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# THE SPANISH 'IMPACT' ON THE PHILIPPINES, 1565-1770\*

BY

M. N. PEARSON

Historians of the colonial period of Southeast Asian history have sometimes assumed that the arrival of the Europeans marks a new 'period' in the history of their area. In its most simplified form this leads to a division of Southeast Asian history into 'pre-European' and 'colonial'. Such a division may be justified with reference to the wielding of authority at the upper-most level, for the Sultans of Java and Malaya, and the King of Burma, *were* replaced by Europeans. But this was not usually the case at the subordinate level. Local leaders often retained the substance of their power, although they were now, at least in theory, subordinate to a European rather than an indigenous ruler. The 'impact of the West' on institutions and on the locus of effective local power should not be over-estimated. Similarly, in the area of economic organization and economic change, a greatly neglected area of Southeast Asian historiography, it can be argued that the arrival of the Europeans did not lead to immediate far-reaching changes.

This paper considers this claim with reference to the Philippines. It attempts to describe changes in local level authority relationships, and in the relation of the Filipinos to their environment. It deals only with that part of the Philippines which was under Spanish rule in the two centuries after 1575—the date by when the Spanish were firmly in control of the maritime provinces of the northern and central parts of the archipelago. Except for purposes of contrast, developments after about 1770 will not be considered.

The first aspect of the Spanish impact to be considered concerns authority relationships. The only pre-Spanish unit of society was the

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\* I wish to thank Professor David Joel Steinberg of the University of Michigan for his valuable comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

*barangay* <sup>1)</sup>). This was based on kinship and mutual dependence, and usually consisted of less than one hundred families. Typically its members made up four groups. They were the small *datu* class, the so-called nobles, the free men, and at the bottom the dependents. The latter also were often linked to their superiors not only by their dependent status but also by blood ties <sup>2)</sup>). The strength of this kinship tie was well seen in the case of an injury inflicted by one member of a *barangay* on an outsider. The injured party's first claim was against the actual offender, but ultimately all the offender's kin were responsible in proportion to their degree of relationship <sup>3)</sup>).

Within the *barangay* political and social dominance was exercised by the *datu*. Basically his position rested on his ability to organize the labour force of the *barangay* <sup>4)</sup>). His status was buttressed by several social factors. The hereditary nature of the *datu's* position reinforced his authority. Furthermore, the *datu* was the *barangay's* arbiter over matters of customary law. A *datu* maintained his status and succoured his inferiors by sharing some of his wealth, particularly in the form of the ritual feasts in which meat and rice wine figured largely <sup>5)</sup>).

The Spanish conquest influenced the existing authority relationship in the Philippines in that an alien power imposed a common sovereignty (and religion) over the area of the Philippines with which we are concerned. In practice, both political and religious matters were usually looked after by the same person in the provinces. This was the parish priest, who frequently was the only Spaniard permanently resident in a *pueblo*, the main unit of local government. Broad policy was now deter-

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1) In the sixteenth century, as earlier, Islam was expanding in the Philippines from its dissemination centres to the South. It was, however, firmly established only in the Southern Philippines, in the islands which the Spanish never controlled. Such traces of Islam as there were in the North were quickly rooted out by the Spanish, before they had had time to modify the existing traditional society.

2) J. L. Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines*, Madison, 1959, p. 22.

3) A. L. Kroeber, *Peoples of the Philippines*, New York, 1928, p. 159.

4) Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 121; T. R. McHale, 'An Econecological Approach to Economic Development : The Philippines.', Ph. D. thesis, Harvard University, 1959, pp. 31-32, 49.

5) Robert Fox, 'Pre-Spanish Influence in Filipino Culture.', n. p., n. d., p. 5.

mined by the Spanish in Manila and Madrid. Decisions were transmitted to the priests, who passed them on to the native officials. It was this last group which actually put the Spanish decisions into effect at the local level. They no longer determined much policy but they continued to administer it<sup>1</sup>). Further, they continued to administer policy in an area of about the same size as that which they had ruled in pre-Spanish times.

The Spanish retained the basic structure of the *barangay*, and it was transformed into the smallest unit of local government. The *datu* changed his title to *cabeza de barangay*, but little else about his position altered. Spain indeed erected 'the superstructure of her political regime upon the foundations of already deeprooted institutions.'<sup>2</sup>) Care was taken to make Spanish rule attractive to the *cabezas*. A law of the *Recopilacion* soon after the conquest said that :

It is not just that the members of the former ruling class among the Indios in Filipinas should be in worse state after having converted [than before]; on the contrary, they should be accorded such treatment as will make them happy, or incline them to loyalty, in order that, to the spiritual blessings that God has extended to them . . . shall be added temporal benefits, and so that they will live agreeably and conveniently. To this end we order the governors of those islands to treat them well, and entrust them in our name with the government of the Indios of whom they were formerly lords.

