VOL. I

The Philippines:

A PAST REVISITED

(Pre-Spanish — 1941)

by

RENATO CONSTANTINO

With the collaboration of
Letizia R. Constantino

(Vol. II: The Continuing Past)
(1941 — 1965)
Spanish colonization was an alien force which interrupted and redirected the course of development of indigenous societies.

It is futile to speculate on the particular characteristics of the Asian societies that might have emerged in the archipelago if the laws of development operating within the social units then existing had not been drastically modified by colonialism. It is however essential that as we tried to analyze the nature of Spanish society at the time of conquest, we should likewise examine the nature of the indigenous societies and their level of economic development at the moment of confrontation with Spanish colonialism.

Proto-Anthropologists

Spanish clerical chroniclers left a legacy of proto-anthropological observations which have to a very large degree formed the basis for present views and conclusions regarding the pre-Hispanic past of the Philippines. Three factors impaired the accuracy and reduced the value of their observations: (1) their lack of training as social anthropologists, (2) their natural tendency to view and describe the situation in terms which would justify their missionary presence, and (3) their inability, reinforced by their conviction of racial superiority, to evaluate an Asian society on its own terms.¹

These limitations resulted in chronicles which often recorded the minutiae of life in indiscriminate fashion, tended to generalize on the basis of limited observations, disparaged native customs and values because these did not conform to Christian norms or offended personal tastes, and above all, consistently viewed pre-Spanish society from the vantage point of the European experience.

Influenced by these Spanish sources, Filipinos have tended to regard all pre-Spanish native communities as having reached more or less the same level of development. A more pernicious result has been the acceptance of Western analysis which equated pre-Spanish institutions with European models.

While it is true that Filipino historians have endeavored to counteract derogatory estimates of pre-Spanish culture by highlighting its achievements (sometimes to the point of idealization), they have taken few steps to free the study of early history from bondage to European stereotypes.

Anthropological studies of early Asian societies give ample evidence of a distinctly Asian development which should be explored further for new insights into the Philippine past. This is a task other scholars would be better qualified to undertake. It is sufficient for the present that we are aware of the existence of these different levels of social development and of the danger of forcing these early institutions into a European mold.

Neither shall we attempt to describe the customs and practices, economic and artistic accomplishments, religious beliefs and values of all communities in all their variety and detail. Rather, we shall limit our discussion to the fundamental aspects of social organization and economic development which formed the foundation on which Spanish colonialism was erected.

Aborting Historical Trend

Of various linguistic groups that inhabited the Philippines at the time of Spanish conquest, the Muslims of the South had the most developed social organization. This was due mainly to the Islamization of Mindanao and Sulu. These Muslim communities already exhibited social stratifications reflecting concepts acquired from their economic and religious contacts with Muslims of neighboring regions. The fact that they could adopt some of the institutions of their more advanced neighbors proves that their economies had reached levels capable of supporting an emerging ruling class.

If history had taken its course undisturbed, the Muslims might have Islamized the whole archipelago. They could have seized the leadership in nation-building. As a matter of fact, Manila and its environs were already outposts of Bornean principalities.

But the development of the Philippines took a reverse course.
Instead of the more developed society expanding its influence over the others and diffusing its culture and social organization throughout the less developed ones, Spanish conquest aborted this historical trend, developed the other regions, and froze the evolution of what had once been the more advanced society—the Muslim South.

It should be a source of pride for the Filipinos to point out that the Muslim South was never fully conquered by Spain. This sector of the archipelago remained free by virtue of its higher social and economic development and its better organized and more tenacious resistance. It must be admitted, however, that other factors were partly responsible for this region's relative freedom from Spanish occupation.

