

The ancient in Philippine society

COMMUNITY STRUCTURE

The early Filipinos established their communities along the bays, coasts and on the mouths of big rivers. Some communities were small with 50 people living together while others were big with a population of more than 2000.

Areas for settlement were chosen on the basis of economic opportunities, use and strategic locations. Areas where sources of food was plentiful was one important factor considered by early Filipinos. Places along the bays, seacoasts and rivers were popular sites for residence because these places also provided a convenient means of transportation.

Land use was another factor which affected the site of communities. Cultural beliefs also affected the building of one's house. When the occupants of the house sensed that they had offended the spirits, they quickly moved out of the house for fear of reprisal. The early Filipinos also took certain precautions to protect their homes and community from their enemies. They built wooden fences around their houses and fortified their communities with walls made of palm trees or with arigues, wooden posts filled with earth.

DWELLINGS

The word balay is a Visayan word for house. There were three types of houses during the early period. Houses built of permanent wooden materials were called town houses. They were occupied by the datu. This was the largest house in the community. It was 30m long. This was not only the datu's abode, but also his workplace, storehouse and community center for civic and religious affairs. This center had a public lounging platform below or in the front. There were separate chambers for the datu, his wife, family, daughters, concubines and house slaves. Wooden partition carved with foliage in high relief separated these chambers.

The second type of houses was called cottages. These cottages were occupied by ordinary people (non datu) in the community. They were made of light materials. This enabled the cottage dwellers to be always ready to move every few years to be near shifting swiddens. These cottages were built near the fields.

The third type was called the tree houses. These houses were used only in times of war. There were also a variety of huts called balay-balay. They were used by hunters, farmers and travelers.

The houses were elevated off the ground on posts and had steep roofs. This type was appropriate for a tropical environment characterized by heavy rainfall.

Temporary shelters were also built near the fields where the people raised their crops. These were made of light materials and were often abandoned after harvest time.

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

Early Filipinos primarily engaged in the following economic activities: farming, fishing, poultry and swine raising, gold mining and trade.

Agricultural activities among early Filipinos had an early beginning. The people first used the slash-and-burn method of planting rice. Later, they adopted wet agriculture. The slash-and-burn method was common in the interior and high coastal areas while wet agriculture was practiced in the lowlands. During the planting season, the early Filipinos performed certain rituals to ensure a bountiful harvest. Work in the fields also followed the changes in season. The methods used in wet agriculture are similar to what is being done in the rural areas today.

Other crops being raised aside from rice were millet, bananas, sweet potato or camote, areca

nuts, oil, cotton, wine and vinegar and coconuts. Abaca was raised and its fibers were gathered and made into ropes or fabrics.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

The family was, as it still is today, the smallest but the most significant unit of ancient society. The father and mother were accorded complete obedience and respect by the children. The father was the head of the family while the mother managed household affairs. The early Filipinos had close family ties.

There were four social classes in ancient Filipino society: the chiefs, nobles, freemen and the slaves. The datu or the chief headed a barangay or community. His family, relatives and elders belonged to the maginoo class group of nobles. The freemen or middle class belong to the timawa or maharlika group. Men who were born free or were freed from slavery composed the lowest social class because they had no property and were under control of their master.

A Filipino could become a slave through birth, inability to pay debts, purchase, punishment for crimes or by being held captive in war. Slaves were of two kinds: aliping namamahay and aliping saguiguilid. The aliping namamahay enjoyed certain privileges such as the right to own property, and the right to work for any master. The aliping saguiguilid did not enjoy any right and freedom at all.

Women occupied a high position in early society. They were regarded as equals of men and were given the same respect conferred upon the men. The mother of the family had the honor of naming the children.

POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

The unit of government was the barangay. The barangay varied in population from 30-100 families. The early barangays were independent of each other. The head was called datu and was the chief executive, legislator, judge and military commander. He made laws, enforced them and judged all cases and trials brought by the villagers. However, he had a council of elders who assisted him in his administration. A person could become a datu through inheritance, wealth, wisdom and bravery.