In all else the governors shall see that their services are availed of justly, giving them the same recognition according to the form that prevailed in the days of their heathenism, provided that this shall be without prejudice to the tributes which they owe to us, nor to those which belong to the encomenderos.<sup>3</sup>)

Among the *cabeza's* duties were the supervision of the *polo* (forced labour) and *vandala* (compulsory purchase) systems, and the collection of the tribute money, which he forwarded to the provincial capital. This latter task became more important as the number of private *encomiendas* decreased<sup>4</sup>). Other *principales* (the Filipino upper class), not necessarily the *cabezas*, helped the local priest. They acted as the *fiscal*,

1) Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

2) O. D. Corpuz, *The Bureaucracy in the Philippines*, Manila, 1957, p. 106.

3) Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 107.

4) Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 117. For *polo* and *vandala* see below pp. 180 f; for *encomiendas* see 179 f.

supplied the bearers and oarsmen needed when the priest travelled, assigned young men to do odd jobs for the parish, and collected and managed the funds for the community chest from which parish and public improvements were financed <sup>1</sup>).

The main 'official' privilege which the *cabeza* got in return was exemption from *polo* and tribute <sup>2</sup>). His official position in the Spanish administrative hierarchy changed little over the years. The hereditary basis of his office was gradually weakened, as a result of the failure of some *cabezas* to provide heirs, and the bad records of others which led to loss of office <sup>3</sup>). In 1786 the position was made elective <sup>4</sup>), but a description of a *cabeza's* duties as late as 1842 shows that the nature of his position had changed very little since the early seventeenth century <sup>5</sup>).

The main unit of local government was the *pueblo*, which consisted of a number of *visitas* or *barríos* and a principal settlement, the *cabecera*, in which the parish church was situated. The chief magistrate of the *pueblo* was the *gobernadorcillo*, who tried petty cases in his area, usually according to the Philippine customary law <sup>6</sup>). At first all adult males in a *pueblo* chose three candidates for the position, and a Crown representative selected one of these three to be the *gobernadorcillo*. The method of election became more oligarchic in the second half of the seventeenth century—at one typical election the voters were the six *cabezas de barangay*, six ex-*gobernadorcillos*, and the incumbent *goberanadorcillo* <sup>7</sup>). Thus the *principalia* class formed a tight little oligarchy within the *pueblo*. Among them were the *cabezas*; they elected the *gobernadorcillo* from their members; and the *gobernadorcillo* in return appointed the local officials from his fellow *principales*.

1) H. de la Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines* 1581-1768, Cambridge, Mass., 1961, p. 533.

2) Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

3) Corpuz, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

4) Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

5) E. H. Blair and J. A. Robertson, *The Philippine Islands* 1493-1803, 55 vols., Cleveland, 1903-1909, XVII, 325. This invaluable collection of primary source materials, on which most of this paper is based, will be cited hereafter as BR.

6) D. G. E. Hall, *A History of Southeast Asia*, London, 1964, pp. 231-2; Phelan, *op. cit.*, pp. 124-5.

7) Corpuz, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

The position of this class ultimately derived from the Spanish rulers, but the *cabezas*' position in the Spanish administrative hierarchy was reinforced by their retention of their pre-Spanish economic dominance within Philippine society. And conversely, this economic position depended partly on their political position, for this gave them great opportunities for legal and illegal enrichment. Sometimes they would impose unauthorized taxes on their people, and keep the proceeds for themselves. Other abuses of their official positions included keeping for themselves the wages of rowers or porters hired by the Spanish, and allowing people to bribe them to secure exemption from *polo* and other Spanish impositions <sup>1</sup>). Some Spanish, such as one in 1784, complained of the airs these government officials put on, and the oppressions to which they subjected their people :

there are . . . many others in whom sloth and idleness reign—for instance, many chiefs and their sons, and the heads of *barangay*; and generally those who have exercised the office of magistrate (who, on account of having served in these employments, afterwards refuse through a sort of vanity and pride to go back to field work), all these caring only to subjugate the common people by compelling them to work without pay in their fields, and trying to exempt themselves from the common labour, and from the other burdens to which those who pay tribute are subject.<sup>2</sup>)

Apart from these illegal exactions deriving from his official position, the *principale*'s economic dominance was based on his traditional control of labour. In this matter his position did not change greatly from what it had been before the Spanish arrived, for the old sharecropper and debt peon relationships continued, and the *datu*, now become the *principale*, continued to control more of these dependents than any other member of the *barangay*. (For labour systems see pp. 178-183)

It was fatally easy for a Filipino to get into debt. It could be incurred from having to buy animals for sacrifice to cure an illness, or the necessities for the obligatory feast after a death in the family, or simply food. In most cases twice the amount of the debt had to be repaid at harvest time, and the debt doubled each year it was not paid <sup>3</sup>). A son inherited

1) BR, XXVIII, 248-52.

2) *Ibid.*, LII, 293-4.

3) Kroeber, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

his father's debts and dependent status. Early Spanish opposition to the debt peonage system was moderated, during the Dutch Wars in the first half of the seventeenth century, by military necessity—the existing system facilitated the easy extraction by the Spanish of surplus labour and goods, and such easy extraction was vital to the continuance of their rule. Indeed, debt peonage probably increased during the Dutch Wars, for some Filipinos borrowed to meet their *vandala* demands or to buy exemption from *polo* <sup>1)</sup>.