For one thing, Manila's geographic position gave her more prominence in the mercantile development of the colony. Luzon, therefore, occupied the focus of Spanish attention. Then, too, the Spaniards were kept so busy defending their settlements from the Dutch and the Portuguese that for many years they could not spare a force strong enough to completely conquer the Muslims. Nevertheless, Muslim resistance and the heroes of that resistance should be celebrated in Philippine history. Instead, they are largely ignored and misunderstood. For example, the Muslim attacks on Luzon and the Visayas which the Spaniards called piratical wars must be viewed as part of the Muslims' continuing resistance to Spanish colonialism.

The Muslim South became a beleaguered fortress, a sizeable segment of indigenous society that tenaciously resisted Hispanization and colonization. Because of its consequent isolation, it was able to preserve its indigenous customs and culture as well as to continue to receive Muslim influences. Throughout the Spanish occupation, the Muslims were not considered part of the developing society and the Muslim region was treated as foreign territory. Needless to say, the Muslims shared the same attitude. Religious differences became a basic alienative factor between Christianized "indios" and "Moros." Whatever ties of race and culture had previously existed were replaced by suspicion and antipathy since Christianized natives were regularly conscripted for the wars against the Muslims and, in retaliation, the latter also raided the Christianized communities.

Thus Spanish colonialism left a legacy of alienation between Christian and Muslim. American colonialism continued the process of pacification with greater success only to add an economic dimension to the old animosities when Christian settlers began to encroach on Muslim ancestral lands.

No Philippine history can be complete without a study of Muslim development. For that matter, a history of the Filipino people should include as well the experience of all other groups now lumped together under the term ethnic minorities. Fortunately, a number of scholars have begun the task which in the future will make possible the integration of the experiences of these Filipinos into a real people's history of the Philippines.2

But since it was on the social structures of the communities of Luzon and certain parts of the Visayas that the Spanish colonizers successfully superimposed their own system, a study of their state of development is of primary importance. The evolution of the national community proceeded from these geographic sectors. Among these groups, the Tagalogs and the Pampangos had attained the highest level of development prior to Spanish conquest.

Pre-Spanish Settlements

At the time of conquest, the population of the islands was estimated at about 750,000. This figure is based on the census of tributes ordered by Governor Gomez Perez Dasmarñas. The tributes totalled 166,903. Assuming that there were three dependents for each tribute, the population would come to a total of 667,612.3 This was the figure that appeared in the Relacion de las Encomiendas of 1591. Of course, this census was confined only to the lowlands of Luzon and Visayas, but were we to include the free inhabitants of the uplands and even the unsubjugated Muslims, the pre-conquest population would still have been less than one million.4

The social unit was the barangay, from the Malay term balangay, meaning a boat. The barangays were generally small. Most villages boasted of only thirty to one hundred houses5 and their population varied from one hundred to five hundred persons. According to the reports of Legazpi, he found communities of from twenty to thirty people only.6 Many Visayan villages fringing the coasts consisted of no more than eight to ten houses.7 There were however some giant barangays. Manila had about two thousand inhabitants at the time of conquest, but this was the exception rather than the rule.

Most communities were coastal, near-coastal or riverine in orientation. This was because the principal sources of protein came from the seas and the rivers, the people relying more on fishing than on hunting for sustenance. Although pork, carabao meat, and chicken were eaten, they were mainly ritual and
festival foods. Moreover, people travelled principally by water. The movement of the population was up and down rivers and along the coasts. Trails followed the streams; no roads bisected the countryside, nor were there any wheeled vehicles. Rivers were also the major source of water for bathing, washing and drinking although some communities settled around springs. However, it was in the coastal and near coastal communities more accessible to traders where a higher degree of development emerged. Dealing with traders meant coming in contact with Chinese, Arabian and Indian civilizations. Thus, the coastal communities in Manila, Cebu, Jolo, and Butuan attained a higher cultural level.

Pre-Spanish settlements were in the main far from each other, with houses of renewable materials usually aligned along a riverbank or on a shore. There were no houses of stone and no public buildings, indicating a fairly low level of political and social organization. The custom of burning or abandoning a dwelling when a member of the family died suggests that these houses were regarded as temporary shelters rather than life-long homes. The impermanence was no doubt dictated by the demands of shifting cultivation which was the predominant method of rice culture, although the change to wet-rice agriculture had already been made in the lowlands of Luzon.