The Philippines was divided into hundreds of independent barangays. For mutual protection and cooperation, several barangays formed a confederation. The confederation of Madya-as under Datu Sumakwel was formed in Panay during the 13th century.

The barangay had both oral and written laws. Oral laws were the customs and traditions which were handed down through generations. The early Filipino named Lubluban, the great granddaughter of the first Filipino man and woman, was the legendary law-giver.

The written laws were promulgated by the datu and council of elders. A town crier called umalohokan announced the laws to the people. The contents of ancient laws involved family relations, property rights, domestic affairs, inheritance, marriage conflicts, murder and business problems. Punishment for serious crimes was death, slavery or heavy fines. Minor crimes were punished through with exposure to ants, long hours of swimming, whipping or fines.

JUDICIAL SYSTEM

The datu acted as the judge in the barangay. He conducted the trial in full view of his constituents. He conferred judgment on crimes conducted within his barangay.

In a civil case, the chief tried to have the case settled amicably. When no amicable settlement was reached by parties concerned, the parties involved were sworn to obey the judgment of the chief.

The parties concerned presented as many witnesses as they could in order to bolster their defense. When a witness was called to the witness stand, he took an oath that he would tell the truth by repeating the following words:

"May lightning strike me if I am telling a lie. May the heavens or the sun fall upon me if I will tell a lie."

The early Filipinos considered swearing as a sacred act. If an accused person refused to accept the verdict of guilt upon him, the chief could use force to make him obey the law. If one was accused of committing a serious crime, the accused was subjected to trial by ordeal. It was assumed that if a person was guilty, he would not be able to pass the ordeal that would have been given to him. If some persons were suspected of stealing, they were brought to the deepest part of the river and required to jump. Whoever came out first was considered the guilty one.

The elders believed that the gods punished those who were guilty and absolved the innocent ones.

RELIGION

Religion played an important part in the daily life of early Filipinos. They believed in a Supreme Being which was called Bathala by the Tagalogs; Abba by the Cebuanos; Kabunyian by the Ifugaos; and Laon by the Visayans. The Tagalogs believed Bathala was the creator of heaven, Earth and man. They also worshipped lesser gods such as Idianale, goddess of agriculture; Sidapa, Visayan god of death; Apolaki, war god to the Pangasinense; Dallang, Ilocano goddess of beauty; Malyari, Zambal god of strength; Sisiburannen, god of evil among the Visayans; Hayo, god of the sea; and Dian Masalanta, god of love of the Tagalogs.

The early Filipinos were believers of spirits called anitos by the Tagalogs and diwatas by the Visayans. They worshiped objects of nature such as rivers, mountains, the sun, moon and animals because they believed that the spirits of their dead ancestors might be in them.

Part of the elderly Filipinos' religious life was the mag-anito. This was a ceremony or act of sacrifice which they held in honor of their gods. This ritual was led by priests and priestesses called katalonan among the Tagalogs and babaylan among Visayans. They did not have a definite place of worship. Ceremonies were usually done inside the house and activities involved dancing and singing. Fattened pigs were usually the main animals being offered.

BURIAL AND MOURNING CUSTOMS

The early Filipinos observed certain customs connected with burial and mourning. The dead man's body was first cleaned thoroughly, sprayed with perfume and dressed properly. The dead body was preserved inside the house, in a cave or in a place facing the sea. Among the Visayans, they used hardwood in making coffins for their dead. They called these caskets "longon". William Henry Scott, in his book *Barangay* described these longon as "...hewn from a single tree trunk with a lid cut from the same piece, fitted, pegged and caulked airtight with resins." The longon of a datu or a prominent person usually bore intricate decorations which were done by the future occupant himself. Jars were also used as the resting place of early Filipinos.

