenous terms from fieldwork are spelled following Tagalog/Filipino language.

2. <https://site2.mbcfi.org.ph/tamaraw-count-2019/>, last consultation on 18 May 2021.



FIG. 1. — This concrete bridge replaced a hanging bridge as part of the State modernization plan for the Mounts Iglit-Baco Natural Park. For many Tau-Buhid, the concrete bridge represents a denial of their legal and customary rights within and over the extent of their lands, and is a threat to the survival of their way of life. Through this bridge, State surveillance and control of highland activities intensified. Photo credits: C. A. Rosales.



FIG. 2. — Black swine believed to have turned feral near Mount Iglit (Buksol Mangibok for the Tau-Buhid). Photo credits: C. A. Rosales.

freely around the park, fending for themselves. In time, they became pests, destroying lowland swiddens and contaminating natural springs used for potable water. This scenario, as recounted by my informants, coincides with reports from conservationists, who, in meetings, added that domesticated pigs, like the one shown in Figure 2, had slowly interbred with the warty pigs, compelling the DENR to enforce an even stricter prohibition of bringing pigs into the highlands. This outcome could have been prevented if there were prior consultations with the highlanders, who used to keep a minimal number of pigs in small enclosures under their houses solely for ritual purposes.

In this context, this essay argues that alongside the need for pigs are interwoven issues concerning the Tau-Buhid's struggle to retain their sociality while renegotiating their relationship with the lowlands. I pursue this argument by first showing that the Tau-Buhid's conflict with the State is not unique; in other regions where the need for pigs is a historically traceable, culturally important practice, similar conflicts between the ICCs and the State have occurred, as demonstrated in earlier ethnographic accounts. Second, I trace aspects of the Tau-Buhid sociality maintained in such practices, and how a renegotiation of lowland relationships happens through the need to procure pigs from lowlanders. Third, I present an ethnographic description of the Tau-Buhid's two grand hunting practices: *awatan* (spear-trapping) and *safong* (circular burning). Finally, I conclude by reinforcing the Tau-Buhid's need for pigs as an important political issue that State policies have outright dismissed.

Fieldwork that generated the ethnographic data for this article started in December 2016 and is ongoing as of this writing. I was, and continue to be, a participant observer in hunting activities among the Tau-Buhid at MIBNP. The Tau-Buhid elders requested that long audio-recorded chants not be transcribed and included in my work, except for loudly spoken magic phrases, which help to situate the hunting rituals in ethnographic time and space.

HUNTING AND ONTOLOGY: A SHARED POLITICAL CONFLICT

In this section, I contextualize the Tau-Buhid's situation as a globally shared experience, common among other ICCs, where specific cultural practices are set aside, ignored, or overridden by governments in favor of a State agenda.

Marisol De La Cadena (2010) shows evidence of this phenomenon in Latin America. There, according to her, conflict occurs when mainstream political perceptions of land and landscape contradict the views of Indigenous Peoples (IPs). She observes that Machu Picchu and Ausangate are simply mountains for the State, but are like "beings" for Indigenous people (De La Cadena (2010: 351). They are considered "meta-persons" who demand equal recognition in daily life, respect as co-existing entities, and rights in political processes. But, most importantly, they are also thought to possess "life-and-death powers over the human population" (Sahlins 2017: 91; cited in Abélès 2017: 130; see also Surrallés 2017). De La Cadena (2010) explains, IPs know that any disruptions or acts against these massifs, either by tourism or mining, as their government instigated, will lead to catastrophe. Like humans, the mountains can be pleased sometimes and wrathful other times. The government dismissed this understanding of the mountains as beings, and instead sees any calamities as natural occurrences rather than as the agitation of nature. IPs, on the other hand, interpret environmental disasters as a form of "personal" displeasure against someone's action, as common to many sentient beings. In the Latin America context, De La Cadena (2010) reports that such a displeasure is conceived as human's utter disregard for the active role of these beings in decision-making affecting their co-inhabited world.

In another case, Mario Blaser (2016) describes a conflict between Innu and the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador over a hunting ban on caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou* (Gmelin, 1788)). The Innu expressed frustration over a government-imposed hunting ban to conserve the George River caribou herd in Labrador. They believe that *atiku* (the indigenous name of the caribou) are gifts to humans from its spirit masters. The Innu's lifeworld exists as interdependent

relationships among humans, caribou, and the spirit worlds (Laugrand & Oosten 2010). Blaser (2016) explains that the Innu have protocols to follow when hunting the *atiku*, and according to elders, the younger generations no longer observe these protocols, which is the cause of the decline in the caribou population. These protocols, Blaser (2016) notes, include treatment of bones, sharing of meat, and determining the willingness of *Kanipinikassikueu*, “a powerful spirit master” (Speck 1977: 81; Blaser 2018: 53), to keep giving animals and to bless them.

The Innu, according to Blaser (2016), believe that these protocols are essential in maintaining their relationships with the spirit keepers of the caribou. Therefore, for the Innu, according to Blaser (2016), the ban will not resolve the issue since the protocols only work in the context of hunting, a view the government ignored. For the State, “hunting could mean the disappearance of the caribou”, but for the Innu, preventing them from hunting according to customs would mean the disappearance of the *atiku* altogether (Blaser 2016: 545, 546). For Blaser (2016), these kinds of problems will continue unless governments take seriously the idea that these are “ontological conflicts”, not merely “cultural differences”. In other words, the need for many ICCs to practice traditional ways of life is an ontological issue that requires their involvement in crafting State policies that regulate hunting and other cultural practices.

In the Tau-Buhid context, their need for pigs must also be seen as an issue that necessitates their inclusion in policymaking so that their ancestral practices, anchored in cultural needs and traditions, may survive. The intertwining of pigs and rituals for the Tau-Buhid reinforces collective values, community cohesion, and their relationship with the environment. Similar phenomenon are found in other Philippine ICCs. For example, Queeny Lapeña & Stephen Acabado (2017) conclude, from their archaeological excavations, that an “increase in rituals in Ifugao was an organizing factor for the successful resistance” (Lapeña & Acabado 2017: 584, 593) and revealed the Ifugao’s “ability to consolidate their political and economic resources” (Lapeña & Acabado 2017: 584) during Spanish conquest in the Philippines (see also Veneracion 1997). Archaeological evidence suggests that in the rituals conducted during those times, pigs were indeed ritual animals, and, without them, it would have been impossible to collectively resist foreign power. Pigs were a medium that made the Ifugao free from being militarily conquered, argue Lapeña & Acabado (2017).

