



Domain 3

SOCIAL PRACTICES, RITUALS AND FESTIVE EVENTS

When social practices are continually practiced within the context of societies, the lives of communities are structured into a cohesive whole, establishing identity. In the history of the Philippines, these are intertwined with oral traditions and performing arts in a single matrix. Modern times have led to the evolution of a separate classification for social practices, especially with respect to festive events. Rituals have become victims of the intrusion of non-indigenous religions such that, at times, where these still survive, are merely shadows of reality and gestures of form.

Kapayvanuwawa

IVATAN, BATANES ISLAND GROUP PROVINCE, NORTHERN PHILIPPINES. *There is another and more involved fishing ritual practiced by the Ivatan of Basco to open the fishing season. The fisherfolk of Basco believe that some beings own the sea and its wealth, and that they can benefit from the sea only if these powers would give their permission to have it exploited if man is willing to pay the price for the privilege. What the fishermen sacrifice is the *sadiew* (price, cost) of the fishing ports, the fish in the bay and much more. However, they feel that these are not enough to pay the price. They find it necessary to speak to the gods to ask their favor. The gods are expected to answer through the omens or signs which are read by ritual experts in the intestinal organs of the sacrificed animal – the lungs and liver – whether or not the sacrifice is propitious.*



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THE COMMUNITY assembles on the Valugan beach with a ritual specialist in their midst. Then, they bring a tied-up pig close to the waterline on the beach. The ritual begins when the sacrificial pig is stabbed in the throat. A small amount of blood is drawn into a coconut shell dipper. The ritual specialist holds it along with a piece of *makanyas* (copper), pours the blood and drops the copper into the sea while invoking the gods' favor to give the fisherfolk safe sailing and an abundant catch during the season.

The carcass of the pig is then passed over a fire to singe off the hair. The ritualist then leaves the roasting to the fishermen's assistants. After roasting, the animal is brought to higher grounds where it is butchered by the men. The internal organs are removed and laid down on broad leaves. The ritualist examines the liver and lungs to read the omens. If there are whitish spots in the lungs that are scattered

thinly, the *arayu* (migratory fish) will come early and stay all summer, but they would not be plenty – a lean catch. If, however, the spots are plentiful and distributed all over the surface of the liver, the fish would come and stay all summer – an abundant catch. If the spots are plenty, but located only up to the middle of the lungs, the fish will come early and plentiful but fishing will be brief. The bile is also examined. If the bile is embedded in the liver and is symmetrically located, there would be calm seas and sailing will be safe. However, if the bile is tilted and appears very wet, it is an omen presaging rough seas and the possibility of boats capsizing.

After the necromancy, the pig is butchered and parceled out. Some of the meat is chopped for cooking and feasted upon by all. Alcoholic drinks are always present during the feasting.

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The Batanes island group is surrounded by violent seas making fishing difficult. The preservation of surplus by sun-drying catch is a serious concern. Two species of fish are shown: *arayu* (migratory fish) and *dibang* (flying fish), on the opposite page.