Most of the members of a community were related to one another by blood or marriage. Besides kinship, common economic interests and shared rituals formed the bases for community cohesion. The barangay was a social rather than a political unit, each one a separate entity with only informal contacts with other villages.

Subsistence Economies

The autonomous barangay communities that the Spaniards encountered were in the main primitive economic units with a system of subsistence agriculture which provided them with barely enough for their needs. Proof of this is that Legazpi himself had to move his main camp repeatedly from Cebu to Panay to Luzon for the simple reason that there was not enough to eat. The mere addition of a few hundred Spaniards seriously strained the resources of native communities. Even the Spanish soldiers had to scrounge around for food. The eyewitness account of Diego de Artieda who came to Cebu in 1567 as a captain on the ship Capitana attests to the absence of a food surplus. He writes:

---

**BARANGANIC SOCIETIES**

Rice is the main article of food in these islands. In a few of them people gather enough of it to last them the whole year. In most of the islands, during the greater part of the year, they live on millet, *borona*, roasted bananas, certain roots resembling sweet potatoes and called *oropiso*, as well as on yams (*yuñames*) and *canotes*, whose leaves they also eat boiled. The scarcity of all kinds of food here is such that — with all that is brought continually from all these islands, in three frigates, one *patache*, and all the other native boats that could be obtained — each soldier or captain could only receive [as his rations] each week two *almudes* of unwinnowed rice — which, when winnowed, yielded no more than three *cuartillor*. This rations was accompanied by nothing else, neither meat or fish.

They are but ill supplied with cloth. They use a kind of cloth made of wild banana leaves which is as stiff as parchment, and not very durable. The natives of Panay and Luzon manufacture a cotton cloth with colored stripes, which is of better quality. This cloth is used by the Spaniards when they can find it; otherwise they use the cloth above-mentioned. Both kinds are so scarce, that we are suffering great privations for lack of clothing. The people are very poor.

A 1576 account describes the wet-rice agriculture practised by the more advanced lowland villages.

They put a basketful of it into the river to soak. After a few days they take it from the water; what is bad and not sprouted is thrown away. The rest is put on a bamboo mat and covered with earth, and placed where it is kept moist by the water. After the sprouting grains have germinated sufficiently, they are transplanted one by one, as lettuce is cultivated in España. In this way, they have an abundance of rice in a short time. There is another crop of rice, which grows of itself, but it is not so abundant.

The upland technique is described by Fray Diego de Aduarte. It is more or less the *haingtin* method as practised to this day.

---

**Transitional Societies**

At the time of Spanish conquest, the barangays were societies
in various levels of transition from the primitive communal state to an Asiatic form of feudalism in the Muslim South. Even the least advanced of the established communities exhibited the beginnings of social stratification while the most developed, the Muslims, showed a more elaborate system of social divisions. Generally speaking, however, these stratifications were not rigid, pointing to a recent post-communal development.

Since the Philippine settlements were subsistence villages, all of the inhabitants, with the possible exception of chieftains in the larger communities, were self-sufficient farmers. Although agriculture was their principal occupation, these farmers were also part-time craftsmen. There was no separate artisan class. All made their own ornaments but the chiefs and their families displayed a wider and more valuable collection of trinkets. In the matter of clothing, however, not much differentiation was visible. There was no separate group of literati in the barangay although many individuals in the more advanced communities could read and write. Syllabic writing was however confined to seventeen indigenous groups, all coastal or near coastal. Writing, according to historian Horacio de la Costa, was more for sending messages than for recording purposes. There was no parchment and there was a lack of writing implements. This is an indication of the low level of technology and the low productivity of labor.

