

Natural Phenomena Rituals

HANUNOO MANGYAN, MINDORO ISLAND PROVINCE, CENTRAL PHILIPPINES. *Hanunoo Mangyan believe that people's acts result to natural calamities for which propitiations have to be offered to the appropriate deities (e.g. to the spirit of water when there are droughts). Remedies, however, for natural phenomena can also parallel the cure for human ailments.*



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A pamulungan mother with her ailing child being relieved of stomach pains.

DROUGHT AND RAIN RITUALS

Panagdahan (from *sagda* – propitiation). This is performed if a drought continues for many days. Elders come down from the mountains with rice and pigs to have a feast at the sea coast usually at the end of September in the town of Mansalay. This is done furtively; non-Mangyan are not allowed to participate. It is done to appease *apo danom* (spirits of the water) which are believed to live in the sea, rivers and springs. The offering consists of cooked rice and pork. Rain usually occurs afterwards, it is said.

THUNDER AND LIGHTNING

Panlabay – This ritual for calming thunder and lightning is performed by a *panlabayan* if these phenomena continue for a long time. The *panlabayan* must have a ritual iron stick (about 50 centimeters) called *sambong* and the knowledge of the ritual. Lightning is supposed to be a diarrhea of the sky, hence the treatment is similar to medicine for a stomach ailment. The ritual paraphernalia is composed of the iron rod, piece of ginger, *kusol* (*Kaempferia galangal* L.) which is usually used by the *pamulungan* (herbal doctors) to cure stomach trouble and a set of betel chewing materials. She gets a *bayod* (myriapod) and makes a chicken discharge excrement. She pulls a few hairs from her head and burns them in the hearth inside the house. Then she puts the iron rod in the fire. She eats the ginger and makes the sign of the cross in the air with the *kusol* in her fingers, chewing the betel leaf and areca nut. She puts the insect and chewed betel in one dropping of the chicken feces. She suddenly bursts out laughing. Then she takes the iron stick and erects it on the ground at the foot of the *sulay* (bamboo supporting the roof of the house). If the thunder and lightning does not stop after this, people are inclined to think that someone might have violated the incest and marriage rules.