After the Dutch Wars the Spanish had some success in ending the dependent system. It was, indeed, legislated out of existence between 1679 and 1692, but while the lowest of the two groups of dependents did disappear at this time, sharecropping based on debt peonage continued to be the main labour system. During the eighteenth century a change in detail occurred, in that the *principales* often became partners with the landless natives. The latter cultivated the former's land, and the harvest was shared. The tenant usually needed a loan, at a high rate of interest, and so his dependent status was increased <sup>2)</sup>. As late as 1939 only 49.2% of all Filipino farmers owned the land they tilled, while 15.6% owned a part of the land. Over one-third were tenants, nearly all of whom had to share their crops with the landlord <sup>3)</sup>.

One other factor helped the *principale* to maintain his position—the preservation of pre-Spanish kinship ties within Filipino society. Even today kinship is pervasive in all Philippine activities. Thus employment practices favour a kinsman of a person already employed <sup>4)</sup>. Catholicism in the Philippines has led to the sanctification of established social or class relationships, and emphasized and strengthened the traditional kinship ties <sup>5)</sup>. Generational respect is still strong, so that family heads and older people still often make the important decisions <sup>6)</sup>.

There were some disadvantages attached to the *principale's* official

1) Phelan, *op. cit.*, pp. 115, 119.

2) *Ibid.*, pp. 115-116.

3) K. J. Pelzer, *Pioneer Settlement in the Asiatic Tropics*, New York, 1948, p. 86.

4) McHale, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

5) *Ibid.*, pp. 152, 155.

6) Fox, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

position, which go a little way towards explaining his exploitation of his fellow Filipinos. If the *cabeza* did not meet the annual tribute total as fixed by the Spanish, he was liable to a fine. Some *gobernadorcillos* were imprisoned for this offence, and some were left in prison until they died. In such cases the body was not released until the relatives found a security for the unpaid tribute and other debts <sup>1)</sup>. The *principale* was expected to provide food and wine on ceremonial occasions <sup>2)</sup>. The *gobernadorcillo* was paid two pesos a month, and got one-half of one percent of the tribute collection. In return, he had to have the tribute and other tax money sent to the treasury in the provincial capital, pay the local police, feed the local prisoners, maintain the jail and provide materials for new bridges in his district <sup>3)</sup>. Despite all these obligations, it seems that the *principale* in an official position was able to make enough money from it to recoup his expenses and have a little left over. The proof of this lies in the fact that the *principales* in general were well content with the Spanish government. It was only under extreme stress that they deserted and led a revolt. Of the revolts which did occur, all those to the end of the seventeenth century at least resulted from such stress, and were led by a *principale* <sup>4)</sup>.

Thus in the sixteenth century the northern Philippines were for the first time unified under one political authority, and this authority was centered on the Spanish at Manila. Yet this change, which superficially marks a turning-point in Philippine history, had little impact at the local level. To the ordinary Filipino the man in authority was still the *datu*, now called *cabeza*; the name had changed, but the man and his power had not. True, the *cabeza* now sometimes acted as the agent of the new supreme power. This meant that the traditional bases of his authority were buttressed by his official position in the new system. The Spanish moved into the Philippines and created a top level of authority, which they occupied, but beneath this the existing pattern continued.

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1) BR, XLIV, 133.

2) Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

3) Corpuz, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-113.

4) Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

The second aspect of the Spanish impact to be considered is the adaptation of the Filipino to his economic environment, especially as regards land and labour. A brief description of the pre-Spanish Philippine economy is needed before these two factors are discussed in detail. At the time of the arrival of the Spanish the Philippine economy was at the subsistence level and was localized in the *barangay* communities. The production base was rice agriculture, with a heavy secondary dependence on fishing. Production and distribution within the settlement were controlled by kinship, social status and religious rituals<sup>1</sup>). Religious functionaries interpreted omens and dreams, and so discovered how the deities which controlled specific aspects of human endeavour were disposed. Many aspects of economic and non-economic life were influenced by the results of these interpretations—marrying, fighting, planting, hunting, travelling<sup>2</sup>). There was little territorial specialization in economic activity, and so little external trade. What little there was, especially to South China and Malacca, was in Chinese hands. The Filipinos had made only a start in the use of metals—iron, bronze and brass were used locally, but the metals were imported. Gold was the only metal discovered and mined by the Filipinos in the archipelago<sup>3</sup>). The wheel was not known, so pottery was crude, and the water buffalo was used mainly for sacrifices. There were no permanent stone structures. Cotton and manila hemp were produced locally and used for making clothing and cordage<sup>4</sup>).

Pre-Spanish agriculture in large areas of the Philippines was apparently based on a form of shifting cultivation of dry rice—the farmers lived in a fairly permanent village, but rotated the piece of ground they cultivated<sup>5</sup>). Depleted land was abandoned for a period of fallow, result-

1) McHale, *op. cit.*, p. 29. The main sources for the pre-Spanish economy are the works already cited by Phelan, Fox and Kroeber, for changes under the Spanish, those by Phelan and McHale. All four are largely based on Blair and Robertson, *op. cit.*

2) Fox, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-9.