The following observation of Legazpi provides an important insight into the type of economy which prevailed at that time:

More or less gold is found in all these islands; it is obtained from the rivers, and in some places, from the mines which the natives work. However, they do not work the mines steadily, but only when forced by necessity; for because of their sloth and the little work done by their slaves, they do not even try to become wealthy, nor do they care to accumulate riches. When a chief possesses one or two pairs of earrings of very fine gold, two bracelets, and a chain, he will not trouble himself to look for any more gold. Any native who possesses a basketful of rice will not seek for more, or do any further work, until it is finished. Thus does their idleness surpass their covetousness.

Legazpi faults the Filipinos for not trying to accumulate riches, not even the chiefs. He concludes that they were lazy. The reason for such behavior, so incomprehensible to one belonging to a class society, is precisely the absence of an exploitative class as such. Everyone worked for an immediate need and that was all. The means to systematically exploit the labor of others were not yet at hand.

Administrators not Rulers

The village chief was the administrative leader of the community; he was not an absolute ruler. First, the scope of his authority was limited by a traditional body of customs and procedures. Second, although his position had become hereditary it was originally attained by an exhibition of greater prowess and valor, traits useful for the community's survival. His usefulness to the community earned him respect so that services were willingly rendered to him and more severe penalties were imposed for injuring him or his family. Since the original basis for leadership was his superior personal attributes, he could be replaced if for some reason his position weakened. This was a possibility especially in the larger communities where there were several kinship groups, each with its own chief.

Finally, unlike the rulers of class societies, chieftainship was not his exclusive occupation. Although the chief exercised executive, judicial and military functions when these were required, in most communities he remained a farmer and wove his own cloth like the rest of the barangay members. Next in rank to the barangay head and his family were the so-called freemen. They helped the chief in endeavors that required common efforts such as going to battle, rowing when the chief set out to sea, planting his field or building his house. During such times, the chief fed them, a fact which calls to mind the provincial custom of bayanihan still practised today.

In other words, the freemen generally assisted the chief in chores that involved the welfare of the community. When they helped him personally such as in building his house or planting his field, this was as much a service rendered in consideration for his own services to the group as for his position as leader. Moreover, others in the community could likewise benefit from such cooperative efforts and host families also undertook to feed all participants.

The Dependent Population

Below the freemen were the dependent population whom Spanish chroniclers, reflecting their European experience, called slaves. Actually, these dependents — and there were many gradations of dependency — were debt peons rather than chattel slaves in the classical European sense. Their peonage was not
permanent; release from dependence was possible by paying back debts.

Individuals became dependents by being born to dependents of a certain type, by being captured in battle, by failing to pay a private debt or a legal fine. Many crimes were punishable by fines. If the guilty party did not have the wherewithal to pay his fine, he borrowed and repaid the amount with his labor, thus becoming a dependent. Moreover, those who for other reason found themselves in straitened circumstances also borrowed and became dependents. The usurious rate of interest charged insured the existence of a large group of dependents in the larger communities since it took a long time to repay debts.

Although the charging of interest may appear to us as incongruous in a subsistence economy, accustomed as we are to associating interest with commercial dealings, this practice had in fact a reasonable basis. Since the natives did not use money, what they lent and borrowed was rice. Rice was precious stuff; loaning it could mean some reduction of consumption, and even if the lender had some surplus he was still depriving himself of that much seed for planting. Since such rice if planted would yield more than double its quantity, it was only fair that the borrower repay double what he borrowed or more, depending on the local custom. In a subsistence economy where primitive methods made sufficient harvests uncertain, lending rice entailed both risk and sacrifice, hence the high rate of interest.

Barangay stratification was not rigid. A chief could be deposed, freemen and even members of chiefs' families could be reduced to dependence, and debt peons could become freemen once they had paid their debts. Moreover, these dependents underwent a form of servitude that was generally benign. In his annotations on Antonio de Morga’s *Sucesos de las Islas Filipinas*, Jose Rizal, citing Argensola, notes that master and “slave” ate at the same table and that the latter could marry a member of his master’s family. We can well believe this, for where there is hardly any wealth, how can marked differences in status be expressed? Moreover, since the barangays were kinship units, the hardships of dependence must have been mitigated in most cases by the blood relationship.

