

Seminar Paper on  
**Cultural Ecology and Neo-Evolutionary Thought**

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The early leading lights in Cultural Ecology and Neo-Evolutionary Thought are Julian Steward and Leslie White, respectively. But discussion of it would not be complete unless we also touch on George P. Murdock, as well as the best-known articles of Marshall D. Sahlins (“Evolution: Specific and General,” followed up by a more recent one, “Cosmologies of Capitalism”) and Karl August Wittfogel (“The Theory of Oriental Society”).

I will deal more extensively with the first two anthropologists than with the last three, giving the background of the former, their respective theories and methodologies, critiques of these theories and methodologies by the other as well as various anthropologists, and thereafter my own critique and re-appropriation of their ideas. Before I begin, however, I feel obliged to draw up a brief summary of the Marxist theory of society, for the two schools are acknowledged to have been heavily influenced by this theory, and without a common understanding of such, I believe Cultural Ecology and Neo-Evolutionary Thought will also not be fully understood; just as it will not be without a grounding in Spencer, Morgan and Tylor, which this class has already gotten.

The purpose of this paper is: 1) to give a fair estimation of the salient points in the subject under discussion; and 2) to apply the theories learned to the study of Philippine culture as much as my limitations will allow me.

### **The Marxist View**

In “Feuerbach,” the first chapter of **The German Ideology**, Marx and Engels propounded, “It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness.” The “language of real life,” they wrote, consists of “material activity and the material intercourse of men.”

The phantoms formed in the brains of men are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises.<sup>8</sup>

Having identified life’s basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter, they proceeded to identify “the first historical act” as “the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself,” such production consisting of 1) the “daily re-creation [of] their own life,” and 2) the propagation of their kind. Such a production of life “appears as a two-fold relation: on the one hand as a natural [#2], on the other as a social relation [#1] – social in the sense that it denotes the co-operation of several individuals, no matter under what conditions, in what manner and to what end.”

It therefore follows from this that a certain mode of production, or industrial stage, is always combined with a certain mode of co-operation, or social stage, and this mode of co-operation is itself a 'productive force.'<sup>8</sup>

It took Engels to work out this dynamic tension between the mode of production, the relations of production and the productive forces in **The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State**.

**The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State** indicates Marxism's reliance on Morgan for its theory of evolution. He is quoted all throughout the work; in fact, one whole chapter, Chapter III, is devoted to his Iroquois "gens." The book traces the evolution of society from savagery to barbarism to civilization, which is Morgan's classification.

In the lower stage of savagery, Engels says, people lived in the forests, dwelling at least partly on trees, and ate for food fruit, nuts and roots. The development of articulate speech is the main result of this period, he adds.

The middle stage "begins with the utilization of fish for food and the use of fire..., with this new source of nourishment" becoming independent of climate and locality. In turn,

Settlement in new areas, the constantly active urge for discovery, and the ability to produce fire by friction made available new kinds of food; farinaceous roots and tubers, for instance, were baked in hot ashes or in baking pits (ground ovens). With the inventions of the first weapons, club and spear, game could sometimes be added to the fare.<sup>3</sup>

And so on. Each new stage is marked by the invention of some new instrument of production, often made possible by the discovery of some new material come upon through "the material production of life."

To sum up the Marxist theory of evolution, the invention of new instruments of production make possible the empowerment of the forces of production, engendering changes in the mode of production and thereby the relations of production. The conflict between the forces of production and the relations of production, or between the warring classes in society at each stage, would be more trenchantly expressed in Marx and Engels' historic document, **The Communist Manifesto**.<sup>7</sup>

### **Leslie White and his "culturology"**

Having begun with Marxism, it would be logical for us to start our discussion with Leslie White.

White's road to anthropology was a winding one, according to Bohannan and Glazer.<sup>1</sup> He wanted to become a teacher in physics or astronomy, but had to serve in the Navy during World War I. In the Navy, he thought that what was taught about society was wrong, so he proceeded to study, first history and political science, then psychology, sociology, and philosophy, ending up with a B.A. and M.A. in psychology, but adding courses in economics, behavioral psychology, sociology and anthropology with the some of the best teachers of the early 20s. At the University of Chicago, he decided that "sociology was all theory and no fact,"<sup>1</sup> and finally settled on anthropology.

Starting with the Boasian school, he turned to evolutionism when he found difficulty explaining and defending Boas' theories in his classes at the University of Buffalo. He began to be fascinated with Morgan's *League of the Iroquois*, led to it by work with his students on the nearby Seneca reservation. A tour of Russia and Georgia in 1929 made him discover Marx and Engels, thereby sealing his theoretical foundations.

