

Cosmology

TAU'T BATU, SOUTHERN PALAWAN ISLAND PROVINCE, CENTRAL PHILIPPINES. *People look to the skies for signs that are meaningful – where they are, where they are going, when to start, when to cease, when to be afraid, or when to be glad. The Tau't Batu are a kind of people who are still attune with nature in the world that they recognize.*



© Jesus T. Peralta

To the Tau't Batu of Palawan, there is no northern or southern directions, but only where the sun rises, and where it sets.

LIKE OTHER UPLAND ethnic groups in the Philippines and in Southeast Asia that are far from the bustle of urban life, the Tau't Batu are conscious of celestial affairs, but look at it within the limits of their cultural parameters. Their concept of directions, for instance, is limited to two: where the sun rises (the east) and where the sun sets (the west). There are no terms for north and south; they are at a loss in naming these directions. The sun is the eye of the day, and the moon, the eye of the night. They also have names for the phases of the moon: *timbuan*, *bungul*, *talikud* and *pinatey*, which are the positions of the phases of the moon relative to the rim of the huge sinkhole where they live.

Relative again to their east-west orientation and to the rim of their sinkhole, their agricultural cycle is determined by the three stars, *marapuro*, *binavagan* and *sangat*, in the belt of the constellation, Orion. When the three stars are in the westerly position, it is time to plant and when in the easterly position, the time to reap.

JTP