# Process and Social Structure in a Philippine Lowland Settlement

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In the small agricultural settlement of Kapitangan on the island of Luzon, social and economic changes have been taking place at a relatively continuous pace for at least seventy years. From the viewpoint of the social anthropologist, such developments can be seen to be the result of a particular social structural system operating as a stabilizing factor through time and varying environmental situations. Past changes in settlement pattern, marriage system, rules of residence, political, religious, and economic organization appear as consistent variations on a fundamental theme. Present and future changes should be able to take place within this same framework. There seems to be no reason why adaptation to modern technology should require a complete break with the underlying social concepts of this or any other Asian society. Kapitangan has been steadily moving from peasant isolation to involvement in a modern nation.

If one examines the social and economic developments that have taken place in Kapitangan in recent history, the importance and interrelationships of social structure, process, and social organization become apparent.<sup>2</sup> One of the core structural principles—defining family organization and setting the limits for the segmentation of basic economic units—has influenced to a large degree the flow of events that center in and around this Tagalog-speaking barrio in the lowland, wet rice-producing area of central Luzon. Briefly, I will try to show how periodic changes in the total social organization of Kapitangan reflect a relationship between (a) expanding, stable, or diminishing resources, and (b) the enduring structural concept of family control of those resources.

There are four main periods of time to be considered:

- 1880-1926 During this period the settlement was definitely established, but it remained an outpost of several other older communities.
- 1926-1942 This period begins with the construction of an irrigation system and ends with the beginning of the Second World War.
- 1942-1952 This is a time of war and upheaval, including both the Japanese occupation and the postwar communist troubles.
- 1952-1958 This is a period of relative stability and integrative activity.

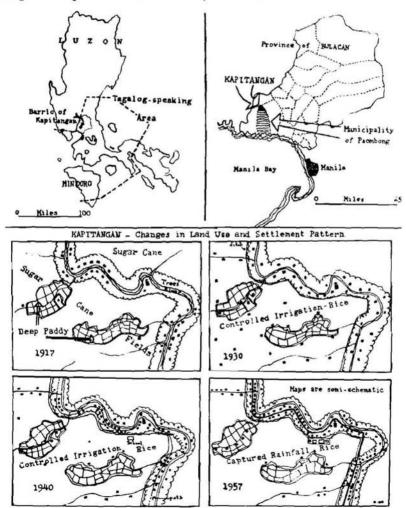
#### 1880-1926

There remains a great deal of research to be accomplished concerning the history of settlement and land use in Kapitangan in the early and middle parts of the nineteenth century. It is certain that the area came under its present intensive use only in the last quarter of the last century. Prior to this, the major portion of the land was not cleared and was used as a gathering, hunting, and fishing preserve by the people of nearby settlements. The square mile of land that makes up the barrio of Kapitangan had only a few isolated families living on it before the 1870's. These people grew rice in a few deep paddies constructed for purposes of irrigation at some unknown time in the past (taking advantage of tidal action on the fresh-water streams of this deltaic area). The subsistence base before 1880 was a combination, in almost equal parts, of wet rice production and fishing. The genealogical connections of these early inhabitants to the present population is still questionable.

Sometime after 1880 (and after an almost legendary typhoon that blew down "all the large trees in the jungle"), the higher ground, that is, three to six feet above the highest tidal influence, was prepared for the cultivation of sugar cane. By 1917, sugar cane had become visually and spatially the dominant feature of land utilization, even though it was the river-irrigated paddies that permitted year-round occupation by more than a handful of people. Wet rice can be harvested twice a year, requires steady attention,

and is the basic staple in Tagalog diet. Sugar cane can be harvested only once a year, requires only periodic attention, and of course is not suitable as a major dietary component. Sugar cane also requires more land area than does rice to produce a crop of equal value. The importance of this fact will be seen later.