As Marvin Harris<sup>5</sup> relates, however, White, to protect himself from the American Inquisition both before and during the McCarthy era, had to conceal his indebtedness to the Marxist framework, hiding behind constant praise of Spencer, Morgan and Tylor.

In his book **The Science of Culture: A Study of Man and Civilization**, he lays down his argument for a science he called "culturology," which term never caught on, his ideas finally being pegged to "neo-evolutionism," which term he resented.<sup>5</sup> Fond of coining phrases like "science is sciencing" and "mind is minding," his prose, though relatively elegant, has not seemed to command attention, much less memory.

Culture, White claimed in his preface, "is a continuum." It "flows freely down through time from one generation to another and laterally from one race or habitat to another."

The determinants of culture lie within the stream of culture itself; ...a language, custom, belief, tool or ceremony, is the product of antecedent and concomitant cultural elements and processes.<sup>13</sup>

In short, culture is "a thing *sui generis*" – a thing in itself.

The symbol, he proposed, is "the basic unit of all human behavior and civilization. ... Human behavior is symbolic behavior; symbolic behavior is human behavior. The symbol is the universe of humanity." He goes on to define a symbol as "a thing the value or meaning of which is bestowed upon it by those who use it."<sup>13</sup>

Morton Fried comments that White's definition of the symbol "leads him to make a sharp, qualitative break between cultural and other forms of behavior," yet this "approach to culture..., that culture be understood in terms of culture, ...in some ways [runs] counter to a major impulse of science which is to explain complex phenomena in the simplest terms, reducing levels if possible."<sup>4</sup>

In claiming that culture "is a thing *sui generis*," and therefore "man, as an animal organism, as a species, lies *within* the man-culture system, and there he is the dependent, not the independent, variable" and, moreover, that "his behavior is merely the function of his culture, not its determinant,"<sup>13</sup> White departs from the Marxist dictum of change, set forth in Marx's "Thesis on Feuerbach": "The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it."<sup>8</sup>

Yet White in his chapter on "Energy and the Evolution of Culture," shifting from poetic to scientific gear, ends up arguing like a Marxist – or, at the very least, a pseudo-Marxist. "Everything in the universe," he begins, "may be described in terms of energy."<sup>13</sup> McGee and Warms, referring to "this arresting opening passage," relate that White believed "that the research methods used in the sciences, when applied to anthropology, would reveal the laws of culture."<sup>9</sup>

"The purpose of culture," White goes on, borrowing from Malinowski this time, "is to serve the needs of man." From here he formulates his law of cultural evolution:

“Culture develops when the amount of energy harnessed by man per capita per year is increased; or as the efficiency of the technological means of putting this energy to work is increased; or, as both factors are simultaneously increased.”<sup>13</sup> He arrives at this formulation through facile equation, derived no doubt from his early fascination with physics:

$$\frac{E X F_1}{E X F_2} = \frac{P_1}{P_2}$$

where E is the amount of energy expended, F the efficiency of the mechanical means with which energy is expended, and P the product produced. From this we are supposed to get the second law of cultural development (that is, “*other things being equal, the degree of cultural development varies directly as the efficiency of the technological means with which the harnessed energy is put to work*”) which leads directly to the general law of cultural evolution above.

In other words, like Marx and Engels, White argues that instruments of production, which he calls technological means, are central to the development of culture, the amount of energy expended on such technological means most likely corresponding to the efforts of the forces of production.

As Steward objects, however, this equation is arrived at by relegating the factor of environment to a constant,<sup>6</sup> thereby ignoring it altogether. What use were White’s laws, he averred, when they were, as McGee and Warms,<sup>9</sup> expressed it, “so general as to be virtually self-evident,” and “told nothing about the specifics of change within a culture”?

Moreover, Harris’s<sup>5</sup> critique of Durkheim’s superorganic as coming from an “unfortunate idealist and mentalist bias” may very well be leveled at White’s “culturology.” After so much effort expended by White on its definition, what, then, is culture, as differentiated from society? And what relation does his use of the symbol have to his final equation leading to the law of cultural evolution? Why does one get the queasy feeling that the term, borrowed from linguistics as much as from literature, got dropped along the way?

