

PRELIMINARY NOTES ON THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE PALA'WAN, PALAWAN ISLAND, PHILIPPINES

YASUSHI KIKUCHI

I. INTRODUCTION

The data on which this essay is based were obtained from among the sub-grouping of the Pala'wan, a mountain people, who live largely within the south portion of Palawan province. The Pala'wan are a large pagan group which is still unstudied. They have been chosen for field work because aspects of their social structure show considerable variation, as does Batangan [Mindoro Mangyan group] social structure, from the usual bilateral kinship organization found elsewhere in the Philippines.

The Pala'wan practice shifting cultivation and belong to the proto-Malaysian grouping. Their culture is very similar to that of the Tagbanwa who are located in central Palawan and are also shifting cultivators.

At present, some of the Pala'wan people are associating with the Christian group at Quezon, who are mostly Bisayan. This town (Quezon) has rapidly developed since 1960. Most of the Christians are farmers, with a few fishermen and owners of *sari-sari* stores. The Pala'wans call all the Christians Bisayan and in return the Christians also call them Pala'wans.

Matri-uxorilocality is the pattern found among the Pala'wan similar to the Tagbanwa and to the Manubo in Mindanao; however, the Pala'wan, even in the same linguistic groupings, employ many variations of the residential type. For example, in the central area there is the "unilocal, square house residence" where each room has its hearth and all relatives live together, and the "tree long house". The Tag'bae group employs a matri-uxorilocal type.

It is the primary purpose of this paper to study the problems relative to Pala'wan social organization with reference to cognatic kinship structure, which is found throughout the Philippines.

II. THE LOCAL GROUP

The Pala'wan are divided into lowlanders and highlanders. The highlanders are located in the higher mountains and still retain their original culture. The lowlanders associate with the Christians physically and culturally. This paper is concerned with the highlanders; the writer worked in the area in December 1966 and in August 1969. This group, the Tag'bae, is near Quezon and has had contact with Christians recently. It is one of the

sublocal groups and is divided into eight(8) residential units: the unit under consideration being the *Pinag-uringan* locality. The people here live in the mountains with an altitude of about 800 meters. This unit consists of five (5) households; households number three(3) and five (5) are compounded households and the others are nuclear families.

As among the Batangan of Mindoro, the primary food staples are the sweet potato and upland rice. This group grows more rice than the Batangan, however, and has comparatively more contact with the Christian world. Some of them are converted Protestants with high school education and are working in municipal offices. The Pala'wan are not as exclusive as the Batangan, but according to my informant, *Kodli*, they still use poison (*dit'a*) on strangers, especially the Christian outsiders. This poison is used on the dart (*boslog*) of the blowgun (*su'blak*).

Although there are widespread similarities between the Pala'wan and the Tagbanwa, the writer is here concerned with two problems unique to the Pala'wan: (1) the emergence of an axial family line in relationship to the family line of the heads (*panglima*) and of the folk-medicine man (*mag'urowan*) of the local group; and (2) the social mechanism for inheriting paraphernalia.

III. KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE SYSTEM

The smallest unit of the residential grouping is the natal household. In the Pinag-uringan area, as noted there are five households, and two of them are compounded. The traditional house in this area usually has no windows. It is square and built independently. The exit is located towards the east (*salatan*), as is the fireplace (*apoy*) in the corner. The roof is covered with cogon thatch and the walls are made of coconut tree fronds. In this area, however, household no. 2 is an imitation of the Christian house and has two windows, a terrace, and a kitchen with the hearth separated from the bedroom.

As noted, in this area there are two compounded households in which more than one family live and share one hearth (household no. 5) or have individual hearth for each nuclear family (household no. 3).

The compounded households are formed on the basis of either consanguineal or affinal relationships. For example, the compounded household no. 3 is composed of a father and his daughter and son-in-law and his granddaughter; that of household no. 5, a father and his unmarried daughters, his married other daughter and son-in-law and his grandchildren. Household may be described as a partial compound household, for a couple lives there with the wife's unmarried sister.

The relationship in the Pala'wan family emphasises the sibling link as do the majority of Filipino families. The father is the head of the family as in all Philippine society, but there is among the sibling group a social order based upon birth. This is shown by the prescribed patterns of inter-

personal relationships. Thus among siblings the eldest always teaches the younger how to behave to the parents, and in the case of girls they are taught how to take care of the household while the parents are away.