3) Kroeber, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-22.

4) *Ibid.*, pp. 84, 97; McHale, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31.

5) See Harold C. Conklin, *Hanunoo Agriculture*, Rome, 1957, for a complete typology of shifting cultivation systems.

ing in secondary forest growth <sup>1</sup>). In many other lowland areas which came under Spanish control wet-rice cultivation was central, with diked *padis* and rudimentary irrigation. In either case, rice cultivation was completely dominant in the subsistence economy; it is notable that there was a ceremony for nearly every stage in the rice culture, although other crops were not so favoured. Other sources of food were gabi, yams, bananas, bamboos and coconuts, but there was no permanent orchard culture. The plough was not known; human labour only was used, and, the usual tool was the dibble stick. Apart from the water buffalo, pigs, fowls and dogs were domesticated. There was no stock herding <sup>2</sup>). The dependence on rice and fishing, and the primitive methods of work, meant that the population lived close to its fields or rivers, in small scattered communities. The land was owned communally, the 'titles' being vested in the *barangay*.

This pattern of land use was not much altered by the Spanish, even though they introduced the idea of individual land ownership. Large-scale Spanish alienation of the land from the Filipinos did not follow, because the ownership was assumed by the *datus*, who took the titles to the land their subordinates cultivated. Preconquest usufruct of land became titles held in fee simple. Land not owned either communally or individually at the time of the conquest was part of the royal domain, but it could be assigned to the *datus* as real estate <sup>3</sup>).

Little land was taken by lay Spaniards, mainly because they did not want it, although the religious orders acquired some large estates <sup>4</sup>). One revolt in 1739 was a result of the exactions of the Jesuits. All the land surrounding a certain village was owned by one ecclesiastic, and the Filipinos had to pay him rent not only for the fields they cultivated, but also for the land their houses stood on <sup>5</sup>). Such revolts were the less frequent because a large majority of the land under cultivation was retained by the Filipinos.

1) E. H. G. Dobby, *Southeast Asia*, London, 1954, p. 347; Pelzer, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

2) Fox, *op. cit.*, pp. 3, 7; Kroeber, *op. cit.*, p. 86; McHale, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

3) Phelan, *op. cit.*, pp. 117-118.

4) Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

5) BR, XL.VIII, 141-2.

Agricultural methods were little changed by the Spanish. A description of agricultural practices in the Visayas in the early seventeenth century shows that the Spanish had introduced no basic changes in the pre-conquest pattern by this time at least <sup>1)</sup>. According to Fox, even today many tools and techniques used in the Philippines predate the Spanish conquest, and are linked with traditional values. Much rural agriculture is still subsistence <sup>2)</sup>. The Spanish did introduce new techniques, such as the use of iron tools and of the buffalo for ploughing. Some new crops were introduced, including maize, the sweet potato, tobacco and cassava but rice remained dominant. Sheep, goats, oxen, donkeys, horses and cattle were all imported. Some of the Orders tried to establish large cattle estates, usually with breeds imported from China and Japan, but the local climate and grass militated against the development of an extensive pastoral economy in the Philippines <sup>3)</sup>. Cotton production seems to have increased slightly early in the seventeenth century <sup>4)</sup>. The Chinese were more skillful agricultural labourers than were the Filipinos, and they were often used by the Jesuits on their estates in preference to the natives. But most Chinese immigrants remained in Manila, where they monopolised the retail and craft trades <sup>5)</sup>.

The absence of any basic agricultural change is reflected in the failure of the ecclesiastical attempt at resettlement. Conversion would be facilitated, it was thought, if the native population could be 'reduced' or congregated, for then it would be under the constant supervision of the parish priest. But the agricultural pattern under the Spanish, being similar to the pre-Spanish one, still required that the natives live near their work. A Leyte Jesuit admitted as much as early as 1603. He pointed out that the Filipinos had to live in the country near their food sources, to engage in hunting and fishing, to stop their crops from becoming overgrown and to protect them from birds, rats, thieves and pigs <sup>6)</sup>.

1) de la Costa, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

2) Fox, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

3) Kroeber, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94; McHale, *op. cit.*, p. 34; Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

4) BR, XI, 106.

5) Phelan, *op. cit.*, pp. 11, 109.

6) de la Costa, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

They were also kept close to their land by sentimental ties, for then as now, land was important to self-identification. It was not simply a piece of property. The Filipinos' part was closely tied to it, and it was a basic source of power and prestige<sup>1</sup>). Thus by the end of the seventeenth century there were still less than twenty villages in the archipelago with over 2,000 people<sup>2</sup>). The Spanish-inspired settlement pattern of *sitio—barrio—cabecera* was not essentially different from the pre-Spanish pattern.