Could it be that White’s interdisciplinary road to anthropology, lending him vulnerable to the influence of an eclectic range of theorists from the Spencer/Morgan/Tylor triad to Malinowski to Marx and Engels to Trotsky to Charles Darwin to Kroeber to Durkheim to Childe to Millikan, got the better of him, rendering his theories inefficacious and subject to the forgetfulness of time? Could it be that his principal use in the theory of anthropology was merely to introduce the Marxist equation of the dialectics between instruments of production and forces of production, to an American public barred from appreciating Marxism by McCarthyism?

### **Julian Steward and his “multilinear evolution”**

The ideas of Julian Steward, a faithful student of Alfred Kroeber, were met by the latter with a “rather frigid reception,” according to Harris.<sup>5</sup> We must remember that Kroeber was, in the words of Bohannan and Glazer,<sup>1</sup> “an early observer and recorder of the close relationship of ecology, culture and civilization.” Himself a follower of Boas, Kroeber nevertheless showed the importance of the superorganic, as well as cultural patterns, in fashion, philosophy, the arts, and other subjects, “to demonstrate that individual genius is

part of a cultural era and not an independent agent.” This brought him “astonishingly close” to Emile Durkheim.<sup>1</sup>

As to the reason for Kroeber’s “frigid reception” of his faithful student, we will probably never know. What we do know is that Steward was the second child of the chief of the Board of Examiners of the U.S. Patent Office. This lineage may very well have lent Julian Haynes Steward with the methodical doggedness to pursue the archeological and ethnographic studies that led him to all manner of “primitive bands” as well as such places as Peru, and to edit as well the three-volume **Contemporary Change in Traditional Societies**, which spans modernization in key “underdeveloped” areas all over the world.

Steward’s emphasis on ecology, cultural types, and multilineal evolution, according to Bohannan and Glazer, “gave the anthropology of the 1930s and 1940s a viable alternative to the ‘traditional’ approaches to cultural evolution.” He made it his problem to “find an acceptable view of evolution without removing the ‘s’ from ‘cultures.’”<sup>1</sup>

In “The Concept and Method of Cultural Ecology,” he pegged the principal meaning of ecology as “adaptation to environment.” Cultural ecology, he stated, “differs from human and social ecology in seeking to explain the origin of particular cultural features and patterns which characterize different areas rather than to derive general principles applicable to any cultural-environmental situation.” The three fundamental procedures of cultural ecology, he said, are:

1. The analysis of “the interrelationship between exploitative or productive technology and environment,” technology including “a considerable part of what is often called ‘material culture’”;
2. The analysis of “the behavior patterns involved in the exploitation of a particular area by means of a particular technology”;
3. The determination of “the extent to which the behavior patterns entailed in exploiting the environment affect other aspects of culture,” this third procedure entailing “a genuinely holistic approach, for if such factors as demography, settlement pattern, kinship structures, land tenure, land use, and other key cultural features are considered separately, their interrelationships to one another and to the environment cannot be grasped.”<sup>1</sup>

The above procedures tend to show that Steward may have understood Marxist dialectics more than White, who adopted its materialism. Indeed, Steward in “Multilineal Evolution: Evolution and Process” consigns White to the ways of “universal evolution,” which he defined as a mere revamp of unilinear evolution. “I must insist,” he added, “that White’s elimination of both the human and the environmental factors is an aspect of his concern with culture rather than with cultures.”<sup>6</sup>

He called his own concept “multilineal evolution.” Unlike historical particularists of the Boasian tradition, McGee and Warms tell us, Steward wanted to discover general laws of nature. Unlike White, however, he believed that “certain types of society are extremely likely to occur under particular conditions of technology and environment.”<sup>9</sup>

After Kroeber’s value and utility components, Steward divided culture into core and secondary features, with the culture core similar to Kroeber’s utility culture. This culture core consisted of what Steward felt “were closest to subsistence activities and economic arrangements.” But, according to McGee and Warms, while Kroeber thought value culture more important than utility culture, Steward focused his studies on the utility

features. Groups of elements of the culture core that occur regularly across cultures, such as the patrilineal band, he called culture types.<sup>9</sup>

Influenced like White by his reading of Marx, Steward was concerned with “the technological process by which people exploited their environment, and his analysis focused on how different subsistence strategies necessitated different social structures.”<sup>9</sup>

However, he was not as heavily influenced by Marx as White was. While he is concerned with the interrelations between technology, environment and society, as specifically outlined in his three procedures above, his work “lacks the characteristically Marxist emphasis on conflict as the motor of evolution.”<sup>9</sup> But, I must add, so does White’s, for that matter.