According to Philip Piper *et al.* (2009), the significant role of pigs among colonial ICCs dates back 4000 years in the Philippines, when they were “kept specifically for ritual and ceremonial function” (Piper *et al.* 2009: 692). Piper *et al.* suggest that many Indigenous Peoples among neighboring countries in Southeast Asia separate ceremonial pigs from wild pigs that were used for general eating purposes. They further assert that ceremonial pigs have an “overall social and ideological importance” (Piper *et al.* 2009: 692, 693; see also Harris 1987, 1989; Dobney *et al.* 2007).

More recently, Frédéric Laugrand *et al.* (2020) show how such views of domesticated pigs are reinforced among the Ibaloy of the Upper Loacan in a ritual called *késheng ja waray*

batbat, performed in the exhumation of the deceased that serves as a “key in the exchanges made by the living to the dead” (Laugrand *et al.* 2020: 476). Through pigs, Laugrand *et al.* (2020) assert, the spirit of the dead, including ancestral spirits and multiple other beings among the Ibaloy, are conjured in the human realm not only to remember them but to receive good luck and other spiritual blessings. Remarkably, Laugrand *et al.* (2020) report that pigs are not only sacrificial in this context but serve more as “connectors”. Thus, death is not seen as an end of life but a connection between many worlds (De La Cadena & Blaser 2018) where everyone meets to reinforce community values related to ancestors, the dead, and the living. As “connectors”, then, pigs are important in the Ibaloy’s “local exchange system” and “central to their relationships” with each other (Laugrand *et al.* 2020: 498).

Thomas Gibson (2015) has also remarked on the importance of pigs in reciprocal relationship among ICCs, especially of the Buid Mangyan, a neighboring community to the Tau-Buhid, where pigs are mediators between the human and non-human world (Gibson 2015: 170). For instance, he notes that when a couple intends to build a household, pigs are sacrificed to the spirit of the earth in exchange for the growth and survival of their future children (Gibson 2015: 192). This notion extends beyond the bounds of benevolent and malevolent spirits, and is connected to the view that the “cosmic order” is “exploitative”, where “the stronger prey on the weaker” (Gibson 2015: 176). In the Buid cosmology, some spirits are predatory and could harm humans at will (Gibson 2020). That is why there is a need for animal sacrifice, particularly domesticated pigs aimed at manipulating desirable spiritual effects for humans through their “vitality” killing as payment to the spirits, and consumption as reinforcement of community cohesion.

Gibson (2015) suggests an association between ritual sacrifice of the pigs and the concept of “compensation” where the Buid are compelled to sacrifice only animals they raised. In this logic, sacrificing domesticated pigs is safe because “they owe their lives” to the human owners who raised them (Gibson 2015: 176). Simply put, there is no sacrificial payment necessary for such pig killings when their vitality is needed in some rituals, especially in healings (Gibson 2015).

For the Tau-Buhid, domesticated pigs are central to hunting because, through their sacrifice, the ontological system becomes intelligible. There is no substitute to understanding Tau-Buhid lifeworld without mediation of domesticated pigs during hunting season. The Tau-Buhid held that before the currently imposed restriction on highland pig raising, they already shared a view with the Buid that “pigs are intimately associated with the household that raised them. They begin life in the house, are fed by human hands with human food, and live underneath the house when they mature. They provide a link between human world and the earth” (Gibson 2015: 201).

Gibson also suggests that the “unmistakable affection Buid show for their pigs is linked to the knowledge that one day they will eat them” (Gibson 2015: 174), which also reinforces the importance of the relationship between pigs and humans. But the death of pigs may also be viewed as temporal because their true purpose is related to how humans view the cosmos.

Hence, pigs, like among the Tau-Buhid, are not killed simply for consumption but always in the context of a ritual. Through rituals, pigs are transformed into sacrificial animals, transcending their ephemeral roles as meat or objects of affection for humans into a more permanent state in the spirit realm. Consequently, the centrality of pigs in rituals among ICCs may help researchers and policymakers understand how to accommodate beings that may never have empirical forms into what can be called “multispecies ontology” as an analytic approach.

Roy Rappaport (1968) hinted at this need based on his fieldwork among the Tsembaga Maring – a horticulture ICC in the highlands of New Guinea. According to Rappaport (1968), “if we are to understand what is uniquely human we must also consider aspects of existence which man [*sic*] shares with other creatures” (Rappaport 1968: 241, 242). He argues that rituals and beliefs associated with animals, including pigs, can accommodate behaviors of other beings, not only of humans (Rappaport 1968: 4, 153–224; 1999: 28, 29). Thus, Rappaport hypothesized that the Tsembaga Maring’s pig festival cycle is the dominant mechanism by which the quality of their ecosystem is maintained (see also Strathern & Stewart 2004). Using this idea, he attempted to decenter anthropology from a human-centered orientation to include other beings that also demand articulation in contemporary ethnographies.

Although Rappaport’s hypothesis may be controversial to some scholars (e.g., Foin & Davis 1984) because it discredits other aspects of the Tsembaga ecosystem and is motivated by his passion to seek what is uniquely human, recent ethnographic works on human-animal/nonhuman relations (e.g., Viveiros de Castro 2004; Stépanoff 2012; Kohn 2013; Laugrand & Oosten 2015) also demonstrate that an important overall concept of lifeworld involved in human-animal/nonhuman relationships among many ICCs hinges on their connection with nature. Rituals make such connection possible with an attempt to make complex forest life intelligible, as Rappaport implied.

Multispecies ontology, I would argue, may have implications for how we understand collective IPs rights over their lands. The State must realize that it is “not merely the consideration of collective rights, but [also] the nature of these rights” (Surrallés 2017: 222) that must be at the center of negotiating contested rights in PAs that overlap with traditional Indigenous territories (United Nations 2008; Mentore 2017).

In the Tau-Buhid context, a multispecies ontological approach may help governments and other policymakers understand why the highlanders insist on the inclusion of practices that conjure myriad beings with overlapping biological and spiritual conceptions as components of their rights. For the Tau-Buhid highlanders, these rights help reinforce an alterity (High 2013) that delineates their sociality from that of the lowlanders while maintaining relationship with them. The Tau-Buhid are aware of how and when to use such otherness. For instance, sometimes they embrace the derogatory identity of the Batangan, rather than Tau-Buhid, because in some social contexts such as pig procurement, this identity is favorable to them.