Yet, the Spanish conquest was not accomplished without some initial dislocation. There was an acute rice shortage during the 1570s and early 1580s as a result of the arrival of two non-productive groups—the Chinese<sup>3</sup>), and the Spanish and their households of slaves and servants. In 1584 the price was six times that of 1580, but soon afterwards production expanded to meet the new demand<sup>4</sup>). Usually the increase in production was skimmed off by the Spanish, and the Filipinos got little in return. There was thus no feed-back effect, and so little disruption of the native economy.

This continuity also stemmed from the lack of interest of the Spanish lay population in the Philippine countryside. The comparative failure of the Spanish attempts at stock-rearing have already been mentioned. More important was the disappointment of the early Spanish hopes of finding valuable gold, copper and silver mines in the archipelago. According to the early Spanish accounts, nearly every Filipino wore some sort of gold ornament, and they had high hopes of finding precious metals<sup>5</sup>). These expectations were not realized, although the Philippines were actually fairly rich in some minerals. The failure meant that the lay Spanish gathered in Manila and made such a pleasant living from the galleon trade that they had no incentive to settle in the pro-

1) Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 44; McHale, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

2) Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

3) There had been a few Chinese trading with the Philippines before the Spanish conquest, but their numbers increased greatly once Spanish rule was established, and especially after the galleon trade started.

4) de la Costa, *op. cit.*, p. 18; Phelan, *op. cit.*, pp. 11-12.

5) BR, XVI, 101-103; de la Costa, *op. cit.*, pp. 20, 89.

vinces<sup>1</sup>). Manila was an entrepôt port for China goods, the demand for which came from Mexico. The economic interests of the Spanish were thus concentrated almost wholly in Manila, while those of the Filipinos were in the countryside. Manila became a 'foreign' city, an enclave cut off socially and economically from the rest of the archipelago.

The galleon trade pattern began late in the sixteenth century, and continued until the nineteenth. In accordance with mercantilist thought, the trade was closely regulated and restricted from Madrid. For most of the time there was only one galleon a year, which carried Chinese silks and ceramics to Mexico, and brought back silver. Virtually no products of the Philippines were exported—agricultural and forest products could not compete for the scarce galleon space<sup>2</sup>). Not that this trade pattern was without its critics. One Spaniard pointed out that the Spanish in Manila had to work for only three months each year, and added:

This trade and commerce is so great and profitable and easy to control . . . that the Spaniards do not apply themselves to, or engage in, any other industry. Consequently, there is no husbandry or field-labour worthy of consideration. Neither do the Spaniards work the gold mines and the placers, which are numerous. They do not engage in many other industries that they could turn to with great profit, if the Chinese trade should fail them. That trade has been very hurtful and prejudicial in this respect, as well as for the occupations and farm industries in which the natives used to engage. Now the latter are abandoning and forgetting these labours. Besides, there is the great harm and loss resulting from the immense amounts of silver that passes annually by this way into the possession of infidels, which can never, by any way, return to the possession of the Spaniards.<sup>3</sup>)

The Filipinos also did not develop local goods for export. Three reasons for this can be suggested. First was the trade pattern just mentioned, which provided no opportunities for the export of bulky local goods. Yet the Filipinos should not be seen as wanting to export local goods, but being prevented by narrow Spanish trade theories. Thus the second reason was the Filipino attitude towards work and worldly success. Generally, Hispanization reinforced pre-Spanish fatalism. One ele-

1) For the galleon trade see W. L. Schurz, *The Manila Galleon*, New York, 1959, *passim*, and for Spanish life in Manila, *ibid.*, pp. 34-39.

2) McHale, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-43.

3) BR, XVI, 187; see also *ibid.*, XLVII, 243-4.

ment of Catholicism accepted by the Filipinos was a belief in miracles, a belief which Phelan describes as 'boundless and virtually uncontrollable<sup>1)</sup>. Miracles were the normal thing, to be expected, asked for, and believed. Such a belief did not provide the Filipinos with any challenge to control nature, or any notion of self-discipline. There was no idea that success and worth should be equated; prayer for a miracle was substituted for hard work. There was little motivation towards individual acquisition of money. Indeed, frugality and stinginess were equated, and, like many so-called 'primitive' peoples, the Filipinos did not see hard work as a virtue in itself<sup>2)</sup>. This trait in the native character was commented on unfavourably by many of the Spanish, including Legaspi in 1569; '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.'<sup>3)</sup>

The third, and closely related, reason was the Philippine concept of wealth. The *principales* were the only people within the Philippine society likely to have the opportunity to turn to new economic pursuits and goals. But, like other Filipinos, they saw wealth primarily in terms of control over labour. An extra dependent was to them what an increase in income was to a Westerner. Their economic position under the Spanish was favourably designed to enable them to increase their wealth in their terms, and so again they had no desire to change the economic structure.

Thus the potential of the Philippines was not exploited by either native or Spaniard during our period, although the islands were apparently under-populated when the Spanish arrived and for some time afterwards. The population under Spanish rule was estimated at 667,000 in 1591, and 1,500,000 in 1800. In 1916 the population of the archipelago as a whole was over 9,000,000<sup>4)</sup>. It would appear that there was plenty of

1) Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

2) McHale, *op. cit.*, pp. 126, 160-1.