The article most illustrative of Steward’s concept of cultural ecology is “The Patrilineal Band.” In it, he showed through several examples that:

The environments of the patrilineal bands were similar in that, first, they had limited and scattered food resources, which not only restricted population to a low density but ... prevented it from assembling in large, permanent aggregates. Second, the principal food resource was game, which unlike wild seeds, may be profitably taken collectively. Third, the game occurred in small, nonmigratory bands rather than in large, migratory herds. This kind of game can support only small aggregates of people, who remain within a restricted territory.<sup>9</sup>

Steward falters, however, when he tries to reason why these bands were patrilineal:

If human beings could be conceived stripped of culture, it is not unreasonable to suppose that innate male dominance would give men a commanding position. If, in addition to native dominance, however, the position of the male is strengthened by his greater economic importance, as in a hunting culture, or even if women are given greater economic importance than men, it is extremely probable that postmarital residence will be patrilocal.<sup>9</sup>

In fact, the reason is simple: in a hunting and gathering culture, male strength is needed more than anything. But as Steward’s critics have remarked, he was apt to go into psychological explanations even if his theory formally accounted only for the environmental.

It is also surprising why Steward never managed to investigate the cultures of such places as Papua New Guinea, which are patently matriarchal up to now. In fact, it is surprising why none of the anthropologists I have read so far have bothered about such cultures.

Of particular interest to me in Steward’s article on the patrilineal band is his description of Philippine Negritos. Says Steward:

Bands seem to have been politically autonomous, but the lack of an institutionalized chief is implied by the somewhat vague statement that authority rested in the father of the family.<sup>9</sup>

Two other statements are equally interesting:

There is some indication that Philippine Negrito bands have recently changed from patrilineal to composite. ...The bands are now endogamous but at the end of the eighteenth century were exogamous.<sup>9</sup>

Since Steward had never studied the Negrito first-hand and was merely quoting from historical documents, he is unable to supply us with answers to the questions raised by his data: Why no institutionalized chief? Why, from exogamous, did they revert to an endogamous state?

The analysis afforded by “Tappers and Trappers: Parallel Process in Acculturation,” written by Steward together with Robert F. Murphy, would have illuminated these questions if applied to the situation of the Philippine Negritos. For here, he demonstrates how “the aboriginal culture is destined to be replaced by a new type which reaches its culmination when the responsible processes have run their course.”<sup>6</sup>

It is most likely this openness to the analysis of cultures affected by trade that propelled Steward towards the study of, in his words, “complicated contemporary sociocultural systems.” For such studies, he suggests, in “Levels of Sociocultural Integration: An Operational Concept,” a “comparative cultural morphology.” This applies especially to the problematic but increasingly popular notion of “national culture.” “National culture,” he says, “has in fact several special meanings apart from the totality of culture, and it is necessary to distinguish these.”

First, “national culture” may signify “cultural products” or national achievements in the fields of science, literature, philosophy, religion, and the like, which presuppose a national level of sociocultural integration. In some societies, these may be limited largely to the ruling classes. Second, “national culture” may be understood to mean governmental, economic, religious, and other institutions which function on a national scale. Although all members of the society will be affected by these institutions, the effect may be quite different among the various sociocultural segments.

Third, “national culture” may mean the common denominator of behavior that is shared by all members of the nation and that can be ascertained by direct observation of the individual. The method of study presumably requires a technique for sampling large populations, although some use has been made of indirect evidence, such as “cultural content analysis” of novels, motion pictures, and the like.”

It was this framework that led Steward to lead an in-depth study with such students and followers as Eric Wolf and Robert Manners, culminating in the book **The People of Puerto Rico** in 1956, five years after the article above came out.

Harris’ critique notwithstanding, Steward’s methodology is what has widened his following through the years, the biggest evidence of which is the long list of studies and articles (over a hundred entries) that come up upon a search of his name on either Yahoo or Ovid. The mere fact that Harris co-opted him as a cultural materialist should be proof enough of Steward’s many contributions to anthropology.

### **The other evolutionists**

*George P. Murdock* is primarily known for the Human Resources Area Files, “a huge data bank of ethnographic data on over one thousand societies,” according to McGee and Warms. Indexed according to standardized categories, the information can be used to make cross-cultural quantitative analyses and test cultural hypotheses in a wide variety of societies.<sup>9</sup> Murdock’s **Outline of Cultural Materials**, published in 1950, contains the index to the HRAF.