Overall, the Tau-Buhid case shows that while their political situation is shared in other parts of the world, they are motivated by a need to be different (United Nations 2008; O’Sullivan 2020) so that they can exercise an exclusive concept of sociality in the highlands, with the ultimate aim of legitimizing their right to be isolated.

PIG PROCUREMENT: ENGAGING AND NEGOTIATING SOCIALITY

In this section, I discuss how the Tau-Buhid engage their sociality with the lowlanders (*siganon*) through the procurement of pigs. Buying pigs is key in fulfilling their traditional hunting practices. For the Tau-Buhid, hunting is associated with “ensnaring” or “foraging”. Two terms, *gamatan* and *iktan*, are used rather than a single direct term for hunting, especially when such activities do not need any pre-hunting sacrificial offerings.

Only *awatan*, also called *balatik* in other Philippine ICCs, from the star constellation Orion (Ambrosio 2010), and *sa-fong* require pig offerings. As mentioned earlier, pigs are not readily available. Hence, upon Butodaol’s summon, highland Tau-Buhid, headed by their respective *fufuama*, meet to consolidate resources for buying pigs in the lowland. Their gathering (*kamatoan/kamatoan fanfagayuan*, depending on number of participants) may serve also as an overall preparation for hunting, which can only begin when pigs become available for the ritual. Their assembly could last for three days. During that time, their representatives are sent to the lowland to look for pigs. Each household in the gathering may send their male representatives together with some men who are able to carry the pigs uphill. Usually, swidden harvests are brought downhill by these representatives and their assistants either to sell among lowlanders or middlemen, or to be directly trade for pigs.

In the lowland, domesticated pigs (*bombo*) are priced based on color. While the white ones generally command higher price than black and spotted ones, highlanders see white pigs as more valuable. While they may be used in some other rituals such as in planting, wedding ceremonies, and healing sessions, white pigs are the only pigs that can be used in hunting-related rituals. The black ones, on the other hand, are used specifically for rituals involving the dead. Spotted swine may be used in other occasions involving the living as substitute for white pigs, except in hunting, and connote the economic status of the family. In contrast, the white pigs symbolize wealth; those who can contribute white pigs to the communal ritual are regarded with prestige.

In search for white pigs, highlanders establish relationships with the lowlanders, who, in turn, call them the “Hubad” (naked people). This form of othering is convenient for the Tau-Buhid because it maintains a reputation that frightens some lowlanders from encroaching into their territories, and avoids deception from lowland traders who fear that the highlanders might curse them. They are called Hubad because of the *gime* (loincloth/G-string) they wear without upper garments. In the secluded regions, *gime* are traditionally made from the bark of a specific



FIG. 3. — *Siganon* (lowlanders) swine traders who supply pork in the local market and occasionally exchange pigs for swidden-grown rice with highlanders. Photo credits: C. A. Rosales.

tree called *awyan* or *almuyo*. This bark, after being beaten several times, turns into fibrous covering used by both men and women (Quizon & Magpayo-Bagajo in press). Children remain naked. But representatives from secluded communities use *gime* made of cloth, and upon return to the highland, change into ones made from bark. To maintain a collectively enforced isolation, only community representatives are allowed to go downhill. They are those who acquire names from the Tagalog.

For the Tau-Buhid, naming is a sensitive matter. They do not simply give their names, unlike some *siganon*, who give their whenever strangers ask them (Rosales 2019). For example, when a highlander traverses the lowland for the first time, if someone asks for a name, they would only say, “*way ngayan*” (no name) out of fear of becoming easily inflicted with lowland magic or sorcery in the highland. However, this is symbolic of how selfhood is seen among them. Names are not right away conferred to an individual upon birth, but may only be given by a *fufuama* when one reaches the right age. It is also for this reason that children who do not have names yet do not wear *gime* – because they have not been conferred selfhood represented by a name, and perhaps also by the G-string. One is said to have reached the right age when one can help in the swidden economy, and for boys when they have received their first training in hunting and magic. Boys who have been initiated in magic are presented with a *fatalya*, a cylindrical tube like pendant made from a sacred plant. Wearers believe that the pendant has a supernatural power to help them retain in their memory the spells they learn from the elders.

Hence, the Tau-Buhid, along with their pursuit for the white pigs, acquired Tagalog names to embody a unique identity known to the lowlanders. For instance, Tagalog hog raisers and traders may confer one name to five individuals (Fig. 3). But they are distinct from each other based on physical attributes (e.g., a punctured ear, thin body, or lacking a tooth) and attitudes such as temperament. A name like “Pedro” may be “Pedrong butas” (Pedro with a punctured ear), for example, or “Pedrong bungisngis” (Pedro who always giggles). But all this means nothing in the highlands, where they usually call each other *fagwes* (friend) or *at-faduksay* (sibling, especially among men), despite the fact that they have specific names there.

The representatives, finding the right pig to buy, negotiate the price based on the size of the pig – from piglet to full-grown. A weaned piglet, especially a white one, is equivalent to four sacks of dried *palay kaingin* (swidden rice). An adult pig, depending on its size, may be traded for more sacks of rice. It may be paid for with money, but that depends on the market price of rice. Usually, because swidden rice is rare, aromatic when cooked, and believed to be organically grown, some affluent hog raisers demand rice be traded for their pigs, which they then resell for a much higher price. On other occasions, a pig may be traded with mung beans, ginger, cassava, banana, and/or any other crops, but these commodities are based on the equivalent market price of dried rice. Ultimately, price appraisal seems symbolic of highland-lowland relationships, with rice as a form of currency recognized in the lowlands, perhaps because it is the main lowland staple and the main agricultural crop in Mindoro.

