

Fiipino history of precolonial politics flashcard



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The cultural achievements of pre-colonial Philippines include those covered by prehistory and early history of the Philippines archipelago and its inhabitants, which are the indigenous forebears of today's Filipino people. These early Filipinos possessed a culture and technology that were quite advanced considering the timeline of history of science when it flourished. Waves of migrants who came to settle in the islands contributed to the development of ancient Philippine civilization.

Prehistoric aborigines, a cross of Afro-Asiatic and Austro-Aborigines, now called Negritos (Aeta, Agta, Ayta) reached the islands by way of land bridges around 15, 000 to 30, 000 BC, and they were excellent hunters and food gatherers. In its midst, other ancient civilizations were also thriving and evolving. The Proto-Malays, a Mongol-Asiatic race, arrived around 2500 BC using oceanic vessels called balangays, and they brought with them their knowledge in seafaring, farming, building of houses from trees and creation of fire for cooking.

The next to arrive were the Duetero-Malays, of India-Asiatic race (Indian, Chinese, Siamese, Arabic), that prevailed with a more superior and advanced culture. They possessed their own systems of writing, knowledge and skills in agriculture, metallurgy, jewelry-making as well as boat-building. When the Spaniards came to the islands in the 15th century, industries such as mining, agriculture, fishing and pottery were already in place and contacts with other Asian nations had been long established. Pre-colonial form of government

Before the Spaniards came into the Philippines there were existing culture of the Filipinos which were not distinguished by most of the filipinos especially

for the new born filipino citizens. The Filipinos lived in settlements called barangays before the colonization of the Philippines by the Spaniards. The barangay was the Filipino's earliest form of government. As the unit of government, a barangay consisted from 30 to 100 families. The term barangay was derived from the Malay word barangay or balangay, which means sailboat.

The barangays were used to transport the early Filipinos and their cargoes to the various sections of the Philippine archipelago. It was headed by a datu or village chief who was also known as raha or rajah and was independent from the other group. Some datu were more powerful than others and, consequently, were duly respected and exercise tremendous influence. The political development of the archipelago was such that there was no national or central government yet. In other words, there was no datu strong enough to consolidate considerable power and to unite the archipelago into one nation.

The primary duty of the datu was to rule and govern his subjects and to promote their well-being. In times of peace, he was the chief executive, legislator, and judge. And, in times of conflict, he was the supreme commander of the warriors. In Western Visayas it was not uncommon for the datu to be the babaylan, as well. The very influence and mystical ability of the babaylan, especially if he was a man, made him the most likely candidate for community leadership. Usually, several barangays settled near each other to help one another in case of war or any emergency.

According to Renato Constantino (1975), the datu was not an absolute ruler. The scope of his authority was given limits by a traditional body of customs and procedures. His usefulness to the community earned him respect so that services were willingly rendered to him. The position of datu was passed on by the holder of the position to the eldest son or, if none, the eldest daughter. However, later, any member of the barangay could be chieftain, based on his talent and ability. He had the usual responsibilities of leading and protecting the members of his barangay.

In turn, they had to pay tribute to the datu, help him till the land, and help him fight for the barangay in case of war. In the old days, a datu had a council of elders to advise him, especially whenever he wanted a law to be enacted. The law was written and announced to the whole barangay by a town crier, called the umalohokan. Before the coming of Spanish colonizers, the people of the Philippine archipelago had already attained a semicomunal and semislave social system in many parts and also a feudal system in certain parts, especially in Mindanao and Sulu, where such a feudal faith as Islam had already taken roots.

The Aetas had the lowest form of social organization, which was primitive communal. The barangay was the typical community in the whole archipelago. It was the basic political and economic unit independent of similar others. Each embraced a few hundreds of people and a small territory. Each was headed by a chieftain called the rajah or datu.

The social structure comprised a petty nobility, the ruling class which had started to accumulate land that it owned privately or administered in the

name of the clan or community; an intermediate class of freemen called the maharlikas who had enough land for their livelihood or who rendered special service to the rulers and who did not have to work in the fields; and the ruled classes that included the timawas, the serfs who shared the crops with the petty nobility, and also the slaves and semislaves who worked without having any definite share in the harvest.

There were two kinds of slaves then: those who had their own quarters, the aliping namamahay, and those who lived in their master's house, the aliping sagigilid. One acquired the status of a serf or a slave by inheritance, failure to pay debts and tribute, commission of crimes and captivity in wars between barangays.