If a child does not obey the father's order he may punish him by beating the buttocks with his bare hand. According to Kodli, my informant, they never beat their children with anything else for fear of actually hurting them. If a grown child is very bad, the father talks with him using reason and if the advice is not immediately heeded the father leaves him alone to think things over. This isolation is also a kind of punishment. These people consider a child to be good if he has loyalty to his parents and if he respects older persons.

In this society there is no special secret group for the youth or adults as in most of the other societies in the Philippines.

The basic kinship, social, ritual and economic unit of Pala'wan society is the household which consists of the two-generation elementary family; the father, mother and unmarried children. This is also the characteristic household unit. Kinship is reckoned with both the paternal and the maternal kin, yielding a bilateral type of social structure. Through the head of the household (the father or the eldest male in the family), loyalty is kept to the group or area to which the family head belongs. Since he is the center of the household, all family members keep their loyalty to the old man (*panglima*-judge) of the group directly through him, and in this way all families can maintain peaceful relations and exist in an atmosphere without strain. There is in Pala'wan society not only deep respect for "elders" but a patterned hierarchy of relationships between siblings and group members.

Recently this area has had much contact with the Christian people in Quezon regarding trade and labor. Also, their agricultural fields (*uma*) are becoming limited because Christians are occupying the land as private property [as in other areas in the Philippines]. Normally, the fields are shifted every year. Now the Tag'bae are being pushed to higher land which is not so suitable for *uma*. As a result of the pressure, the household as an economic unit has become more important. At the same time a cash economy is coming into the group. With these phenomena and with association with Christians in general, their economic condition and social atmosphere is changing. They are beginning to seek cash more and more which they get from selling their products or by earning wages. This condition is causing them to compete with each other for wealth. It means that they are tempted to have more material wealth: clothes, shoes, slippers, etc.

As noted earlier, loyalty to the *panglima* keeps them peaceful without conflict, and under him they keep the balance of *uma* activities. Thus, in sharing the *uma*, and in exchanging the labor if some members want wider lands than the others, the other members can complain to the *pang-*

lima directly, or if a member does not return the labor debt, the *panglima* convinces him to do so. The *panglima* here is a sort of social or functional intermediary. Also, the shared *uma* land is being parceled out to members of the group by the *panglima*, and in the distribution he considers the desires of members, and also the number of individuals in the household.

Marriage (rápat)—The Case of Household No. 1

The husband, Ambing, is about twenty years old, and his wife, Mandarina, is also about twenty. They have not yet had a child, and Mandarina's unmarried sister lives with them.

About one year ago, Ambing was still single and looking for a wife. Mandarina was the wife of *Lipa't*. Ambing started to court her and after a month of courting she accepted his advances. *Lipa't* of course, became angry with Ambing and appealed to the *panglima* to settle the case. Ambing's parents did not agree with their behavior and marriage, but Ambing and Mandarina eagerly wanted to wed. The *panglima*, in this case, allowed them to marry without a formal ceremony because it was an immoral marriage, and Ambing paid one hundred-eighty (180) pesos to *Lipa't* and Mandarina had to leave her son to *Lipa't*.

This is an unusual case. Usually parental arrangement is employed, or that of free choice. In the case of marriage, the *panglima* is a middle man, like a counsellor. At the ceremony he will part a new couple's hair which means "swearing a union," and all relatives and friends of both sides will drink rice wine (*ta'pa'd*).

Divorce (butas)

Generally, a divorce will occur when either a husband or wife is immoral. In this case if their parents are still alive, they need the agreement to divorce from their parents.

The Case of Household No. 2

Guatu' took the wife of *Bangul*. According to my informant, *Bangul's* wife actually had started to court *Guatu'* and as a result they became close. In this case the *panglima* settled the problem. Finally the two men agreed to exchange their wives, and *Guatu'* paid ninety (90) pesos to his first wife as a penalty. *Bangul's* wife had to leave her two children because of her immortality, and *Guatu's* wife got married to *Bangul*, being with two children. After the second marriage, *Guatu'* still has the obligation to support his two children.