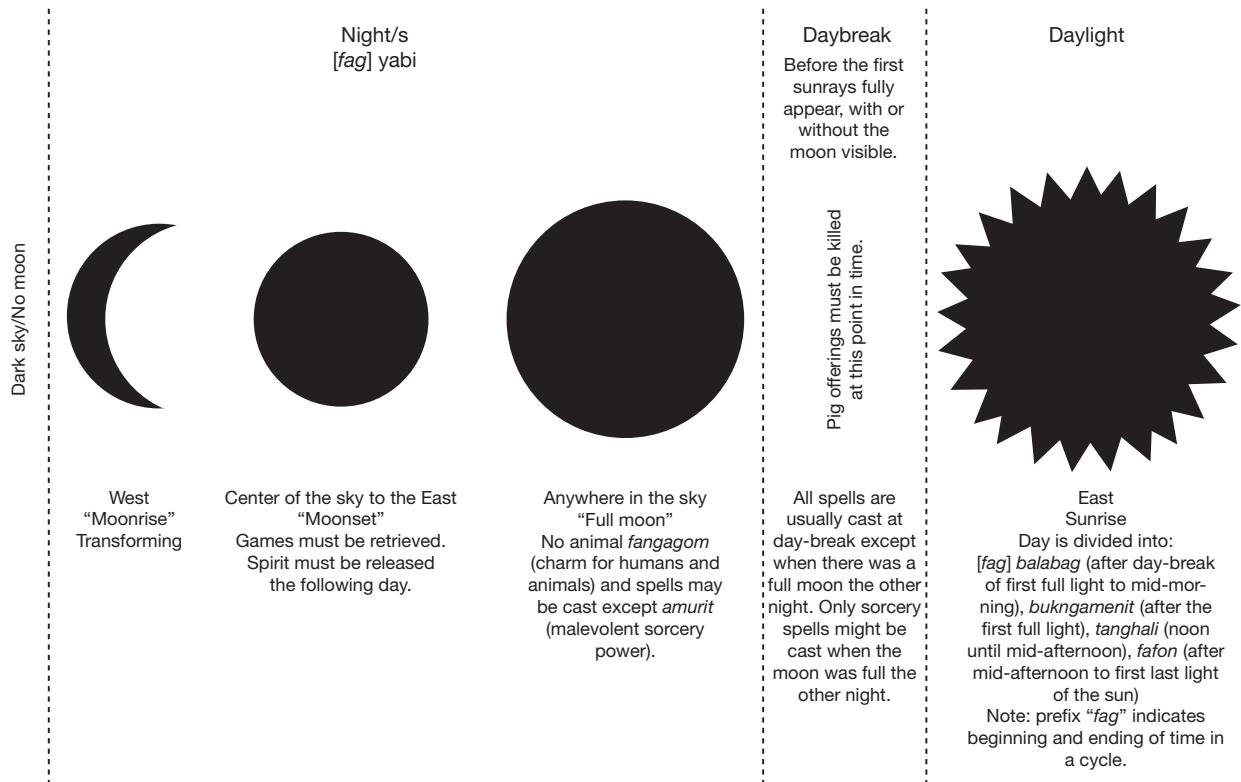


FIG. 4. — Moon phases, sunrise, animal-forming spirits transformation, and casting of spells. Credits: C. A. Rosales.

In the highlands, however, rice is seldom eaten; their staples consist of banana, sweet potatoes, and other swidden-grown crops. But the lower price of rice in lowlands forced highlanders to plant more than what they really need. Rice in the highlands is often regarded as ritual food. Therefore, there is only a minimal need to plant rice. In fact, many secluded Tau-Buhid refuse to eat rice because they believe that magic abilities are diminished when one consumes rice. There is also a belief that rice is one of the conduits of *amurit* – that whoever eats it may be cursed (Rosales 2019). This attitude is echoed in James Scott's analyses of many ICCs in Southeast Asia who gave up rice cultivation to live as swidden cultivators away from State control (Scott 2009: 64-178). However, in the case of the highland Tau-Buhid, rice cultivation is symbolic of the encroachment of the State on their lands while connected to the need for pigs. Giving up rice cultivation for the Tau-Buhid is not practically possible since it is the only way to buy pigs.

After pig payments have been settled, representatives wait until evening before they transport them uphill. This serves two purposes: first, they avoid conversations with the patrolling rangers about where they will use the pig, and second, waiting allows them to coincide their arrival with the time of the sacrifice. Although time is measured in terms of the *unon* (an ember used for smoking), "right time" is anchored on the position of the sun and the moon. Rituals occur just before the "first light" of the sun ([fag] *balabag*/[fag] *bungamenit*). For example, some spells or amulet-like *fangagom* (charm for humans and animals) may be potent only when cast upon

or used before the sunlight, while other spells, especially *amurit*, may be cast when the tip of the sun rises without blinding the eyes (Fig. 4). As among other ICCs, in addition to the sun (*menet*), cosmic bodies such as *galime* (stars) and *magdanon* (moon) are important markers for any ritual. For instance, among the "Sama-Badjao" (Sama-Dilaut, proper) a wedding ceremony may not be pursued when the sun is deemed not in its right brightness even if the reception is ready (Bottignolo 1998).

Arriving highland at the assembly, pigs are given water to drink, and sprinkled with water to cleanse them of any curses that might have been cast by those who saw them transported uphill. This task is the responsibility of the individual families joining the hunt. Then, the pigs, cleansed from those curses, are presented to all *fufuama*. Their presentation to the elders signifies transformation of the gathering that lasted for several days into a prefatory ritual.

SPIRIT WORLDS

The position of the moon and the sun in the sky govern the casting of spells and activities of hunting-associated spirits. In rituals, they are conjured as *falad* (spirits), *lafi* or animal-forming spirits (hereafter, AFS), and *mangaguyang* (ancestors). In contrast, the term *falad* among neighboring Buid refers exclusively to the "soul" of the deceased human being (Gibson 2015: 113, 146, especially 216). These spirits are key supernatural actors who demand pigs when communicated with.

The *falad*, who are known as either weak or strong spirits, govern all of the forests – plants, trees, grasslands, some animals, bodies of water, and landscape, including rocks, stones, and the soil. They are conscious like humans. Therefore, during seances, people can communicate with them as if they are talking to living human beings. The *falad* can be elated by respectful words but also wrathful if they are shown contempt. One of the fearsome *falad*, known as the *sandugo*, is said to cause sickness if their territories are disturbed (Rosales 2019: 142). Among the Buid, *sandugo* is also used but only as a political term they adopted from the Tagalog, which means *isang dugo* (one blood/fictive kinsman) out of their contact with the lowlanders (Gibson 2015: 72; see also Lopez-Gonzaga 1982: 252). I suspect that, in earlier times, the Buid and Tau-Buhid had the same understanding of this term. But the Tau-Buhid's contemporary understanding of the term is likely, at least partly, shaped by their view of some *siganon*, or lowlanders, as hostile persons, akin to some malicious spirits who could harm at will. My Tau-Buhid informants asserted that the *sandugo* are actual malevolent spirits.

The *lafi* are regarded as strong spirits who take the shape of warty pigs (*buswak*), tamaraws (*unwang/sararong*), deer (*biyan*) (*Rusa marianna barandana* Heude, 1888 [Aung *et al.* 2001; World Wildlife Fund 2021]), or any game considered meat animals. They are conjured before a spear-trap (*awatan/balatik*) is set up. They require two sets of pig offerings: one in pre-hunting ritual, and the other in the repayment ritual, which can be done with several pigs.