Slavery — A Misnomer

Even among the Muslims whose society was more markedly stratified, debt peonage was still mild and not the cruel and inhuman institution that we know slavery to be.

Although it refers to the status of dependents in Muslim society of recent date, the following passage from a study by Victor S. Clark provides a useful insight into pre-Hispanic practices:

The domestic slaves of the Moros corresponding to the “criados” of the Christian provinces, are said usually to be quite contented with their lot, and would probably consider emancipation a hardship. Their duties are not heavy, and they live with families of their masters on a familiar footing, almost of social equality, rather as minor sons than as slaves, in the more common sense of the word. There are certain conditions of society where slavery exists, so to speak, in its natural environment, and as an institution strikes no social discord. Probably in those early Roman days when the word “familia” came to have the double signification of family and body of slave dependents, or among the early Germans, when men carelessly gambled away their freedom in a game of chance, little thought of social degradation was associated with this status. It was only when the institution had outlived this period and survived into a period of more complex industrial development that it became an instrument of exploitation, all social sympathies between the free and servile classes were estranged, and the system was universally recognized to violate our sentiment of natural right and justice. Our ideas of slavery are derived from this period of moral revolt against it and do not apply very aptly to the kind of slavery that exists among the Moros . . . . They do not regard slaves as wealth producers so much as insignia of honor.21

All the foregoing considerations indicate that the institution of debt peonage cannot be equated to slavery as it existed in Europe. However, a more thorough investigation of the forms of dependence and the relations between debtor and lender in all their variety must be made by the social anthropologists. Such a study may derive some insights into the relation between the subsistence economy and the benign characteristics of debt peonage in pre-Spanish communities from a study of ancient Greek society by George Thomson which differentiates between two types of slavery: “patriarchal slavery, in which the slave is a use-value,” and that which supersedes it: “chattel slavery, in which the slave is an exchange value, and slavery begins to ‘seize on production in earnest.’”22

It should be remembered that most of the early Spanish chroniclers were actually not describing pre-Spanish societies but those they came in contact with several decades after Spanish occupation. It is possible that such societies already reflected to some extent relations influenced by the class-
imposed values of the conquerors themselves. John Alan Larkin, for example, suggests that the tribute imposed by the Spaniards may already have had an effect on these relations. Attempts must be made to isolate the truly indigenous features of these societies. Moreover, Spanish writers confined their observations mainly to the large communities that had become trading centers and had therefore been subjected to Bornean and Muslim influence — and these societies were certainly not typical.

Insights from Other Experiences

The fact that there were chiefs, freemen and dependents did not indicate that a class society had already emerged. The chief was the head of a social unit, not the head of a state, for the barangay was not a political state. Ritual and administrative distinctions did not connote a class society. There can be no real classes when there is not enough surplus to feed a parasitic ruling class. As we have previously demonstrated, agriculture had not progressed appreciably from the subsistence level. What appeared to be a hierarchical system which Spanish chroniclers identified with either the classical slave society or with European feudalism was perhaps no more than a societal division of labor among the members of the community. The following observation on "primitive" societies is pertinent:

In some cases there are divisions into social groupings the names of which were translated by early observers as "nobles," "commoners," and "slaves." Two points need clarification here. First, a distinction must be made between social ranking of various sorts and a system of classes based on differential relations to the basic sources of subsistence and production; rank per se does not indicate the existence of classes. As Fried puts it, in "rank societies" marks of prestige are not "used to acquire food or productive resources." They do not "convey any privileged claim to the strategic resources on which a society is based."

It is therefore improper to speak of kings and nobles and baranganic confederations. As Larkin writes:

There is no evidence in Plasencia’s writing of suprabarangay organization prior to 1571. Raja Soliman, who led a combined force against the Spaniards, has been called by one writer, “the most powerful of the chiefs of the region,” but his strength lay in his ability to convince rather than command other datus to fight with him.