Adopted Child (anak)

If a couple has no child, they usually adopt one. But they adopt a child only from among their relatives, either from the husband's or wife's side, and not from others. Their reason for this is that if they adopt a child from

those who are not relatives, they may lose the child when there is a quarrel. When they adopt a child, they pay a certain amount to the actual parents. They pay forty pesos for a male and eighty pesos for a female in general, because of matri-uxorilocality. When they adopt a girl, their adopted daughter's husband will come to live with them and help them, so a girl is more valuable than a boy.

Incest Taboo

They strictly observe a taboo against marriage through the second cousin relationship, and also the nephew, niece, uncle and aunt. Recently they have relaxed the prohibition on second-cousin marriage due to the agreement of all *panglimas* and the parents of the parties concerned.

IV. RITUAL KINSHIP—BLOOD BROTHERHOOD PACT (VILA-VILA)

According to E.E. Evans-Pritchard, "blood brotherhood is a pact or alliance formed between persons by a ritual act in which each swallows the blood of the other."

We can consider, generally, that the blood pact is a ritual extension of kinship—the duties and obligations are those of a "brother-in-law which provides security for traders and travellers who are always fearful of poisoning" (Dr. R.B. Fox).

Blood is often exchanged solely for trading purposes and social security. When a man goes to a place outside his own area, his "blood brother" there, if he had one in the vicinity, is responsible for his safety. Here the blood pact takes the place of blood relationships as the traveller's passport.

The Pala'wan call a blood brother, *vila-vila*. The formal blood pact is always with a drink-fest. For instance, when two men make their blood pact they will drink Pala'wan native wine (*tinapey*) at the same time with the witnesses consisting of two or three *panglima* from their respective *sitios* (area division), and after that they may exchange either their clothes or pants. The drinking of *tinapey* will go on until morning. After this ceremony they will call each other *vi'la*, or *si vila*.

The fundamental basis of kinship is a sentiment expressing and unifying itself in social obligations but the fundamental basis of blood-brotherhood is a contract. The writer believes that obligations towards blood brotherhood are more directly binding than a man's obligations towards his actual brother because he is bound to his blood brother not just because he has drunk his *vi'la's* blood but because his blood brother's blood is a concrete magical substance impregnated with a spell embodying a "conditional curse."*

* If the terms of the agreement are not followed the blood brother will suffer illness, death, or some other misfortunes.

V. RULE OF RESIDENCE AND PARTITION OF FAMILIES

Recently the Tag'bae Pala'wan have not been changing their residential place. They almost entirely settle in one place for residence. Even though a death occurs in the settlement they do not transfer to another place as do the Batangan in Mindoro.

According to their genealogy it is obvious that they employ the matri-uxorilocal pattern. This matri-uxorilocality is followed strictly. A new couple should stay at the wife's parents' house or in the area of the wife's parents.

As far as the writer knows, in cognatic society the conjugal ties are very tenuous. This means that the unit composed of a husband and wife is characteristically unstable. For example, if the husband of a man's sister dies, the brother should take care of his sister's family; or if his brother dies and his brother's wife has no male relatives he should take care of her family. In Pala'wan society (as in other Philippine societies) the birth of a child activates a four-generation bilateral kinship structure and strengthens the family ties. This kinship structure centers on the child, for the child is an equal blood relation of both his mother's and his father's relatives, while his parents stand in a relatively delicate affinal relationship to each other's relatives. In short, the birth of a child formalizes the bilateral family.

As in the cases of households nos. 1 and 2, the couple should stay in the group area of the wife even after the wife's parents die. If a husband wants to live or to cultivate land in any other place, he needs the permission of his parents-in-law, or of his wife. All the members of this area, through their spouses are affiliated with each other either consanguineally or affinally.

VI. KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY

The Pala'wan kinship system is fundamentally connected with the personal kindred and the family including affines, as in the Batangan system (Muratake and Kikuchi, 1968).

Among sub-local groups there is variation in kinship terms but principally all Pala'wan kinship systems are organized bilaterally and generationally, behavior and obligations towards relatives extending outward from Ego and his siblings, without definite range. The terminology employed is similar to the Batangan system and fits into the Eskimo type, as noted, discussed by Spier (1925) and Murdock (1949).

In the grandparental generation, the term *opo* is used for the parents of both father and mother without a sex distinction.* *Opo* is extended generationally to siblings and cousins of grandparents, and at the same time to old persons in general as a title of respect.

* Among the Batangan a sex distinction is employed, *fufuama* (male) and *fufuina* (female).