Finally, the *mangaguyang*, or ancestral spirits, are believed to see through time. They can be conjured by name in many incantations. They are regarded as the final keeper of *amurit*, to ensure that it is always potent. They reside in the vicinities of the communities to protect over and counsel their kindreds in time of community conflict. Deference, and perhaps fear of them, enforce Tau-Buhid restriction of outsiders from accessing highland communities. Many *fufuama* explain that, as far as they can remember, it has been a tradition that before an elder dies, they leave behind their spells so to prevent outsiders from trespassing on their communities. Willful violation of such sanction is held to cause disasters, sicknesses, and overall misfortune in their communities. For the same reason, highlanders are strict with visitors who enter their community, even if sometimes they have been permitted by the council of elders in the lowland.

Among these spirits, the *falad* are the most complex because they assume many forms, depending on the kind of exchange humans plead them to give. Customs require that they need to be repaid exactly for whatever favor humans ask of them. In rituals, any officiating *fufuama* determines the energy emitted by these spirits as either weak or strong. Their energy determines the number of pigs that must be offered in exchange for what the humans ask. The stronger *falad* could cause illness among a community if they do not receive exactly what they demand, a reciprocation equal to their natural strength. The Tau-Buhid view “reciprocal exactment” with any spirits as a means to promote good health and make resources abundant (Laugrand *et al.* 2020). While weak *falad* may not really harm anyone, even if they have been accidentally disrespected, they have the power

to conceal resources from plain sight. The Tau-Buhid interpret this phenomenon as a diminution in the availability of resources. Simply put, spirits negotiate the amount of gifts they desire from humans to the exact exchange humans ask them to bring into the material world. Through this mutual relationship, founded on a “resource-favor” dynamic, both humans and spirits reinforce their continued co-existence in the forest space.

This kind of dynamic relationship connected to hunting-associated spirits creates hunting as an inalienable property (Weiner 1992) of the Tau-Buhid. By prohibiting hunting in the highlands, the State negates the Tau-Buhid's fundamental way of being – their existence anchored in the land.

Hunting is the *hau*, or “vital essence” (Mauss 2002; Eriksen 2017), a concept held by the Maori, but also integral to the Tau-Buhid ethnic identity. Hunting is more about a ritual of reciprocity reinforcing a customary rule: *one must take only what one can repay*.

To this end, the rule reinforces itself when a game animal is trapped during hunting. Its meat, jawbones, internal organs, and blood are a direct reminder to the community that they are given to them only because they have to repay the spirit of such animal or its keeper. The jawbone and some parts of the internal organs are not to be consumed since they are symbolic reminder that such animal must be repaid. They are left in a designated place within a community until spirit has been fully repaid. Undoubtedly, the relationship of all beings in MIBNP depends on a constant system of reciprocity made tangible through hunting activity.

AWATAN RITUAL-HUNTING

Formal ritual begins as soon as one of the *fufuama* recites their incantation while poking the pigs. It is required that pigs squeal as hard as possible as a form of communication with the spirit world. In other ICCs, such as among the Ibaloy, pig squealing, as Laugrand *et al.* (2020) explain, is an important aspect of their ritual because it is “the only sound that ancestors and divinities can hear” (Laugrand *et al.* 2020: 485). Such understanding supports a pervasive notion among ICCs that the boundary between the temporal and spiritual worlds is impermanent and mediated by pig offerings.

When squealing begins, other elders take their spear (*subat/gfanguros/bangko*, depending on the size and pointed tip) and poke the pigs until they are wounded and shrieking even louder. After each *fufuama* has poked them, all male community members start to wound the pigs so that there is blood in their *fiso* (bolo). Aside from the spears, the bolo is the main hunting weapon among the Tau-Buhid. Then, the last male takes his bolo to cut the throat of the pigs. The blood of the pigs is spilled over the soil, while elders chant and enter into a seance to speak with the hunting-associated spirits, especially the AFS, until the blood is fully drained from the pigs. Elders returning from the seance pronounce a series of chants over the *fiso*, which is also used to cut logs, shape a spear, and slice meat after a game animal is trapped. Custom dictates that adult males make the *balatik*.

After casting spells upon all the *fiso*, the men, who represent their families, butcher the pigs, separating the heart (*baga*) and putting it in a dedicated place somewhat like a shrine. Then, women take their turns to equally slice the raw meat and distribute it to everyone.

Everyone who receives meat from the women puts their share in a large communal cauldron to be cooked. After the meat is cooked, it is customary to partake in feasting. The meal closes the pre-hunting ritual and addresses hunting-related taboos that might arise during the season. This ritual must over before daylight. During the ritual that I observed, it was clear that everyone knew their part, which is essential to conducting the ritual properly.

At daytime, men set up their *balatik* only in places where spirits are consulted to transform through their respective *fufuama*. There is no restriction on the number of *balatik* that can be set up. For example, a *fufuama* named Kondi reports that their community alone can set up three hundred *awatan* in just one site, based on the instruction of the spirits, which requires the help of other men. One person like him can set up fifty *balatik* in one season. On average, one skilled man using his own spear-traps can hunt three game animals in a season.

At the site, everyone involved prepares the prescribed parts of the spear-trap: *suklian*, *bog*, *fagbari*, *alagyas*, *gurimoton*, *bauyong*, *fesyo*, *lintakan*, *faskan*, *subat*, *fantukod*, *bakyang*, *fatan*, and *tunan*, symbolic of star constellation. Because the assembling process is a ritual, each part of the entire trap is prepared tediously, without error. If a mistake is made, the entire spear-trap is considered useless.

Moreover, because magic is enforced, no participants speak a word during the assembly process, except the person who is assigned to chant over with the verses “*fugkalagyas ro fagkero mafero*.” In this chant, the hunter speaks to his trap and entrusts it with a special command. Informants suggested that this specific *balatik* becomes “alive”, roughly a “being” who must be shown the rightful deference, like “two friends or brothers making a deal”. After this, no sound, except the creaking of trees and bamboos of the forest, is heard. The spear-trap is left there until it “informs” the owner that a game animal has been trapped.