In 1917, there were thirty-seven households grouped into two relatively compact settlements (see below). The houses were large L-shaped affairs, ordinarily housing no more than three



generations-a married couple, their unmarried children, one of their married children, and his or her family of procreation. This seems to have been very similar to the bilek organization of the long house-dwelling Iban of Borneo as reported by Freeman.3 However, the houses were not placed in such a way as to form a long house as among the Iban; instead, they were built as much as a hundred yards apart, facing the water on either side of the river that forms one of the boundaries of the barrio. The river also provided the main means of transportation and communication with the outside world. According to informants, people from one settlement seldom interacted with those of the other, except in terms of polite conversation upon casual meeting. As offshoots of separate older barrios, extrasettlement relationships ordinarily were oriented by the sphere of bilaterally defined kin groupings in the "parent" communities several miles distant. Ritual kinship could have helped to unite the two settlements but did not. Compadrazgo relationships. at a later period, made "relatives" of biologically nonrelated individuals when one acted as sponsor at the baptism, confirmation, or marriage of the child of the other. In the early period, ritual kinship emphasized or strengthened existing kinship ties rather than creating new ones.

Each one of the households, with its constituent nuclear families (husband, wife, and children), held tenant rights (part of the inheritance) to one of the sugar cane plots and one or two of the deep rice paddies. From an economic point of view, the rice plot represented "home base," providing food for the table; sugar cane, along with fishing and trading, brought in a subsidiary cash income. The amount of rice that could be grown each year in a particular paddy rather strictly delimited the number of nuclear families using it. And total paddy production set the limits for community size.

For the first few generations the two settlements continued to represent extensions of other older communities and did so as long as the subsistence base limited population size. Natural increments in population were absorbed by the parent barrios through arranged marriages. Genealogies indicate that the first marriage of the offspring of particular families tended to be endogamous to the settlement, while the second might be exogamous to the settlement but endogamous to the family's bilaterally defined kinship network.

Marriages were arranged by parents with the advice of the grand. parental generation so that stewardship of houses and rights to land use, both in the parent barrios and in Kapitangan, remained within the "descent grouping" (angkan). The descent group, at any one point in time, seems to have been composed of several bilaterally defined lineages, all having mutual interest in maintaining tenancy rights to a number of rice paddies and sugar cane holdings. Each of these maintained its own basic continuity through preferred second-cousin marriage. Marriage between more distant cousins, from time to time, tied the several separate lineages together. Over the generations, the focus of personal kindred relationships shifted in that an individual was distantly related to certain people who would be close relatives of his children. The details of this marriage system and the economic pattern within which it functioned require further analysis, and still more data is needed. It seems, however. that each marriage represented, first and foremost, an agreement among the members of a bilateral descent group concerning distribution of responsibility for maintenance of resources. Simply stated, this worked out so that one child remained at home at marriage while his siblings had to move elsewhere or not marry. Tradition has it that because of this there have always been many old bachelors (matandang binata) and old spinsters (matandang dalaga) in Kapitangan.

From the last half of the nineteenth century, most of the land in Kapitangan was owned by one family living nearby in the provincial capital of Malolos. The family was founded in the nineteenth century by an immigrant Chinese who married a Tagalog girl and made a financial success dealing in coconut oil. Kapitangan's land use was only one of his enterprises, and he maintained the role of landlord to individual tenants and not that of landlord to the tenants as a group. Because of this, the two settlements remained relatively aloof from each other during the first period, even though there was a single landlord for both who might have forced them to cooperate economically.

The cycle of economic, social, and ritual activities was to a large extent regulated by the rice and sugar cane crops. Rice was planted and harvested twice yearly, while sugar cane was planted and harvested only once. Allowing approximately one month for each of these activities, there was a total of six months in each year de-

voted to agricultural pursuits by the bulk of the population. The other six months were spent in other types of activity. Most men were also fishermen. They fished the rivers, creeks, and mangrove swamps to the south toward Manila Bay. Some of the younger men traveled about the country (also by dugout) peddling small items bought in the nearby market center. House building and repair engaged some. Annual fiestas in the parent barrios required considerable expenditure of time. These were not held on fixed days but were arranged to coincide with the slack period at the onset of the dry season following the harvesting of rice grown during the rainy season.

During the nineteenth century, Kapitangan did not have its own fiesta, but at the turn of the century a cult was established centering on the small chapel. This gave rise to an annual celebration and eventually to a full-scale fiesta. Tradition has it that sometime in the early part of the twentieth century a carved figure of Christ was found in a termite hill and installed in the chapel. Soon after, a stranger from far away visited Kapitangan and declared the image to be the very Cristo who had appeared in a vision sending him to seek a "living" statue of Christ. Since that time, the stories concerning the miraculous origin, nature, and history of this statue have grown into quite an elaborate mythology. Flagellantes come from all over the northern Tagalog area to perform before him on Holy Friday. The beginnings of this cult were contemporaneous with the early American Period and the withdrawal of Spanish power and influence.

