

Appeasing Deprivation

The Meaning of *Bandi* (Bridewealth) among the Pinatubo Negritos

by Hiromu SHIMIZU

Based on the materials the author collected during 19 months of field research in and around Kakilingan village, this paper presents an ethnographic description of marriage and bridewealth in the southwestern Pinatubo Negritos, western Luzon. In particular the author will discuss the meaning of *bandi* in their society by answering the following questions; why it is given at marriage; why the amount differs so much according to the socio-psychological distance between the bride's and the groom's extended families; and how it works alternatively to promote or to prevent social change.

Among the Pinatubo Negritos, *bandi* is not a specific property with symbolic value, but ordinary goods of any kind such as pigs, chickens, cloth, clothes, radios, knives, and recently, water buffaloes and cash. It is neither given to compensate for the transfer of rights over a woman (c.f. Fortes 1962, Goody 1973) nor to balance the cost-benefit ratio at marriage (c.f. Spiro 1975). It is also not meant to put mating into a socially meaningful context and a universe of relations (c.f. Comaroff 1980). The author thinks that *bandi* is given to appease the anger and sense of deprivation of the bride's family, while Negritos themselves explain it either as a custom or as a "breast-fee" (the costs of being brought up).

Actual marriage procedures differ widely between two poles; i.e. arranged and/or forced by parents on the one hand, and elopement by a couple on the other hand. Marriage with near kin is prohibited, because it is just like a *bo-et*, an animal with rabbit-like shape, which eats its own droppings and has intercourse by itself. Marriage, therefore, is essentially thought of as depriving the family of a daughter (sister/niece). And even marriage by parents should be arranged outside a socio-psychologically intimate circle and involve a feeling of deprivation on the

bride's side.

When marriage is initiated by elopement, the bride's family gets angry and demands a big amount of *bandi*. If the groom's family cannot meet the agreement at negotiations, or if it fails to fulfill the agreement later, a couple is forced to separate. Elopement takes a long time to achieve stability because of the heavy burden of *bandi*, which is paid in long instalments. Thus *bandi* works to prevent all attempts at elopement from becoming successful and still maintains the importance of arranged marriage. But, if a groom's side succeeds in appeasing a bride's family by delivering the required *bandi*, even though it may not be fully paid, another dimension of social relations by affinal bond is developed. While arranged marriage occurs in already established relations and strengthens the existing social circle, elopement initiates re-organization by introducing outside relations.