During the burial, clothes, food, jewelry, household articles, weapons and even slaves were buried with the dead man to accompany him on his journey to the other world. Among the Visayans, this was very important in order to gain acceptance by the relatives who had already preceded them in the land of the dead. The Visayans believed that these relatives await the kalag (soul) on the other side of the land of the dead, which they call Sulad or Saad. During the mourning period, relatives of the dead wore white clothing.

The datu was accorded special mourning rites. It was called larao. The barangays went into a period of mourning upon the death of a datu. All wars and activities stopped temporarily. Singing was prohibited especially on boats returning from the sea. All spears were carried with their heads pointed downward.

MODE OF DRESSING

Filipinos, even in ancient times were very particular about their manner of dressing. Their clothes were made of cotton, silk and plant fibers. The men's clothing consisted of a collarless, short-sleeved jacket called cangan and a strip of cloth wrapped around the waist and between the legs called bahag. Women's clothing consisted of a blouse with big sleeves called baro and a loost skirt called saya or patadyong. A tapis or a piece of colored cloth was wrapped around the waist.

The men also wore a headdress called putong or turban while the women knotted their hair at the back of their heads. They usually wore a salakot or a wide-brimmed hat when walking under the sun or rain.

To further enhance their personal appearance, women adorned themselves with various types of jewelry such as rings, earrings, bracelets, armbands and necklaces made of gold, silver, agates, pearls, beads and other precious stones.

Tattooing the body was popular among the Filipino men. To them, it was a symbol of beauty and bravery. A tattoo is a painting on the human body. A man who killed an enemy tattooed his body to show his bravery. The more men he killed in battle, the more tattoos he had on his body. The tattoos were different shapes and colors. They could be geometric or circular or be of various objects such as birds, flowers, trees, animals or fruits.

FOOD

The early Filipinos had simple taste in food. Their staple food was rice cooked in clay pots, bamboo tubes or banana leaves. Rice was eaten with fish, shrimp, vegetables, fruits, meat of poultry, hogs, cows, ducks, goats, birds, turtles and carabaos; clams, mussels, seaweeds, sugar, root crops and spices. Food was placed on clean banana leaves. Filipinos ate their hands or with wooden spoons and forks. Cleaned coconut shells served as drinking glasses of water and wine.

Drinking wine was a favorite past time of the Filipinos. Tuba, a coconut palm extract was a popular drink. Basi, an Ilocano wine was distilled from sugarcane; pangasi, a Visayan wine extracted from rice; lambanog, a tagalog wine, came from the sap of a young coconut flower while tapuy, an Igorot wine was made from rice.

ARTS

The early Filipinos were artistic people. Nipa hut is an example of Filipino architecture. Filipinos also showed artistry in the building of various types of boats. Tattooing was a form of painting.

Sculpture was a favorite art form. Clay, wood and gold statues have been unearthed by archaeologists. Handles of weapons and tools showed beautiful carvings.

MUSIC

The early Filipinos were music lovers. They had their own musical instruments. These were the kudyapi or Tagalog guitar, the kalaleng or Tinguian nose flute, the gangsa or Igorot gong, the silbay or Ilocano reed flute, the tultogan or Visayan bamboo drum and the kulintang or Muslim xylophone.

The Visayans of Panay had a pasiyak which looked like a pipe and sounds were produced when air was blown inside the pipe.

The tambuli was another popular instrument in ancient Philippines. It was made out of carabao horns. A hole was made on the smaller end of the horn. Sounds were heard when air was blown into the small hole.

The early Filipinos had songs for various occasions. They had love songs, songs for planting, sailing and lullabies. An example of a love song is the kundiman among the Tagalogs. Folk songs were also popular among the early Filipinos.

The sentiments of the early Filipinos were expressed in their dances. Dances like tinikling, maglalatik, itik-itik, singkil or sagayan, kumintang, dandansoy or binalyan depicted various household and occupational activities.

Ref.: http://wiki.answers.com/Q/What_is_ancient_in_Philippine_society