In the parental generation the terms *ama* (father) and *ina* (mother) are used. The parents' brothers and sisters are distinguished from them by separate terms; *maman* (uncle) and *minan* (aunt). Furthermore, these latter terms are extended to the parents' cousins and their spouses.

In Ego's generation there are several terms distinguishing siblings by birth order: *wo'ka* for siblings older than Ego, and *ari* for siblings younger.* All of the sibling terms are used without regard to sex. Cousins are classed together with one term, *og'sa*, which is used for both sexes. This term is also used for both parallel and cross cousins and is extended out because in social interaction there is the need for distinguishing cousins.

In the first descending generation the term for child is *yogang*, being used by parents for their own children. The term used for all other children of this generation is *anak* which is extended out as far as social interaction makes it necessary. None of the terms in this generation is distinguished by sex.

In the second descending generation the term for grandchild is *opo*, and as in the first descending generation there is no sex distinction.

In affinal relationship terms, the mother- and the father-in-law are both called *pa:ngiganan*.

The term for Ego's sister's spouse as well as his spouse's sister is *i'pag*. The term for Ego's brother's spouse as well as his spouse's brother's spouse is *bayaw* while the term for his spouse's brother and her brother-in-law is the same, *biras*.

The term for child-in-law is *nampil* for both sexes.

In daily life among relatives by marriage consanguineal terms are used vocatively.

The term for "family" is *sankakubuwān* but this can also include everyone in one house, or the "house-mate." The Tag'bae Pala'wan distinguish a vertical descent line, *turoinopo*, and a horizontal relatedness, *mag'og'sa*, similar to the Tagalog *lahi* (vertical) and *lipi* (horizontal). However, there is a general term for all relatives, ascendants and descendants, which is *kakanpugan*, and similar to the Tagalog, *angkan*. The term for Ego's ascendants is *kagurang-gurangan* (male and female) and the term includes dead relatives; the term for Ego's descendants is *kamangayagangan* which does not include sick relatives for they "might die" and become ascendants.

Ego recognizes a vertical descent line on both his father's and mother's side, which means that he has two *turoinopo*. A very important aspect of Ego's recognition of his *kakanpugan* and his *kamangayagangan* is that he recognizes only consanguineal kinsmen as belonging to the groups.

Among Pala'wan groups there is variation in kinship terminology—for instance, the *Bungalun* group makes a distinction in the term of cousin: first cousin, *agsa'*, second cousin, *adua'*, third cousin, *uri'danan*. They also

* Among the Batangan, there are individual terms from first-born to fourth-born, with all siblings from the fifth-born being called by a collective term.

distinguish sex among spouses, the wife calls her husband *waló*, and the husband calls his wife, *oi'*. Among offspring sex is distinguished as for male child, *oten*, and female child, *aendaen*.

VII. INHERITANCE AND SUCCESSION; CEREMONY

The Tag'bae Pala'wans do not have as much property as do the Batangans, but they have a few items which we can consider as their property. These are jars, gongs, pigs, houses, and knowledge of agriculture, hunting and healing. They have no land in the sense of individual ownership but lands which they utilize and work on as a social group; these areas are used from generation to generation which means that all descendants who live in these areas have the potential right to cultivate the land there (Robin Fox, 1967).

Jars and Gongs

This area has only one jar (*siburan*) and no gong (*agong*). According to the informant, these items are not possessed by every family.

The Case of Household No. 1

This household possesses one *siburan*, which belongs to the wife, Mandarina. It came from her dead parents, and according to her, her mother got it from Mandarina's grandmother. The owner's right to the *siburan* belongs to Mandarina, even now that she is married to Ambing. When she divorced her former husband, he could not do anything regarding her *siburan*.

In the Tag'bae group, the *siburan* and *agong* are used for their ritual ceremony, especially for the drink-fest, as among the Tagbanwa (Robert Fox, 1954). Principally, these are inherited by all siblings, but actually it is usually the females who inherit them because of matri-uxorilocality. Since all males leave their families after marriage, naturally the female will take care of the properties, and she possesses the owner's right. All her brothers, however, possess the potential right. This means that the properties can be alternated among siblings who want to use them.

An alternative case is that when the owner (mother, wife, sister or daughter) dies, the properties may be buried with her. Or occasionally, the properties will be sold and the cash will be divided equally. The house also belongs automatically to the female sibling.