3) BR, III, 56-57; see also *ibid.*, LI, 249-50.

4) Kroeber, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

land, and some minerals, available for exploitation, had anyone been interested, but for different reasons neither the Spanish, nor the Filipinos, nor the Chinese <sup>1)</sup>, were. Commercial agriculture did not develop at this time, mainly because of the galleon trade pattern, and this was a factor of crucial importance to the stability of the Philippine economic structure.

The labour system in the Philippines before the arrival of the Spanish was closely bound in with status divisions in the *barangay*. At the top of the scale, the *datu* controlled more labour than did the other free members of the *barangay*, and it was by this that his social status and wealth was determined. The dependent group, most of whom were controlled by the *datu*, were not slaves. Their position was closer to that of a sharecropper or debt peon. This group included debtors, prisoners of war and law breakers. The status was hereditary. There were two main subdivisions. The first could buy its manumission. Its members could own property, and marry without their superior's consent, their only obligation being to work for perhaps one day in four for him. The lower subdivision had to work for a greater proportion of their time for their superior, could not marry without his consent, and could usually be sold.

In the middle of the society were the non-dependents, who did not control much labour apart from that of their own immediate families. This family was the basic labour unit—the whole family worked at food gathering, hunting, fishing and farming. Specialists such as the smiths, potters and religious were not exempt from participation in the usual pursuits. Frequently these middle groups in the *barangay* got their neighbours, the members of the *barangay* less closely related to them, to help in larger tasks such as building and harvesting. Feasts were usually provided by the hosts when the work was done <sup>2)</sup>.

Changes in the dependent labour system as a result of Spanish influence

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1) Most of the Chinese were fully occupied in Manila with the retail and craft trades. Ultimately, they did even better from the galleon trade than did the Spanish, and so they had even less reason to want to engage in other activities.

2) Fox, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

have been discussed under authority relationships. To recapitulate briefly, the opposition of the religious to this system did not succeed in changing it very much. Debt peonage and sharecropping continued, mainly because it was essential to maintain production during the Dutch Wars. But the Spanish also affected the output of Philippine labour, as has also been noted, and in addition they withdrew some labour for their own use. In fact, much of the surplus which the Spanish took was in the form of labour, although for several reasons, the number taken proportionate to the total population was usually not as great as in other Spanish colonies. No gold mines were discovered, so large numbers of Filipinos were not conscripted to work them. Nor was much Philippine labour taken for Spanish agricultural enterprises, except for some taken by the ecclesiastics. Also, the Filipino population was not much affected by new diseases. The natives had already built up a resistance to most western diseases as a result of their contacts with the Asian mainland <sup>1)</sup>, although there was a slight initial rise in mortality due to new diseases <sup>2)</sup>. Had the population been seriously reduced by disease (or a bloody conquest), this fact as well as the removal of part of the remainder for non-productive labour could have had a much more serious effect on food production, but fortunately this did not occur.

The Spanish used several methods for abstracting native labour for their own use. One of the first was slavery, but this was soon forbidden by the imposing trio of Bishop Salazar, Philip II and the Pope. From the late sixteenth century, only actively hostile people, such as 'Moros' and Negritos, were enslaved and few of these were captured <sup>3)</sup>. More important was the system of *encomiendas*. Legaspi split the whole conquered area up into these, and they were given to individuals as a form of reward or recognition. The *encomenderos* were meant to rule, protect and convert the Filipinos in their *encomiendas*, and in return to receive tribute and labour services from them. The latter were not assigned to specific people but rather to the *barangay* as a whole. At first the tribute

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1) Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

2) de la Costa, *op. cit.*, p. 643.

3) Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

itself was often collected in kind, either in the form of produce or of labour. In either of these cases, abuses were common. If the harvest was good, the tribute would be taken in coin, but if it was bad the *encomenderos* insisted on being paid in kind. They would then sell the produce at a great profit. The amount of the tribute was at first far too high, and in many cases the *encomendero* provided none of the services he was meant to—he would be seen by his people once a year, when he came to collect the tribute with an armed escort <sup>1</sup>).

There was strong opposition from the religious to this oppression, and, mainly as a result of their pressure, the greatest abuse was ended in 1595, when the *Audencia* drew up a standard computation of payments, the *tasacion* <sup>2</sup>). The government later refused to grant more private *encomiendas*, and the development of the galleon trade drew the Spanish away from the countryside. In 1591 there were thirty-one crown *encomiendas* and 236 private ones <sup>3</sup>). By 1686 there were more owned by the Crown than by private individuals, and long before then the system had become simply a fairly mild tribute tax <sup>4</sup>).

The major systems of exploitation used by the Spanish government were the *polo* and *vandala*, of which the former was by far the more widely used. Under the *polo* system each settlement had to provide a percentage of its inhabitants for work in Spanish activities such as woodcutting, shipbuilding and munition-making. The worker was forced to work away from home for forty days a year <sup>5</sup>). All Filipinos except the *datu* and his oldest son who were males of over a certain age had to take their turn in this system, although exemption could be bought. The labourers were meant to be paid for their work, and other safeguards against abuses were set up, but during the Dutch Wars military necessity often meant that these were not observed. The pay, when it was received, was one peso a month, plus two-fifths of a bushel of rice. But at least

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1) de la Costa, *op. cit.*, p. 32; Corpuz, *op. cit.*, p. 101; Phelan, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-96; McHale, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-38; BR, XVI, 158-9.

2) Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

3) de la Costa, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

4) Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

5) Corpuz, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

five pesos a month were needed to keep a worker alive, so the government pay was supplemented by the worker's village <sup>1</sup>). In 1617 it was reported that the Mindanao raiders had recently killed two hundred Filipino workers and captured four hundred. Many others had died through overwork, and some had fled to the hills because they had been paid very little for five years <sup>2</sup>). It seems that the limitation of forty days was not observed at this time—in 1619 it took six thousand labourers three months to haul a mast out of the forest to the sea. Nor apparently were the limitations on numbers employed at any one time observed—at busy times the four main shipyards alone employed up to 1,400 men each <sup>3</sup>).

The *vandala* system was also of necessity abused. This system was meant to be one of forced sale of produce to the government, but as the price was seldom paid it was really oppressive extralegal taxation <sup>4</sup>). Sometimes a village was assessed for a product which was not grown locally. In such cases a villager was forced to buy the product in question at a village where it was produced, at a high price, bring it back to his village and sell it to the Spanish at a low price, which was often not paid anyway. In the period 1610-17 six Tagalog towns were owed over 14,000 pesos by the Spanish <sup>5</sup>).

The *polo* system had been started before the Dutch Wars; there had been complaints of wages not being paid promptly late in the sixteenth century <sup>6</sup>). *Polo* continued to the end of Spanish rule—in 1884 the time a man had to work was reduced from forty to fifteen days <sup>7</sup>). But the system was at its worst during the Dutch Wars, during which time even the clergy did not complain, for they realized that the continuance of Spanish rule depended on these measures <sup>8</sup>). There is no doubt that the ordinary Filipino suffered badly in the first half of the seventeenth cen-

1) de la Costa, *op. cit.*, p. 344.

2) BR, XVIII, 174-5.

3) de la Costa, *op. cit.*, pp. 343-4.

4) Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

5) de la Costa, *op. cit.*, p. 345.

6) BR, X, 117-118.

7) Corpuz, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

8) Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

ture (although the *principales* and Spanish did well some of the time at least <sup>1</sup>). The native population fell from 610,000 in 1621 to 505,000 in 1655. The population of the Jesuit parishes in the Visayan Islands fell from 74,000 in 1622 to 52,000 in 1659. This decline was due to starvation, over-work, flight to the mountains and deaths during 'Moro' raids <sup>2</sup>). But once the Dutch threat was removed the government was able greatly to reduce the severity of its exactions. A sign of the improving situation was the removal in 1657 of the annual assessment on all Filipinos to provide rice for the *polo* workers <sup>3</sup>).

The Filipinos were subject to other demands on their labour and money. Those living near Manila had to provide free domestic service for the convents, and in the provinces the natives provided food and stipends for the religious, labour for their buildings, and rowers, porters and domestics <sup>4</sup>). In 1582 a group of *principales* complained of being forced by the *alcaldes-mayors* to provide labour services. For example, Filipinos were forced to provide oarsmen and their villages were assessed to pay them, yet the oarsmen seldom got their pay. One hundred of the three hundred Filipinos in an area near Manila had moved away to avoid such exactions, yet their *cabezas* still had to pay tribute for them and were flogged if they did not <sup>5</sup>). The volume of "Blair and Robertson" from which this information was taken also contains a long series of complaints from Bishop Salazar to the King concerning the ill-treatment of the Filipinos. He summed up by saying: 'I only say, and truthfully, that this land is ruined; and it is doubtful whether, if it experiences another year like the two just past, it will endure to the third [*sic*]-and this is not an exaggeration.' <sup>6</sup>) At the other end of our period, in the 1730's, another series of complaints about ill-treatment was listed. All Filipinos had been forced to pay two gantas of rice <sup>7</sup>) per tribute

1) de la Costa, *op. cit.*, pp. 346-8.

2) Phelan, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-101, 191.

3) *Ibid.*, p. 102.

4) *Ibid.*, pp. 98, 103.

5) BR, V, 190.

6) *Ibid.*, V, 210-19.

7) A Filipino measure of capacity—about two quarts.

to help rebuild a fort. Over a period of fifty years the Filipinos had contributed at least 150,000 pesos for this purpose, yet the fort had not been rebuilt. Rice was bought from them at two *reals* when it was worth four. They were forced to cut timber for ships, and work as soldiers and rowers. Sometimes they were poorly paid, and sometimes they were not paid at all <sup>1</sup>).