## 1926-1942

By 1926 the fiesta and Holy Week activities were firmly established, giving the separate nuclear settlements common interests and a growing sense of identification with the land of Kapitangan. Ties with the parent barrios were weakened—or rather changed from unilateral to more bilateral relationships. Now there were at least two fiestas attended by each family: their own, and that of the barrio of their close relatives. Now they were no longer only guests at fiestas; they could return the hospitality at their own. Kapitangan was becoming established as a full-scale barrio.

The introduction of a controlled irrigation system in 1926 brought about an explosive change in land use and settlement pat-

tern. Equally important, it brought about a new situation in respect to settlement endogamy. Under the sugar cane utilization, each nuclear family or household had worked as much as eight to ten hectares of land. The irrigation system made it possible for wet rice to be grown on the high land. However, using traditional techniques, a farmer and his family could work only two or three hectares of land devoted to wet rice. Yet this smaller area of land produced much more dependable and adequate income than had the larger sugar cane holding. The larger holdings were divided. This released land to be used by new families (and potential population size was tremendously increased). From thirty-seven households in 1917, the settlement grew to seventy-five or so in 1930. This increase actually occurred after the construction of the irrigation system in 1926; thus, in a brief four-year period the number of houses more than doubled.

Marriages now tended to be most frequently endogamous to Kapitangan, or at least Kapitangan-local. As children married, the landlord assigned them to part of a holding that had been divided. At this point, children, who formerly would have been forced to seek marriage partners elsewhere, could remain within Kapitangan. The landlord allotted these holdings according to his evaluation of efficient use and not always according to kinship considerations (inheritance of right to a tenancy). Thus, households budding off from the two nuclear settlements were soon interdigitated on the rice plain as many of the nuclear families now moved from the two-family houses on the river to single-family dwellings on the broad dikes near their respective paddy lands.

The two settlements lost their physical and social independence of each other. Children playing together, farmers cultivating neighboring fields, women washing clothes side by side brought about interaction on a daily basis between people who in the first period would have had little to do with one another. Now it was easier to trade labor with neighbors regardless of kinship relation than to depend upon one's family, the members of which might be located some distance away. For one thing, the nature of the paddy arrangement made it difficult to move carabaos from one end of the settlement to the other in the wet season without damage to dikes, ditches, and crops. Children of genealogically unrelated families living on adjacent paddy dikes became potential marriage

partners as kinship was ritually established between neighbors by the compadrazgo system.

Annual fiestas elsewhere and crisis situations contined to bring together members of the wider-spread bilateral descent groups, thus reasserting the old ties to some extent. But other factors began to override the descent group as the only determinant of cooperative interaction, marriage, and general social orientation of individuals. Compulsory schools, construction of a dirt road to the administrative center of the municipality (and thus to the outside world), and the real beginnings of local government on the municipal level—all these faced the people with decisions to be made as a barrio.

Probably the outstanding factor, however, was the active and direct role assumed by the son of the old landlord. He built a house near the chapel and lived there with his family for a considerable portion of the year. He directed work on the irrigation system and recruited work teams with little regard to the kinship network. He held obligatory meetings of all his tenants concerning agricultural and political affairs, gradually training the people not only in the facing of new problems but in the ritual of holding meetings. Today, because of this experience, the people of Kapitangan have their own "Robert's Rules of Order" and hold quite sophisticated formal meetings.

The evolution of a barrio political and social organization relatively divorced from biologically determined kinship organization stems from this period. Of course even today biological kinship cannot be disregarded in the process of decision-making or the patterns of leadership, but the extended family and descent group as an almost total power organization began at this time to give way to neighborhood and occupation associations. The same patterns for basic social organization remained, but outside, non-Kapitangan, genealogically determined social obligations were weakened to some extent. Further, there was developing a feeling of "Kapitanganism" which cut across kinship boundaries.

The cult of the Cristo reached a peak in the latter part of the 1926-1942 period. Fiestas became bigger and better due to increased prosperity and population growth. The miraculous power of the Cristo gained widespread acceptance both within and beyond the limits of Kapitangan. Thousands of people attended fiesta and Holy Week activities. During some years more than one hundred

flagellantes performed on the road in front of the chapel on Holy Friday. The chapel was gradually improved and bamboo walls gave way to adobe (volcanic tuff carved into building blocks). This fame of course intensified the pride of each Taga-Kapitangan in his barrio.

