

# philippine studies

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## **Philippine Prehistory: An Anthropological Overview of the Rise of Filipino Society and Culture**

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## Book Reviews

PHILIPPINE PREHISTORY: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL OVERVIEW OF THE RISE OF FILIPINO SOCIETY AND CULTURE. By F. Landa Jocano. Quezon City: Philippine Center for Advanced Studies, 1975. 280 pages.

In *Studies in Philippine Anthropology* (1967), in honor of H. Otley Beyer, edited by Mario D. Zamora, Jocano has a 22-page article (pp. 128-50) entitled, "Beyer's Theory on Filipino Prehistory and Culture: An Alternative Approach," in which he claims that he had "reviewed the development of Filipino prehistory and culture in a holistic rather than chronological approach" (p. 148). This claim, however, was denied in substance because the essence of the article was an exercise in chronology and stage-making, a crude attempt to restate Beyer's and Fox's earlier attempts at presenting Philippine prehistory in a stage framework. Jocano disguised the stages by calling them novel names but with basically the same chronological values as in the following.

Germinal Period: 250,000 - 10,000 B.C.

Formative Period: 10,000 - 500 B.C.

Incipient Period: 500 B.C. - 10th C. A.D.

Emergent Period: 10th C. A.D. - 15th C. A.D.

By 1975, or some eight years later, this article has grown into a 280-page book but the central chronology has remained intact. Instead of the accompanying dates, there is appended a descriptive subtitle reminiscent of the Fox-National Museum chronology chart.

Formative Period: The Stone Traditions.

Incipient Period: Pottery and Metal Traditions.

Emergent Period: Contacts with Other Asians

In the book version the "Germinal Period" has been dropped and combined with the earlier section called "Geological Foundation." This now appears as Part 1: The Natural Setting, which includes geology, flora, fauna, and early fossils. The more interesting transformation is the old section called "Reconstruction of Ancient Filipino Society" which now appears fattened into Part 3: "Filipino Society and Culture at the Spanish Contact,"

discussing social organization, writing, literature, beliefs, and rituals. Between these two parts is the archaeological core of pure stage chronology faithfully reproducing the 1967 format. The Stone Traditions is still divided into "Old" and "New," and the Metal Traditions into "Early" and "Late," as if one were reading the introductory chapter of Fox's *The Tabon Caves* (1970). The subtitles to Jocano's three-stage framework look like a collapsed version of the four-stage chronological chart of the National Museum, the last stage of which is entitled "Age of Contacts and Trade with the East," while the Jocano version is simply "Contacts with other Asians."

True to his scholarly philosophy that both facts and theories must change, Jocano's definition of his stages also changed. In 1967 "Formative Period" was defined thus:

This more sedentary nature of living differentiates this period from the previous one. That is why we call it formative. By this we mean the appearance of local, sedentary groupings of people bigger than the nuclear family. The size of this group however was not big enough to structure a community pattern (p. 148).

In 1975 the definition of "Formative" has been transformed to this:

The earliest period in the development of Philippine society and culture may be labeled as Formative. The term is used here to refer to the level of technological development during which a discernible pattern of cultural adaptation (hence behavior) to post-Pleistocene environment began to take shape. The earliest known carbon-14 dated period of community life in the Philippines is 30,500 BP. Previous estimates, on the basis of tool types, geological stratigraphy, and paleontological evidences, set this date from 500,000 to 250,000 BP (p. 73).

Here Jocano is at a loss whether to limit Formative to the post-Pleistocene adaptation or to include earlier instances of community life under Formative (since he has decided to drop the clumsy Germinal Period). To include 30,500 B.C. under Formative, however, means to include an early date under post-Pleistocene. This would be a novel discovery indeed, for undergraduates are taught that the Pleistocene ended at around 8,000 B.C. not 30,500 B.C.

The details enumerated in Part 3 are a haphazard recycling of the Blair and Robertson volumes on Loarca, Colin, Chirino, Plasencia, Morga, and of later writers like Phelan, Francisco, Solheim, and others. In spite of all this, however, one objective of Jocano's prehistory is laudable — to disprove the charge that "we have no cultural roots to speak of" (p. xiii). But his claim that "a start in the rethinking of our beginnings has been made" may appear unconvincing in the shadow of the massive bibliography (quite useful) of previous scholars and thinkers before him. His major thesis that Philippine prehistory can be usefully viewed from within, and that mechanical waves of influences be discarded in favor of local selectivity and adaptational strategies, is likewise valid. But precisely this techno-environmental linkage with society

and ideology is not articulated in the book. Why is there an upland-lowland contrast in Philippine cultures? If the Incipient Period introduced "the general levelling off of local and regional socio-cultural differences," (p. 107) how does one account for the persisting pattern of linguistic differentiation? What items were exchanged for the trade goods brought in by Arabs, Chinese, and other early foreign traders? Such "functional" questions seldom emerge from the obsessive attempt at chronicling the stages of development and paraphrasing the details of artifacts, behavior, and belief recorded by others.

However, his readers and colleagues are from the start disarmed by hedging humility — that perhaps the picture is incomplete, that errors need to be corrected by better data, that his perspective may have to be restructured because it falls short of their scholarly expectations (p. xiv). Perhaps. The book at least succeeds in putting together in one handsome binding, if not in one integrated thinking, many useful bits of geological, archaeological, and ethnological information otherwise scattered in various books and journals about the Philippines. There is nothing new in it for serious students of Philippine anthropology and history, but the book may be of use to general readers.

*Eric S. Casiño*

CITY OF PINES: THE ORIGINS OF BAGUIO AS A COLONIAL HILL STATION AND REGIONAL CAPITAL. By Robert R. Reed. (Center for South and Southeast Asia Studies, Research Monograph No. 13) Berkeley: University of California, 1976. xxi, 189 pages.

In recent years certain historical geographers have directed their attention to the process of urbanization in Southeast Asia and in the Philippines in particular. In general, Western colonization in Southeast Asia originally gave rise to one major fortified settlement from which imperialist commercial activities were carried on through a series of small trading stations. The rest of the lands dominated commercially were ordinarily not subjected to direct political control until the nineteenth century. Only Spanish Philippines was an exception to this pattern, due to the key role religious motivation played in Spanish colonization. Without a pre-Spanish urban tradition existing in the Philippines, most older towns, apart from the Westernized Spanish entrepôt of Manila, grew out of the creation of centers by the missionaries for effective Christianization. From these later developed the regional urban commercial centers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A major exception to this pattern was the city of Baguio, created as a "hill station" for recovery of health, rest, and recreation, serving the needs of Westerners, but which has since developed into a regional capital for northern Luzon, serving many functions not envisaged in its creation.