Waiting for a catch makes hunters anxious. Hence, at times, they would really want to check their spear-traps. They normally do this when a trap is closer to their residence. To determine the proximity of the trap, they would put dried tobacco (*sulod*) in a clay pipe called *bagtu*. They would light the tobacco in the pipe before traversing the trail. When the tobacco has been totally consumed just when they arrive at the trap site, it is said that the trap is closer to them. It is favorable to have traps closer to one’s residence, for they could easily hear a shriek of a game animal indicating that it has been trapped. But by tradition, no one really stays close to the trap. The “smoking” measurement is rarely used except when the spirits themselves have designated that they will transform in that location where one’s residence is quite close. As a result, also by custom, it is not actually advisable to visit the site because it disturbs the approaching animals.

During this season, utmost silence on the trails is required of all communities, including tourists. This is because noise disturbs the transformation of the *lafi* into game animals. Thus, there are five associated taboos to observe: first, avoid any encounters with people when checking the trap; second, after tending to one’s *gamason* (swidden), one must not directly head to the location of his trap if he has the urge to check it; third, if anyone sees someone still setting up an *awatan*, one must never shout that person’s name, or even mention it; fourth, when one is heading towards the location of his *balatik* and accidentally meets someone carrying or gathering firewood, he must immediately avoid him or, better yet, postpone his visit to his trap to another day; and last, one’s body must be clean when checking the trap. These customs must be rigidly observed because during this time the *lafi* are beginning to resurface in the land to give their meat to humans, and to take from humans corresponding gifts. Doing any of these prohibited acts is a distraction to the “forming”/“becoming” process, especially during the moonrise, full moon or when the moon is at its peak luster, and moonset.

As shown in Figure 4, moon phase and time are quite complex in the highlands. I observed that two common terms – *lati* and *kabagungan* – are frequently used to refer to a particular phase. For a lowlander like me who sees the passage of the moon only through its waxing and waning, it would be a mistake to say that highlanders have only two lunar phases when they refer to a particular phase as either *lati* or *kabagungan*. Highlanders determine whether a moon is *lati* or *kabagungan* to decide if it is the right time to cast a specific spell. The interpretation of these two terms as lunar phases requires specialization, for no exact description could fit these terms into a single passage of the moon in the Western system. This is because these terms are connected to the luster and position of the moon in the night sky, and heavily dependent on the elders’ interpretations.

Roughly, “first appearance” may be considered “moonrise” (*magdanon nu kasure*), which refers to the first light of the moon seen in the western section of the sky after sunset. “Moonset” (*magdanon nu kafalyu*) refers to the position of the moon from the “middle of the sky” to the east. To be clear, while the moon as we know will always rise in the east, the highlanders’ concern about its luster suggests that they interpret the appearance of the moon as moonrise in the west right after dark regardless of its equivalent in the Western system. This is because they are interested in determining if there is a full moon. Full moon is crucial in the transformation of the AFS, but a moon may not be “full” except when it is deemed in a perfect luster even if its phase is just beginning to be fully spherical. Hence, while moon phase seems important, the Tau-Buhid are more concerned about the “moon dissolving” (*magdanon nu gakafalyuun*) from what can be considered full moon in the Western system. I explain why in the following pages. Meanwhile, in the context of hunting, three important aspects of the moon are delicately observed: the luster, position, and phases (especially *lati* and *kabagungan*).

Complex interpretation of the activity of the moon is also extended to the position of the sun used in determining when to sacrifice pigs, or when specific spells might be cast. In this context daybreak is crucial because it is the time when most spells are cast and pigs are sacrificed.

Three important moon “phases” are associated with the transformation of the *lafi*: first, during moonrise or when the first light of the moon appears, these *lafi* roam around the earth to find the places agreed upon with humans where they will transform. Second, AFS go to these sites during the full moon. Again, since there are many possible interpretations as to what a full moon is, the families or the communities, together in consultation with their respective *fufuama*, determine what counts as a full moon. It is crucial to identify the “correct color” where the moon is said to be full because during this stage game animals have already transformed. Premature or late declaration of a full moon may offend the AFS or disrupt their activities. I noticed that, for many *fufuama*, a “yellowish-red” is often the color associated with the full moon, but this is not absolute. Last is the moonset, an important phase indicating the possible availability of animals in the trap. If a game becomes available, it must be retrieved right away to perform a ritual that would “deliver” a repayment to the spirits. This specific phase also signals the end of the use of *fangagom*, a charm that could enhance “friendliness” with animals. The Tau-Buhid believe that casting the associated spells of such charms become useless when the moon rises at the eastern section of the sky. It is comparable to a moonset. In short, careful consideration of the “right time” connected with the moon is essential in one’s success in hunting.

Inability to determine the right time may consequentially disturb the *lafi*, and they may not transform into game animals, thereby cancelling the “agreement” between humans and the spirit world. Thus, it is important that timing must be observed in one’s activity because, just as the hunting season begins and ends so shortly, so too the meat of these beings begin to form and also ends after a short while. There is a limited chance that these spirits could form themselves as game animals. But when the transformation process is successful during that short period, it becomes non-reversible. Their meat must be “accepted” immediately lest the return of the spirits to their worlds may be delayed, and consequently disrupt the process of formation (“meat formation”) for another season. It follows that it is only essential that trapped animals must be retrieved immediately.

Following customs, hunters must wait for a dream to receive a message from the *balatik*, which reinforces an earlier belief that the *balatik* become living beings after the ritual. In dreams, scenarios associated with a catch involve courting a woman, carrying bananas, playing *sumpingan* (a variant of children’s hand/finger games), and stabbing a friend with a spear. Sadly, if none of these scenarios appears in dreams, it may indicate an empty *balatik* caused by disturbance in the transformation process. Those who are impatient to learn the result of the traps may also resort to a specialized hunting divination, which is done by “grilling” a *bagto* (bamboo species) usually before sunset. After taking it out of the fire, one must strike it hard on the ground. If the powdery sand-like parts come off in crisscross patterns, it means that the hunt will be successful. Using the same material, if

striking the grilled *bagto* hard with another wood causes the bark of that wood to get inside the bamboo, one must immediately head towards his *balatik* to retrieve its catch.

Upon retrieval of the animal, everyone is informed that its meat will be equally distributed to all. To honor the spirits, an offering containing the jawbone, liver, the heart, and entrails of the animal; the incantation-bound *fiso*; and bracelet beads are put near the spear-trap owner’s door. Just as these offerings are placed there, a man or a woman either from his own family or the members of his own community, bangs on the cauldrons that are specifically used for cooking meat while chanting in a manner like, “*tabo, tabo, tabo katambing dala giring tumambing*”, which means that they have already repaid their “debt” to the spirit(s) who caused the formation of that animal as a meat. These spirits are sent back to their worlds. But just as they are leaving for their original realm, the community wishes that they would return in the next hunting season.

