



The rice of bees: among the Batak of Palawan

Directed by: Giorgio de Finis
Produced by: SD Cinematografica
Duration: 50'
Versions: 
Format: SD

Divided into small isolated groups, the Batak live in a 240-square kilometres region north of the green island of Palawan, which is the nearest to Borneo among the other islands of the Philippines.

At the beginning of the century 700 Batak inhabited the region; at present their number has sharply decreased and there are less than 400 of them still surviving.

Hunters, gatherers, restless growers, the Batak developed a surprising knowledge of their natural environment: the forest.

Ten years ago the Palawan forest - rich in endemic species - was seriously threatened by timber-merchants; it may seem a paradox but, nowadays, the creation of protected areas and the introduction of rules safeguarding an environment ingenuously conceived up to now are considered the main obstacles to the survival of its inhabitants.

Much pressure has been put in order to stop traditional economic activities such as fishing with poisonous herbs or farming with the "cut and burn" technique.

The documentary is the result of 4 years of anthropological studies carried out by the author on behalf of the Manila University.

It focuses on rice and honey, the two most important products for the Batak survival, and the "lambay" a very significant ritual moment for these people who witness the constant struggle of the shamans "babalian" and the whole community against the nearby groups in order to get the "sprit" of rice and bees.



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