In the case of only one son, he can inherit everything and the patri-virilocal pattern is employed.

Agricultural and Hunting Knowledge

Usually agricultural knowledge is learned by all male and female children, but only male children learn about hunting—either from their

fathers or from the old men in the community. The knowledge concerning the use of the blow gun is also taught only to male children and in the same manner.

Folk-medicine Man (*mag'urowan*)

There is no medicine man in the Pinag-uringan area, but in the nearby *Silidinloman* area lives a *mag-urowan* who is a sixty-year-old man. According to his memory, his father and grandfather were also *mag-urowan*.

He, *A'gka*, has no child; therefore as his successor he adopted a male child from his wife's sister's son, *Basul*. As previously noted, they usually prefer to adopt a girl, but in the case of *A'gka*, he adopted a male child. This adoption makes evident the fact that the title of the folk-medicine man is inherited strictly by the male line. The title is important not only to himself but to his family.

In case he has only a daughter, his son-in-law (the daughter's husband) can be a successor. In *A'gka's* family, the adopted son should stay in the parent's house—patrilocality. At the same time, the property inheritance is in accordance with the practice followed in the case of only one male child.

Midwife (*mongonp'ot*)

The *mongonp'ot* or midwife is a female. In the Tag'bae group, there is a *mongonp'ot* named *Singsing* who lives in the *Pinagbrayan* area. According to *Singsing*, her mother was also a *mongonp'ot*. She has three daughters, and the eldest daughter will be the formal successor but the other daughters are potential successors.

During childbirth, the pregnant woman's husband is usually an assistant, (*maninik'gu*). He may actually stay with her or stay outside, and while the wife is delivering he may attend to the discharge that comes out of the birth canal and falls through the slats in the flooring, covering it with banana leaves and disposing of it in the forest. Usually, if the *mongonp'ot* has a sister or daughter, she will be an assistant, trained by the *mongonp'ot* herself. From this information the writer considers the title of *mongonp'ot* to be inherited by the female line.

Life Ceremonies

(a) Birth (*kaul*)

When a baby is born, the parents hold a ceremony as soon as possible, especially in the case of a first child. The family which had the child will invite all relatives and friends and feed them as much as they can afford. The invited people will bring gifts in the form of food, such as rice, chicken or pig.

(b) Menstruation (*pa'gdugwan*)

This is the most important ceremony for a girl. When a daughter begins her menstruation, the parents will announce the fact to the group "now we will have the celebration which is connected with the first menstruation of our daughter."

There is no special food nor prohibited food. All people in the group may attend the affair with some gifts, usually in the form of food. There are no special gifts. This is a sort of initiation.

(c) Marriage (*rápat*) (see Section III)(d) Funeral Ceremony (*kumot*)

When a person dies, the old people in the group will sing poems for twenty-four hours, which mean (freely translated) "I call you today to come, to come. Here is the food that I have prepared for you until the next harvest. I promise to pray for your life." This poem will also be chanted for the harvest ceremony (*samaya*) with rice wine being also used. After the period of singing or chanting is over, all men will bury the dead person with his personal items (those he used during his life), and the women will assist except for the burial itself.

They believe that a dead person will become a *kuludua*—a spirit. They do not appear to be afraid of death and the *kuludua*, as evidenced by the fact that they do not change residence as do other Pala'wan groups.

VIII. SUMMARY

In the Philippines, there is generally speaking, no corporative group-community. As Kroeber noted (1919), the people live in scattered villages which are found in both the upland rice cultivating areas and the wet rice cultivating areas.

In the Tag'bae group there is a sort of "head man" titled, *panglima*. The eldest man among them is often the *panglima*, and in this area, household no. 3 is the residence of the *panglima*, *Kiki*. In considering the function of the *panglima*, the writer considers the most important one to be that of consultation during important life problems. For example, recently their barter activities are increasing remarkably with the Christians. Sometimes they have no agreement in bartering and in this case *Kiki* will be a middle man; he is also the one who will appear to the municipal court in situations where the group cannot handle the problem themselves. As noted before, regarding marriage, divorce or quarrelling, *Kiki* will be consulted or will advise.

Problems are becoming more complicated than before because there are not only private but also social ones between the Pala'wan and the Christians. This is why the role of *panglima* *Kiki* is becoming an important

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