Despite all these exactions and oppressions, the situation was not as black as may appear. Certainly many Filipinos were at times overworked and underpaid. But during the period of most hardship, the Dutch Wars, production was increased. In the short run this meant hardship for the Filipinos, for all the increase was taken by the Spanish, but in the long run it probably had beneficial effects. Once peace returned and the Spanish did not need to extract so much labour from the economy, the Filipino standard of living probably rose; certainly their population increased. It is also important to note that the basis of the Philippine economy was not seriously altered by these hardships. Whether the Spanish took labour or produce, the Filipinos received little in return. Thus the economy was not upset by any great cash feed-back from the Spanish demands. This was understandably a grievance in the short run to the Filipinos, yet in effect the Spanish exactions, both during the Dutch Wars and at other times, were like a plague of locusts or a bad harvest—they led to hard times but not to any basic change in the traditional agricultural economy.

It should by now be apparent that during the first two centuries of their rule the Spanish caused no important structural changes in the economic or political aspects of Filipino life. Society and economy remained essentially what they had been before, with the different elements more or less in the same equilibrium. The land was now owned, not just used, but as it was owned by the people who were already dominant in the native society little economic change occurred; indeed the *principales* had no reason to desire change. These same people remained politically dominant over areas of about the same size as the pre-Spanish *cabeza*. They also continued to exercise their traditional con-

1) BR, XLIX, 119.

trol over most of the dependent labour. New crops and techniques increased production, and after the Dutch Wars this led to a growth of population, but the islands were able to absorb this fairly easily. The Spanish gave little in return for the labour they extracted, and so traditional methods of exchange within the Filipino society remained undisturbed.

Ultimately, such changes were made in the Philippine system that the traditional order became non-viable and basic structural changes did occur. Economically, this began in the late eighteenth century, when for the first time the Philippines, including the provinces, were opened to economic relations with the external world. Spanish policy changed—they began to develop local products for export, and soon after opened the country to foreign trade and business activity<sup>1)</sup>. After two centuries of Spanish rule, Western businessmen at last were able to penetrate the Philippine hinterland. Further, this meant that the *principales* now had an opportunity to enrich themselves in the Western sense, if they so desired. Some apparently did. The two other reasons mentioned above for the Filipino lack of interest in commercial agriculture (the Filipino attitude to work, and their concept of wealth<sup>2)</sup>) no longer applied to a few of the *principales*. These few were usually *mestizos*<sup>3)</sup>, and thus had presumably been strongly affected by Spanish ideas and aims. In any case, there is no doubt that a development of commercial agriculture began at the end of the eighteenth century, and that as a result some Filipinos prospered as a Filipino had never done before—that is, in *cash* terms. This agricultural development in turn spelt the end of the traditional semi-subsistence agricultural pattern in some areas at least. Other important developments followed, notably an increasingly wide gap between the oligarchy and the ordinary Filipino. Not only was the member of this oligarchy rich in a new and ‘western’ way, but also he now participated in the western, international sector of the economy, not in the traditional peasant economy alone.

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1) Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 678; McHale, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.

2) See above, pp. 176 f.

3) Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 680; Schurz, *op. cit.*, p. 40; BR, LI, 103-104; 106.

A political change of comparable magnitude and importance occurred in the twentieth century, and this political change had important economic effects. Until the end of Spanish rule the electorate and the elected for local office had both been members of the *principalia* class. The American conquest, and their goal of speedy independence, introduced a radical change. At first under their rule property and literacy requirements restricted the franchise so greatly that the political scene was not greatly affected. But as literacy requirements came to be less strictly enforced, and the property qualification was reduced and then abandoned, the size of the electorate increased greatly. This revolutionised Philippine politics. Formerly campaigning had been a local and simple matter, requiring little organization or expense. But now the *principales* were forced to move beyond their own *principalia* class and to seek the help of small landowners and influential peasants in order to be elected, thus making these people political participants as they had not been before. In addition, the Americans had opened to election positions at a much higher level of government. These provincial or national offices bestowed more power, but were far more costly to win. In practice, contests for them were confined to wealthy men, and this division between the electorate and the candidate combined with the large size of the new constituencies to leave these candidates few personal contacts with their constituents. Thus chains of 'vertical alliances' were formed, by which the ordinary voter was linked to the national politician through village leaders, town politicians and provincial leaders<sup>1</sup>). Such a system was, of course, in two respects totally different from the village politics of the Spanish period. First, 'national' politics and the political structure had been integrated by a Spanish-led ecclesiastical frame-work or by a Spanish-administered governmental structure. But now the Filipinos held political power well beyond the limits of the old local *barangay*. Second, the basis of political power and support was no longer access to labour—it had become access to capital. Thus an enormous po-

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<sup>1</sup>) For these political changes see C. H. Landé, *Leaders, Factions and Parties, The Structure of Philippine Politics*, Yale, 1965, pp. 25-30

litical advantage was given to the same oligarchy that had already gained access to the westernized, capitalized sector of the economy.

These changes were basic, structural ones, and had a profound effect on authority relationships in the Philippines, and on the relationship of the Filipinos to their economic environment. The effects of these changes showed that the West had at last impinged decisively on the Philippines. For those who want to divide history into periods, it is here, late in the eighteenth century, that a new era in Philippine history begins.