

A Contribution to Southeast Asian Infrastructure, Analysis of Pre-Spanish Philippine Society

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Except for some southern islands where Islam had permeated since the 15th century, the greater part of the Philippine islands had scarcely been affected by foreign cultures before Spaniards came to conquer the islands late in the 16th century. Therefore you may suppose that the indigenous culture to Southeast Asia, if there was, would be maintained in this area longest. In this paper the present writer analyzes the social organizations and institutions of Pre-Spanish Philippine society, especially Tagalog society, which will consequently present some data by which you may infer a Southeast Asian 'infrastructure' suggested by G. Coedès.

On the eve of the Spanish occupation the Filipinos were grouped into the small communities called *barangay* which was then the only form of political and social organization. Although there usually existed several *barangays* in a village which Spaniards represented by *pueblo* or *poblacion* in their language, the overlordship reigning over the whole village, that is, a regional grouping of *barangays*, had not been established yet. The following are the main conclusion on the composition and institutions of the *barangay* community which the present author has come to through the analyses from the chapter I to the chapter V of this paper.

1) Usually *barangay* consisted of from 30 to 100 families, which were all relatives of *dato* or the chieftains according to Fr. Juan de Plasencia. However it was not a kinship group in a strict sense of the word. Because the rule of descent of Philippine society is bilateral and *barangay* was not composed of a single bilateral descent group of *dato*.

2) The group functions of *barangay* were to obtain the exclusive

possession of a certain space of earth for agricultural production and to protect the security of the members against outer enemies.

3) In the *barangay* complex there were four distinct classes, that is, *dato* or the chieftains, *timagua* or the freemen, *namamahay* and *saguiguilir*. The last two were the dependent classes subject to *dato* and *timagua*, and the Spanish records usually call both of them slaves. However, although *saguiguilir* were the real slaves who served their master in his house and on his cultivated lands, and could be sold, *namamahay*, having their own house and property, served their master with half of their cultivated lands on which they had the same usufruct with *timagua* and could not be sold.

4) The main origins of these dependent people were those for loans, those for crimes and those by captivity.

5) *Namamahay* and *saguiguilir* could emancipate themselves by giving a set amount of gold to their master. On this occasion a ceremony took place between the master and the dependent.

6) The dependent status was hereditary. The children of a freeman and a dependent woman or of a dependent man and a free woman, were divided into two parts, the odd numbers and the even numbers, and the former succeeded the father's status and the latter the mother's. If there should not be more than one child, he was half free and half dependent. The same with the odd child, in case there were an odd number of children. The possession of the individual children whose parents belonged to separate masters was decided in the same way.

7) The land ownership vested ultimately in the communal *barangay*. However, *timagua* and *namamahay* were able to dispose their cultivated lands at least within the *barangay* and their children could inherit these lands.

8) Strictly speaking there was no family property in this society. Husband and wife had one's own property in a household. All the legitimate children, whether male or female, inherited equally from each of their parents.

9) Marriage was commonly contracted between a man and a woman of the same class and they had a tendency to procure a spouse from their close relatives. On contracting a marriage the groom had to pay bride-price to the bride's family.

10) The social order of *barangay* was kept by the custom laws. The crimes and disputes which occurred in the *barangay* were judged by *dato* in accordance with the custom laws. The crimes and conflicts concerned with two *barangays* were heard and judged by one or more than one *dato* who was chosen by the rest in the village. The cooperative relationship of the *datos* had been established to maintain the social order through the village.