Notably, while domesticated animals are only used for rituals, specific parts of the hunted game animals belong to the spirits, and hence cannot be eaten. The jawbone, after the post-trap rituals, is left in an open space until it is dry. Then, it is collected as a remembrance of that specific hunting season. In fact, examining hairline patterns in the bones and teeth of old jawbones, a skilled Tau-Buhid hunter can tell how many game animals had resurfaced in a specific hunting season, even if he had not participated in that season. The meat, however, belongs to humans. Hence, right after the ritual, the meat is cooked and consumed communally in a festive moment. Others may preserve their share by smoking, but this is discouraged as one may be suspected of sharing them with the *siganon*, a taboo that must be observed especially when dealing with the meat of the hunter’s first trapped game.

Customary rules dictate that sharing is only allowed among members of one particular community. Highlanders, in particular, are strict in the observance of this rule. So, in reality, to avoid suspicion, no meat is actually preserved. For a Tau-Buhid, it is shameful not to consume the meat when it has been given, and more shameful when it is not shared with others in one’s own community.

When the *awatan* season ends, communities reunite again to perform the post-*balatik* rituals. Here, a pig (or several pigs) is procured again, and before daybreak elders chant over it while they enter into a seance. Right after, at daybreak, the pig is butchered, and its heart, liver, entrails, and one leg are put in an elevated shrine facing the sun, outside the community. In addition, before daylight all spears are burned, and the *fiso* are hit with a piece of *fanungko* stone to create a spark. The stone is ordinarily used for creating fire (*santikan*), but here the spark signifies that the spells previously cast upon the bolo have been lifted. The sunrise signals the end of the *balatik* season. All the men who set up their *balatik* return to those places to dismantle them. At MIBNP, at the beginning of the season, the hunters indicate the locations of their *balatik* with a series of directional arrows on pole (Fig. 5), so that the rangers can avoid endangering themselves when patrolling. And when the *balatik* are dismantled, the hunters send a messenger to inform the park rangers that secluded areas have been cleared of *balatik*.



FIG. 5. — Customary marker indicating distance and number of *balatik* (spear-trapping) near the trail. Each arrow represents a spear-trap and its distance from the trail. When the arrow points a little upward, it means the trap is far from the trail. Photo credits: C. A. Rosales.

SAFONG: CIRCULAR BURNING OF THE SAGRADO

Deep in the park, the highland communities practice an exclusive activity called *safong* – a hunting method using large-scale circular burning. The *safong* is held strictly once annually at a specific place called *sagrado* (sacred) during the month of April or early May (depending on the moon). *Sagrado* is a Spanish term, attributed to the *siganon*, to describe the deference of the Tau-Buhid to this place. As far as elders could remember, their ancestors used the *sagrado* as a magic training ground. The training culminated in a fire-making contest through the use of a branch of an enchanted tree called *maymaling*. Whoever makes a fire out of their incantation using its branch is regarded as winner and therefore leader of the highland community. Informants state that the present overall *fufuama* has passed a magic test among the present generation of elders.

Sagrado is a plateau of more or less a hundred hectares located near the foot of a sacred mountain called Talafu (Fig. 6). As noted earlier, mountains are regarded as beings who nurture the spirits residing there. Here, while *sagrado* serves as a sanctuary to all the AFS and other spirits, Mount Talafu is home of the ancestors. Humans reside outside these places, and access to these areas, especially to the mountain, is restricted even among Tau-Buhid.



FIG. 6. — *Sagrado* (sacred place) at the foot of Mount Talafu, east (right) and west (left). Photo credits: C. A. Rosales.

Entry is only possible through consultation with and approval of the tribal council and there is only one true necessity for going there: collecting medicinal plants, sacred soils, and curative stones that are essential for making *balugbugan* or medicines with incantations. In the *sagrado*, custom forbids hunting at any point of the year except during a gathering of all communities at an exact time for the *safong*. Again, timing is always essential and depends upon a desirable luster of the moon based on the elders' interpretation, which they make several nights prior to the assembly. When all *fufuama* have agreed on the timing – sometime before daybreak – all residents of the upper ICCs, gather in preparation for the burning.

Current residents are headed by *fufuama* Butodaol (Figs 7, 8). Communities fear him for his supernormal abilities, and he commands great respect and authority among them. He is a healer, sorcerer, and political leader. It is his responsibility to decide how to resolve conflicts over customary issues, including marital disputes, property issues, and swidden land allocation, particularly when there is a perceived deviation from tradition.

Here, prior to burning, an introductory ritual requires an offering of domesticated pigs. Depending on the generosity of joining communities, three or more pigs may be offered. First, the pigs are cleaned in a nearby river. Then, the *fufuama* from each community touches the pig while whispering incantations. Then, the pigs are wounded so that they shriek loudly. Each community representative's spear and bolo are required to gently pierce the skin of the pigs while their squealing gets even louder. This custom is meant to signal to the spirit that the offerings are now ready. The shrieking reverberates throughout the landscape, until the pigs are butchered (*filas*) simultaneously. Their blood spills over the soil and the river, symbolic of returning life to earth. This is done because the *lafi*, who are now animals, need life to return to the spirit realm. And so, blood containing the vitality of a spiritless pigs is food for the *lafi*, to gain strength to transform themselves back into *lafi*. Then, the pigs organs are removed and placed in a makeshift shrine inside the *sagrado*. The organs are not be



FIG. 7. — *Fufuama* (grandfather, elder) Butodaol, leader of the highland Tau-Buhid. Photo credits: C. A. Rosales.

consumed by humans; they are only for all spirits. However, the pigs meat is distributed to everyone after the communal supplication to the spirit world.

Upon the appearance of the first rays of the sun (Fig. 4), the offering concludes. The conclusion signals that communities may now gather in their specific key posts, normally near the mountains surrounding the plateau. *Fufuama* are stationed at each community. The main role of the elders is to assist in the supernatural aspect of the *safong*, especially in monitoring sunrays so that they could harness its “fire” through the aid of chants. Through such means, the *safong* becomes more than just a usual hunting activity; it is a grand ritual ceremony involving the sun.