Murdock demonstrates the utility of the HRAF in his article “Family Stability in Non-European Cultures.” But as McGee and Warms say, “quantitative analysis does not necessarily eliminate researcher subjectivity.” Moreover, Murdock does not cite the sources for his data in the HRAF, a requirement of critical import to scholars, for it is one way of judging the accuracy of reports.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, “the HRAF remain a popular and valuable tool for research.”<sup>9</sup>

*Marshall Sahlins* wrote “Evolution: Specific and General” to demonstrate that there was no conflict between the theories of White and Steward. “Evolution creates both diversity and progress, Bohannan and Glazer point out to describe his thesis.

Specific evolution focuses on the adaptation of a particular culture to its environment, in terms of cultural evolution. General evolution focuses on the ways in which progress in a specific society allows us to consider that society more advanced – and therefore at a higher level of cultural evolution.<sup>1</sup>

In Sahlins’ own words, “Specific evolution is ‘descent with modification,’ the adaptive variation of life ‘along its many lines’; general evolution is the progressive emergence of higher life ‘stage by stage.’” This distinction was, according to Ortner, “subsequently refined by Elman Service (1958) and by ... Sahlins and ... Service (1960) into the famous bands-tribes-chiefdoms-states scheme.”<sup>2</sup>

The distinction made by Sahlins is typically Western and in my view merely boggles the mind. What I think is behind the need for the distinction is the insistence of the scholar in the heart of imperialism that he is not racist, while at the same time conjuring the means by which his nation could further its imperialist ends.

This becomes fairly obvious to me in Sahlins’ “Cosmology of Capitalism: The Trans-Pacific Sector of ‘The World System,’”<sup>2</sup> where he describes China during the China trade and the kings and would-be kings of the Sandwich Islands with the sarcasm of one who in reality thinks himself superior. For some reason he is more objective about the more abject Kwakiutls.

*Karl August Wittfogel’s* “The Theory of Oriental Society” is described by Morton Fried in his introduction “as one of the great attempts to understand the evolution of civilization in fundamentally ecological terms.” Wittfogel describes this theory most succinctly in his abstract:

The true ‘oriental’ form of production first arises when waterworks must be undertaken on a larger scale (for purposes of protection and irrigation). On a lower level of technical development, the state then acquires a specific economic function: public works and astronomy. A differentiated form of society comes into being: at its base are the peasants, either bound to the village or – later, free; the upper ranks comprise the autocratic sovereign and an administrative, religious, and military bureaucracy.

He also enunciates most clearly the use of such a theory:

The analysis of the organization of the productive forces makes it possible to explain the stagnation of the oriental agricultural society from the particular, centralized structure of the system of production based on irrigation. This is in contrast to the decentralized nonirrigational agriculture of feudal society, which did not hinder the development of towns and of an industrial capitalism fostered by late feudal absolutism.

Harris<sup>5</sup> points out Wittfogel's indebtedness to Marx's Asiatic mode of production for this theory, but mentions how it clashed with the Stalinist version of world history, inducing Wittfogel (perhaps a German or a Russian, but certainly at one time a communist) to abandon it. Apparently, the Stalinists thought that if Asiatic societies were not feudal, they could not evolve into capitalism, and therefore could not develop communism.<sup>5</sup> However, I would think that recent events have belied such fears. State socialism under the guidance of a centralized bureaucracy led by their respective Communist Parties developed in Russia and China precisely because of the absence of the Western type of feudalism – and in using this term I am saying that “Oriental despotism” was merely another type of feudalism, not a different system altogether. The Communist Parties merely took over the state apparatus and made it useful to the majority of the population. However, with the ripening of imperialism into global capitalism, the Communist state apparatus had to give way, allowing of the growth of capitalism within its own borders, albeit in a restrained way. My own thought on the matter is that the two trends – one, of global capitalism growing slowly but steadily into socialism and two, of communist-led socialisms acquiring capitalist habits – will someday merge into a type of world socialism hitherto unknown even to Marx and Engels, but the main lines of which they were able to draw.

### **My own critique and re-appropriation**

After the exercise, the definition of culture seems to me to remain as nebulous as ever. Could this be because the anthropologists in question tried so hard to skirt Marx, while using his theories as surreptitiously as they could?