The core social structural feature found in this and all the periods is the concept of the nuclear family estate. Each marriage must represent either the continuation of an already existing body of property and rights, or the establishment of a new one. The more stable, restricted, or actually decreasing the available resources, the more control the wider kinship group seems to have in arranging marriages.

In an expanding resource situation, new estates (or resource for family income) can be easily established for new marriages. These marriages do not merely replace an already existing marriage or partnership. The nuclear family does not need to rely exclusively on obligations within the two concomitant "kindreds" to find marriage partners for its members.

Toward the end of the period just before the Second World War, a gravel, raised, intrabarrio road was constructed, allowing easy access from one end of the barrio to the other throughout the year. With the construction of this barrio road, a new period seemed about to begin, but this was interrupted by the Japanese occupation and its aftermath.

A few years before the war many of the families living out in the paddies began moving their houses to sections of the road not too far from their rice plots. As in the first period, the settlement pattern began to follow the line formed by the river (the road paralleled it directly); however, it no longer was composed of two distinct kinship nuclei but reflected the socio-spatial relationships newly established during the expansion period. These new houses along the road were larger and finer than the field houses. They represented capital accumulated under the new prosperity brought on by the irrigation system. Many parents left the field house to one of the children and his or her spouse and built a completely new house on the road. The settlement pattern was largely the same as it is today, although the actual lineal interdigitation of house-

holds has been considerably altered due to events of the war and the communist period.

Along the eastern edge of the barrio formed by the river, there is a strip of wooded land varying in width from a few yards to one hundred feet. The road divides this strip in half, and the houses in 1940, as now, faced the road on either side for the mile that it stretches from one end of the barrio to the other. The trees and the road form a serpentine tunnel so that the yards and houses might be pictured as caves or rooms opening off it. In the immediate prewar period, this lineal settlement pattern was irregularly divided into neighborhoods. Many times a family (maganak) moved in near some member of either the husband's or wife's immediate family (a sibling or parent), but just as often they moved near someone who had been a neighbor in the fields—regardless of relationship. Often their close relatives were located in some other neighborhood farther up the line.

Thus the lessening of extended family ties in daily activities that had begun during the shift to the scattered settlement pattern continued to some extent even after the lineal nucleation along the road occurred. The road enabled close relatives living at opposite ends of the tunnel to visit one another quite easily, and carabaos could be shifted from paddy area to paddy area quickly and without damage to fields. This meant a reversal in the cooperative labor pattern was possible, and, to some degree, this occurred. But never since the early period has there been the same emphasis on close biological kinship as a basis for organizing all activities. Neighbors continued to form the core of labor parties.

In the earlier period, primary relationships were kinshiporiented irrespective of spatial distribution. In the second period, some of the relationships with close relatives who were located outside the settlement became almost secondary, while relationships with certain nonrelatives located inside the settlement, which had been secondary or tertiary, began to approach a primary stage.

### 1942-1952

During the early portion of the war the people of Kapitangan "sat out" (their term was nagtanga—"stand around and look stupid") the Japanese occupation. A small garrison of soldiers was established in the schoolhouse; the school, which had been estab-

lished in 1939, was continued with a Japanese propaganda emphasis. The people more or less awaited developments. Guerilla activity in the area stimulated Japanese suspicions concerning the loyalty of the people of Kapitangan. The chapel and its *Cristo* were important symbols, in different ways, for both the Tagalogs and the Japanese. Near the end of the war, misunderstandings concerning guerilla activities finally resulted in the soldiers' herding all the males of the surrounding area into the chapel and demanding to know who were the guerilla leaders. When no one would divulge the leaders' names—and it is doubtful if many of the local people were directly involved in guerilla activities at this time—a machine gun was fired into the chapel and seven or eight men killed. Someone was able to break open a section of the chapel wall, and the men escaped into the nearby paddy area. The Japanese were unable to round them up, and within a few hours most of the population of Kapitangan had dispersed to isolated areas of the nearby Candaba Swamp where they spent the remainder of the war—about a year. Only a handful remained behind, and these pretended loyalty to the Japanese. The houses of the others were burned.