Recent anthropological studies have established certain characteristics of Asian societies that were not present in the European schema. Although the Asiatic mode of production is still a relatively unexplored field, students of pre-Spanish society may find it fruitful to study the work done on other early Asian societies for possible insights. Clark’s observation that Moros “do not regard slaves as wealth producers so much as insignia of honor” calls to mind the Chinese experience.

Prof. G. Lewin, a scholar on the Asiatic mode of production, points out that although there were numerous slaves in China, that country never developed what could properly be called a slave-owning society. The slaves were not employed in production; they served as household slaves and for ostentation. In fact, peasants, who were the real producers, complained about “the lazy, idle slaves” that they had to feed. Such a situation would be unheard of in the classical slave society.

Instead of automatically equating the chief to the European feudal lord just because members of the barangay performed services for him, it may be useful to examine the studies made of similar phenomena in other primitive Asiatic societies. In his study of Melanesian tribes, Peter Worsley, a British social anthropologist, suggests that members of these tribes used their food surpluses as a means of acquiring prestige. Blessed with a fertile soil, the Melanans despite their primitive methods often harvested more than they needed. In their primitive society, surpluses could not be stored, they could not be used to extend trade, or to acquire capital equipment: instead they were used as means of acquiring prestige. A man’s personal material wants in perishable commodities like yams and taro were soon satisfied; he therefore gave it in a manner which created an obligation on the part of those who participated in the feast to render him respect, service or some return in the future. Feasting was thus the avenue to political success and even to religious authority; it was the means by which one humbled one’s rivals.

Spanish chroniclers have remarked on the great number of occasions the natives found for feasting. At such feasts, the whole community was invited and eating and drinking were indulged in for days. In fact, this custom persists and it
A Past Revisited

Certainly still confers prestige on the host.

Even more to the point is the Javanese experience. In the kelompok of Java, each villager who used part of the village's communal lands paid for this use in personal services to the community. The headman apportioned these services among the community. Villagers also rendered personal services to their headman, cultivating his field, bringing in fuel, repairing his house.

These appear to be essentially the sort of services the barangay members performed and it is probable that like the Javanese they rendered services primarily to the community and served the chief as the symbol of the community. That this practice eventually developed into service for the chief himself is understandable considering that the symbol at times is more real and intimate than the thing represented.

Concepts of Property

The idea of personal private property was recognized in the more advanced communities. In Pampanga, for example, such property could be forfeited for crimes, inherited by one's children, or used as dowry. However, private property in its most significant sense, in its exploitative sense, did not exist. In an agricultural society, land is the primary source of wealth, the principal means of production; therefore, if a real concept of private property had existed, land would have been privately owned.

Baranganic society had one distinguishing feature: the absence of private property in land. The chiefs merely administered the lands in the name of the barangay. The social order was an extension of the family with chiefs embodying the higher unity of the community. Each individual, therefore, participated in the community ownership of the soil and the instruments of production as a member of the barangay. In the more advanced communities, however, use was private although the land was still held in common.

Generally speaking, the societies that were encountered by Magellan and Legazpi were primitive economies where most production was geared to the use of the producers and to the fulfillment of kinship obligations. They were not economies geared to exchange and profit. The means of production were decentralized and familial and therefore the relations of dependence were not created within the system of production.

Save for occasional exchanges, the tendency was to produce for the direct consumption of the producers. Surpluses were exchanged between groups or members of groups. Control of the means of production and labor was exercised by the producers themselves, and exchange was an exchange of labor and its products. The simple system had not yet been replaced by one in which the means of production were in the hands of groups that did not participate in the productive process—a leisure class backed by force.