In fact one aspect of Marxist thought that the above anthropologists barely fathomed is the dialectical aspect of Marxism. From Harris,<sup>5</sup> who expressed the fear that Marxists tend to meddle with the facts for the sake of propaganda, it is easy to glean how this happened. Dialectics is presupposed to logically lead to class struggle and active efforts to overthrow the state, and is therefore anathema to the American academe. But if they had gone on to study Maoism, they would have encountered a less threatening, and more useful, explanation of dialectics. Within a given entity, Mao said, there are principal and secondary contradictions. Within each contradiction, there is a principal and secondary aspect. Identifying the principal contradiction and the principal and secondary aspect of that contradiction, as well as the secondary contradictions that support its existence, enable us to determine the solutions to the problem of that given entity. Moreover, there are antagonistic as well as non-antagonistic contradictions. Only antagonistic contradictions are resolved bloodily.

Wary as they have been of the dialectics of materialism, and befogged as their theories are because of it, the above American anthropologists have in any case presented a substantial advance in anthropological theory from its founding fathers. They have taken anthropology to its most scientific limits so far, specifying the key motors for cultural change and evolution, whether in terms of White's energy cum technology or Steward's adaptation to environment. This is already a far cry from Tylor's very general description of culture or, as he himself adds, “civilization,” as “the complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.” Rejecting the unilineal evolution of Morgan and the implied racism of Spencer and refining Durkheim's notion of collective consciousness, they have used the tools offered by Boas and Kroeber to outline more

specific tools and methods by which to measure cultures. Culture has now begun definitely to assume an “s,” and with Steward especially, it has become possible to study even the most complex cultures.

As such these anthropologists do present aspects of the study of social change, however disparate, that are useful to a study of Philippine society, my principal interest.

Steward’s cultural ecology teaches us that the type of early societies we had emerged from the environment that coddled them. If in Africa and other parts of the world hunting and gathering tribes relied on male muscle, this was because the targets of the hunt were big ferocious animals, and gathering entailed going into huge fearsome forests. In the Philippines, I suspect that the same animals were hunted then as now: wild boar small enough for a Negrito to spear, and deer that leaped shyly into the gentle wilds rather than fight off captivity. Gathering was not as arduous an activity as in other parts of the world, either. Due to periodic volcanic fertilization, the soil yielded fruit and tubers in plenty, gathered without much effort. The legend of Juan Tamad, who merely waited for the guava to fall into his mouth, has I believe basis in fact at least up the middle of the last century, even in Negros.

Such an environment evolved an originally non-patrilineal, non-patriarchal, society. This is why Steward quotes his sources as not citing “an institutionalized chief,” as “implied by the somewhat vague statement that authority rested in the father of the family.” Since the sources were men, and men from such patriarchal societies as Spain and the U.S., they could honestly not make out societies or families without institutionalized chiefs, where authority did not necessarily rest in the father of the family.

Historical as well as literary and, indeed, anthropological studies since then have theorized that at least a significant number of early Philippine *barangays* were led (and not ruled) not by the datu alone but by a triad of leaders composed of the *datu*, the *babaylan* and the *panday*. These roles were not hereditary, but a consequence of what in one region is called *dunggan* -- a term implying charisma and strength. The *babaylan* was in the majority of cases a woman; whenever she was not, the man in her place had to wear skirts. It was this *babaylan* who, being in charge of the spiritual, health and internal affairs of the people, and being in the best position to say when to wage war, or even when the *datu* could not safely get out of his house, who took over the *datu*’s role if something happened to him.

From such data I would attempt to hypothesize that early Philippine tribes were largely matricentric. Such matricentrism arose both from the relatively gentle environment, and may even have had roots in the Austro-Polynesian cultures from which we may have sprung.

However, this is a hypothesis that has to be further verified in historical and anthropological terms.

As for White, I find some use in his explanation of the energy expended on production as a motive force for cultural evolution. If Wittfogel was able to establish that the rise of a state bureaucracy in hydraulic agricultural civilizations caused the stagnation of these civilizations and their inability to evolve into capitalist societies, I would attempt the hypothesis that the very same gentle environment that gave rise to our basically

matricentric society, after such society had been superimposed with a foreign, but nevertheless assimilated, patriarchy, has caused the stagnation of our own culture into one that could not quite grow out of its semi-feudal fetters. Here I define culture in its Marxist (or is it Althusserian) boundaries, which is clearer than the above anthropologists' definition of it; that is, culture in the sense of superstructure and ideology, arising out of the economic base but at some point cramping (and crumpling) it.

But these are just thoughts, and I wish I had the facility of Julian Steward to do a study of Philippine society such as that of **The People of Peru**, not from the point of view of an academic agent of imperialism but from the point of view of a Filipino, nay Filipina, genuinely concerned about the fate of her people.

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[Pertinent sections only]

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