In the final stages of the war and in the immediate postwar period, two things of importance occurred to shape Kapitangan's postwar development. First, as the Japanese withdrew south to Manila and north to Baguio, the people returned to Kapitangan and began to rebuild. The old distribution of households formed a model for the location of the new dwellings, but there were some shifts. Accidental associations during the withdrawal period brought new close relationships and affected decisions concerning the location of particular houses. All sorts of factors brought about slight variations in the settlement pattern, including the appearance on the scene of new spouses from distant barrios and even different linguistic areas who had married into Kapitangan families in exile. All of this broke the continuity of spatial relations to some extent, but still the old relationships and patterns remained quite strong in orienting social organization and residence patterns. The tendency was to return to the way things used to be as much as possible.

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Just as some sort of stability was appearing, however, a second war broke over the heads of the people of Kapitangan. This time it was between the government of the Philippines and the insurgent Hukbalahaps, a communist-directed movement. From 1948 to

1951, an actual military campaign was waged in, around, over, and on both sides of the barrio. Toward the end of this period many of the people once more took to the swamps for a year or so.

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All in all, this was a time of turbulence and unsettledness; Kapitangan was highly fragmented—that is to say, most of the families had little to do with one another but took up association either with newly established friends in the depths of the Candaba Swamp or re-established old ties with bilateral descent group members in parent barrios. Kapitangan ceased to exist during this time as a settlement, let alone as a community.

# 1952-1958

By 1952 the area was cleared of Huk activity, and Kapitangan began to return once more to normal. This was a difficult time because the people were not sure but that the fighting might break out again at any moment; so they remained poised for flight. In the meantime, several new factors had arisen to shape the

overview of Kapitangan. First, the landlord died, leaving the land undivided to his twelve children with no one really in charge. Secondly, an improved road was built from the edge of the barrio into the municipal center, connecting with a paved surface leading to Manila. The barrio was effectively connected now with the outside world throughout most of the year. Thirdly, a new principal was appointed for the school who began to work intensively for community solidarity and improvement. In many ways he took the place left by the death of the landlord—but not completely, since he had nothing to say about the agricultural activities or land holdings. Fourthly, a somewhat intangible factor was introduced by the "new" approach to central government during the Magsaysay administration in which barrio development was emphasized as the basis for national development. Part of this program eventually involved election of barrio officials by the barrio people. Further, unintentionally it posed a new orientation for loyalties. Traditional relationships were attacked as holding back progress toward national development and full "democracy." Tenants began to question openly and actively the policies of landlords, and young people the commands of the older generation.

Finally, the irrigation system failed. Manila's needs, due to postwar growth in population, drew off most of the water that was supposed to supply the irrigation ditches of the whole area north of Manila which included Kapitangan. Water reached the barrio only infrequently and then not at the required times nor in the necessary quantities. The higher paddy land could be used only during the rainy season and was fallow during the dry season. Rainfall is not so easily controlled as irrigation water so that even the rainy season crop was less productive than in the prewar period. Kapitangan now had a larger population, but its total rice-producing potential had been cut more than half. By 1957, even though the individual holdings had been divided, only 25 per cent of the nuclear families held tenant rights to more than one hectare of rice land, another 25 per cent held less than one hectare, and the other 50 per cent held none. Half of the families of Kapitangan, then, were without rice land.

At the present time, however, a program of planting fruit trees in the house lots begun in the twenties and thirties by the old landlord is bearing fruit, and the new road allows the produce to be marketed easily on the outside. A major portion of the income loss from lowered rice production has been made up by the marketing of these fruit crops. For example, one mango tree can bring two hundred pesos or more a year, and many of the yards have more than one such tree. Rights to these trees are handled in the same way as rice tenancies.

The road to the outside opened up a whole new world of economic resources for Kapitangan. People can commute to Manila either daily or weekly so that a male household head and some of his children can work in factories while the rest of the family remains in Kapitangan. Peddling of fish, ice cream, vinegar, and various products from the markets into other barrios is also a major occupation. This is, of course, an old pattern, but previously transportation in the area was restricted mostly to the complex river system, making peddling quite slow and difficult. Bicycles, jeeps, and even walking are much faster and easier than a dugout.

Interestingly, the cult of the *Cristo* has helped make up some of the loss of income due to lowered rice production. Each year the fiesta and Holy Week activities attract thousands of outsiders who come as spectators and participants. Stands selling drinks and food are set up by many of the families of Kapitangan, and considerable income is derived thereby. The amount of income realized

is without doubt equal to the value of a rice crop for some families.