When all communities are positioned, Butodaol intones his chants, communicating with all the great forest spirits mediated by the organs of the pigs in the shrine. He reminds all the great spirits that their respective animal embodiment will now be retrieved in exchange for the vitality of the pigs offered to them. The chants help to reassure the communities that there will be an abundant hunt. Then, Butodaol, after inspecting the sun to determine its favorable state, chants that the sunrays symbolized by the fire in the *unon* may aid them to burn the *sagrado* in a circular manner. He believes that the brighter the sun is, the stronger the fire will become. He talks to the sun in spontaneous manner while taking fire from the ember. Then, in a small fire, he burns a portion of grass until it blazes. When the blazing fire touches the bushes, all other communities beckoned by the smoke rising up to the air also join in the burning. The process creates a circular ring of fire from periphery towards the center. Because the burning is a ritual, the *fufuama* of each community chants continuously, while younger males secure the periphery so that the fire does not jump to another location. Young adult males are responsible for the fire break.

As the fire consumes all life in the *sagrado* (Fig. 9), plants, trees, and bamboo explode, rocks crack, and people mumble – some murmur spells, others whisper to each other or



FIG. 8. — Author (upper left) in conversation with *fufuama* (grandfather, elder) Butodaol (wearing G-string, his back to the camera) through an interpreter (wearing colored shorts, middle), a few days before the *safong* (circular burning). The boy (lower left) is Butodaol's attendant, while the man on the upper right is a park ranger and one of the author's casual informants. Butodaol fears that the State might totally prohibit their hunting activities because of stricter law enforcement in the protected area. He could not imagine that younger generations might be forced to abandon the highlands to the lowlands, as is gradually happening now in fear of being apprehended by the law. Photo credits: C. A. Rosales.

themselves, anxiously waiting to see how many game animals will be revealed once the fire is out. Flying embers darken the skies like rain clouds. Remarkably, no animal sounds are heard. Nor do birds fly above.

The individual *fufuama* continually chant a single word – *fō* – and gesture to the fire, telling it to move to the center of the plateau. They momentarily gaze toward the sun and command it to sustain the strength of the fire so that it not divert from the trail. Meanwhile, other people, especially women, talk to each other, hoping that the pigs sacrificed are acceptable so that there will be more trapped animals when the fire is out. The *safong* goes on and on until the plateau is entirely burned (Fig. 10). Then, another incantation, which only Butodaol knows or perhaps is allowed to recite in silence, is mumbled. Everyone knows that it is the end of the activity when, after that silent chant, the rain mixed with fly ash pours very quickly. Then, as soon as the whole *sagrado* cools down, everyone moves into it with their incantation-bound spears and bolo to search for any half-burned game animals. Custom requires that these spears must be used to strike through the heart of any huge animals found inside even if they are already dead because such gesture is, again, symbolic of gratefulness to the spirits of these animals and/or their keepers.

When I witnessed this celebration, several half-burned warty pigs, deer, and a tamaraw were retrieved after the fire. In just over three hours, the entire ritual closes with all the trapped animals retrieved. Butodaol, with other *fufuama*, declare it closed when he has chewed a variety of yellow ginger and spits it out where the organs of the pigs were offered earlier. Others say that he does this to activate all the hexes required to guard the *sagrado* from *siganon*'s premature hunting until its opening the next hunting season.



FIG. 9. — *Safong* (circular burning) fully initiated. Photo credits: C. A. Rosales.

CONCLUSIONS

This article shows the importance of cultural activities that are commonly prohibited by the State in a protected area. More specifically, I demonstrate that ritual-hunting among the Tau-Buhid is an ontological practice integral to their sociality, and thus should not be overlooked by State-sponsored livelihood programs. In this case, the prohibition of keeping pigs in the highland instigated the expansion of swiddens to provide resources for buying pigs, but the State does not realize that hunting practices will continue in the highlands because hunting is not only done to procure meat. Rather, hunting is also about maintaining relationships with the spirit realm to maintain community cohesion.

The Tau-Buhid's need to maintain their spirit connection should be seen as equally important as the State's creation of protected areas. As Wolfram Dressler (2005) argues, reciprocity, rights, and the meaning of life are "embedded within and shaped by cultural beliefs about how humans and nature functioned within a broader spirit world" (Dressler 2005: 27; Dressler *et al.* 2009). The Tau-Buhid embrace a nature-human dynamic where animals, humans, and spirits sustain their interconnection through hunting, which is mediated by the vitality of domesticated pigs.

The role of pigs as mediators (Gibson 2015) and connectors (Laugrand *et al.* 2020) allows us to recognize hunting as a ritual that reaffirms interconnection between animals and humans, because it is where spirits guarantee the continuity of animal existence in the material realm. This understanding provides insights on traditional resource management, where, for the elders, species cannot be lost if spirit-human contact is sustained in the context of pig sacrifice. Through these sacrifices, spirits are viewed as the prime agents in the appearance, extinction, and reappearance of species³ in the

3. Global Wildlife Conservation (now Re:wild), in their website dated November 1, 2018, reports the discovery of some species they considered lost. They state that "lost species are animals, plants, or fungi that have gone unseen for



FIG. 10. — Men from middle and highland regions waiting for the rain to pour down. The man on the left (wearing a shirt) may witness the process but cannot join directly in the activity because he is from the middle region (near Mount Iglit). As of this writing, only secluded highland communities may join in burning the *sagrado* (sacred place). Photo credits: C. A. Rosales.

biological world. In other words, for the Tau-Buhid, the physical realm and the spiritual dimension are not distant worlds; rather, these worlds co-exist and augment each other to sustain forest life.

Overall, despite the State control over traditional practices in the highlands, the Tau-Buhid have found ways to maintain their sociality there. In fact, they have arguably used the State prohibition against raising their own ritual pigs to their advantage. Nonetheless, they would prefer to be able to practice their traditional rituals and hunting activities without State surveillance and fear of punishment.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to the Tau-Buhid communities, especially to Chief Fausto Novelozo, for supporting my fieldwork in the highlands. I owe my deepest gratitude to Frédéric Laugrand (Université catholique de Louvain), Cherubim Quizon (Seton Hall University), Thomas Gibson (University of Rochester), Antoine Laugrand (Université catholique de Louvain), Joanne Muzak, and the two anonymous reviewers of *Anthropozoologica* for their constructive comments, which have helped me think through many crucial aspects of this article. An earlier draft was presented at the Anthropological Association of the Philippines (Ugnayang Pang-Agham Tao/UGAT) 40th annual conference: *Our Interconnectedness: Doing Anthropology in a Time of Ecological Crisis*, Palawan State University, November 8-10, 2018. Consultation with participating communities and key informants was conducted prior to writing and publication.

years or decades and are feared possibly extinct". <https://www.rewild.org/lost-species>, last consultation on 22 May 2021.

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Submitted on 6 December 2020;
accepted on 17 March 2021;
published on 25 June 2021.