Disintegration of Communalism

This is not to say, however, that these communities were not in the process of evolving a class structure. There is every probability that the Muslim societies were already at the threshold of class society. They were evolving an Asiatic form of feudalism where land was still held in common but was private in use. This combination of communal ownership with private possession is clearly indicated in the Muslim "Code of Luwaran." The code contains no provision for the acquisition or transfer of lands by private individuals. Neither is there any mention of cession or sale of lands, yet there is a provision regulating the lease of cultivated lands.

The chiefs were the administrators of the communal lands but were now assuming political functions as the embodiment of the community. They were therefore the recipients of tributes which formerly pertained to the communal funds. The productivity of the land enabled them to appropriate part of the surplus product contributed by other members. This was the Muslim development which already had its influence among the larger and more developed communities that were in contact with them.

Such barangays were passing through a higher stage of development characterized by the gradual disintegration of village democracy. Spanish colonialism accelerated the disintegration of communalism and the breakdown of the collective spirit. While there were embryonic social cleavages in baranganic society, it was not until the conquest that a Europeanized class structure began to develop and was superimposed on indigenous kinship structures.

The primitive, self-sustaining communities customarily surrendered labor service to the collective unity represented by the heads of families, the chiefs. However, the rule of the early chiefs was not supported by a coercive apparatus, nor did it need to be, for they were performing social functions for the
higher unity of the community.

Just when the point of transition was being reached when the chiefs were being transformed from social functionaries to superstructures of domination, the Spanish conquest accelerated the process. A new superstructure was erected and modified the process. A new apparatus within which the chiefs became part of the exploitative and slavery in the classic sense began to be practised only under the Spanish regime.

The Resultant Social System

The pre-conquest forms which were later incorporated into the exploitative institutions adopted by the Spaniards became the basis for the evolution of a society with feudal characteristics. Many former communal lands were transformed into private property as Spanish colonialism manipulated the indigenous form of social organization to make it part of the exploitative apparatus. Debt peonage and sharecropping which have blighted Philippine agrarian society for centuries had their roots in the pre-Hispanic period, but it was under the Spaniards that their exploitative aspects were institutionalized.

Although, as we pointed out earlier, the Spaniards encountered communities at various stages of development, they subsequently adopted the mores and institutions of the more advanced societies for utilization in the integration of other native groups. Spanish pacification campaigns and conquest of the rest of the country facilitated the diffusion process.

Summary

To summarize: The generally small communities that the Spaniards found and subdued were societies in transition. Some were still in the communal state, others because of their higher level of production were in transition to class society. Those that were in the post-communal state already had quasi-class lines as a result of the diffusion of the culture of the more advanced Muslims who were establishing settlements farther north or were trading with certain communities.

Some trading went on between communities and with Muslim and foreign traders, but such trading seems to have been on the whole accidental and irregular and therefore was hardly a boost toward an economy of exchange.

BARANGANIC SOCIETIES

In the more advanced societies, the beginnings of a division of labor had been established but bondage took forms different from the classical slave or serf types and may be loosely termed proto-feudal. The Spanish conquerors reinforced these proto-feudal structures and incorporated them into their colonial apparatus. The Hispanized adaptations have been carried over into the present, but with modifications reflecting the historic stages they have undergone.

Thus, the set-up which emerged was an artificial one, an imposition from without, a transplantation of decaying institutions of a feudal nature from a conquering country with a growing capitalist base. Therefore, while feudalism in Europe antedated capitalism, in the Philippines feudal relations similar to the European experience were a consequence of capitalist incursion.

Spanish colonialism arrested the natural development of the native communities, but it also laid the basis for a unification of the archipelago which was to be the very cause of an awakening that would end the days of Castilian overlordship in this part of the world.

The processes of colonialism accelerated the formation of classes and by doing so triggered new struggles and new levels of consciousness among the people. Spanish colonialism became the force that transformed post-communal relations into relations of exploitation.

Spanish administration created a new class of native beneficiaries of colonialism and thereby made possible, from time to time, the awareness of the masses of their own dispossession, an awareness indispensable to their further progress.