The cult is a strong force in uniting the people of the settlement at certain points. Although kinship, neighborhood, and individual associations tend to divide the people of Kapitangan into many segments on almost every issue, interest in the upkeep of the chapel and the care of the figure of Christ unite them. Meetings of all sorts are most often held directly in front of the chapel, and the door is left open so that the Cristo can be seen. When arguments reach the boiling level and it seems that schisms are about to develop or be reinforced, often the "chairman" can smooth things over by halting the meeting and going forward to pray. When he returns, a decision may be made amicably, or at least a motion put forth to delay discussion until a later date. The latter happens most often and such decisions are seldom made. The Cristo is a figure so respected and of such supernatural power that it can, with intelligent direction by wise heads, operate to stem development of overt factionalism on particular issues. Welding Kapitangan into one unit with an established heirarchy of leaders and decision-makers may yet occur if the cult grows stronger in the years to come.

The settlement pattern is an intensification of the immediate prewar lineal alignment along the road. There are still a few houses out in the paddy area, but these are gradually being moved nearer the road or to the vicinity of one of the new artesian wells. Houses of holders of tenancy rights continue to be located on the section of the road nearest their fields. The others are interspersed according to some sort of kinship relation (which by now can almost be assumed—either consanguineally, affinally, or ritually), but not necessarily in terms of relation to an extended family or bilateral descent grouping.

Social organization in Kapitangan today revolves around two main axes. One is the groupings and reciprocal behavior brought about by membership in particular bilateral descent groupings. This is a holdover from the days when preferred second-cousin marriage brought about relatively endogamous social isolates that were more or less independent cooperative, if not corporate, groups. In those days neighbors were automatically close relatives of one spouse and elementary family members of the other.

The other axis of social organization, which began developing

in 1926, is much more obvious to the casual observer. This is composed of the neighborhood units which often have many of the organizational characteristics of the nuclear settlements of the earlier period. While actual biological kinship among neighbors is apt to be more distant than in the previous periods, daily activities and participation in many local affairs are often shaped more by membership in a particular neighborhood than membership in the wider-spread kin groupings to which everyone still belongs. These latter become most obvious in crisis situations such as sickness and death; fiestas elsewhere; to a large extent in marriage-partner selection (but not so much as formerly); and in reciprocal relations outside one's own neighborhood. Within the neighborhood, the gap between nonrelatives is bridged by ties developed through propinquity and ritual co-parenthood.

Finally, tenancy presents a different picture today than at any time in the past. There are now many nonresident landlords who do not take much interest in the affairs of the tenants and, further, do not expect much because of the failure of the irrigation system. The people of Kapitangan, in the main, direct their own economic activities from beginning to end without much interference from outsiders. They are now developing new institutions to take care of their problems as they become aware of a community of interest.

Kapitangan has changed in the past eighty years from an ecological area including two distinct settlements made up of separate kin groupings into a settlement in which little or no nucleation of settlement pattern along kinship lines can be distinguished. To a great extent, close kinship (nuclear, extended family, kinship grouping) has lost force as an organizing factor and neighborhood, religious, and economic associations have gained in turn. However, the maintenance and improvement of established "estates" held by nuclear families and the creation of new ones remain primary goals in social organization. When resources expand, the wider kinship grouping loses its importance in regulating affairs. When there is competition for resources, kinship groupings become important. The bilateral kinship system allows for this waxing and waning in that, during a period of want, established ties have to be utilized since new ties are difficult to establish; on the other hand, during a period of plenty, old ties recede somewhat at the expense of new ones which can be formed. New ties, once established, are grafted

onto the old organization. If these do not fall away under stress, a new integration has been accomplished.

#### NOTES

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Corporation.

2. Social structure can be defined as the symbolic, conceptual framework for social interaction (including economic, political, and religious activities) which persists through time and remains relatively stable regardless of the constant changes in population and environment that occur from generation to generation. Social organization is the conformation visible to the observer in the total relationships and behavior among the individuals making up the society at any one period. Through time, it may be possible to discern several varieties of social organization stemming from one social structural base. Process indicates the dynamics of social evolution.

3. J. D. Freeman, "The Family System of the Iban of Borneo," Cambridge Papers in Social Anthropology, 1, 1957, 15-52. Also, The Iban, ms., 1958. (To be published in the symposium: Social Structure in Southeast Asia, ed. by G. P.

Murdock.)