

LOWLAND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION II: AMBILINEAL KIN GROUPS IN A CENTRAL LUZON BARRIO

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This study investigates ambilineal kin groups as they function in a lowland Christian Tagalog group. The fieldwork was conducted in Barrio Pulo of San Isidro, Nueva Ecija between 1966 and 1968. The author explores the factors contributing to the formation of such groups, describes some specific *angkan* (ambilineal kin groups) in Pulo, and discusses the importance of the *angkan*. The author concludes that although the northern Tagalog ambilineal kin groups are not formally organized they are recognized and do function in important ways as interest groups.

As Fred Eggan (1967: 186) has pointed out, the Philippines "provides one of the important regions of the world for the study of bilateral social systems." This is particularly true of the area that was included in the old Mountain Province, where "bilateral descent groups of some type exist in Ifugao and Sagada, and very probably in Kalinga and Bontoc as well" (Eggan 1967: 186). Lowland Christian groups, on the other hand,

show further variations as a result of their long period of acculturation to Spanish and American cultures, but the basic features of the personal kindreds and bilateral descent are still important, though reduced in scope. In the lowlands the social system has become more flexible, in that more distant kin relationships have to be implemented to be effective. This factor of choice is further represented in the system of *compadrazgo* or godparenthood, introduced by the Spaniards but adapted to Filipino social life (Eggan 1967: 200-201).

This paper is about ambilineal kin groups among a lowland Christian group, the northern Tagalog.¹ Spanish acculturation and the "factor of choice" are important in the formation of these kin groups. The basic features of bilateral descent are not reduced in scope, however, nor is the implementation of distant kin relationships and *compadrazgo* as important here as Eggan implies they are in other lowland areas.

The northern Tagalog ambilineal kin groups are not formally organized or well defined.

They are generally recognized, however, and they function in several important areas within the limits of the barrio.

The barrio in this case is the principal sitio of Barrio Pulo of San Isidro, Nueva Ecija. The Tagalog-speaking people of Pulo are primarily landless and until recently worked as tenant farmers under the *kasama*, or share tenant, system.²

The Social Units of Pulo

The social units of Pulo include five different kinds of local and kin groups.

1. *Households*. Most of the households are intact nuclear households (111 of 174), although modifications of the nuclear household are found. The most common is the vertically extended family household (29 of 174). The household is an economic unit and ideally should have its own farm. Because of population pressures, however, this ideal is not always realized.

2. *Local kin groups*. A concise definition or description of Pulo's local kin groups is impossible because they vary in size and structure. In general, however, they consist of groups of two or more adjoining, or nearly adjoining, households which are consanguineally, and sometimes affinally related. The members exhibit patterns

of constant visiting and sharing. For an extensive discussion of these groups, see Murray (1973).

3. *Ambilineal kin groups*. These are the subject of this paper.

4. *Kindreds*. These are cognatic, ego-centered kin groups, composed of near relatives of the individual. They do not embrace all of the ambilineal kin groups of the parents.³

5. *The barrio itself*. It tends to fit Wolf's (1957) model of the closed corporate peasant community.

Surnames and Banság

An important concept in defining ambilineal kin groups in Central Luzon is the use of surnames. Spanish surnames are commonly used throughout the Philippines, as they are in Latin America. Following the Spanish custom, the woman may assume the surname of her husband at marriage; the child generally follows the surname of his father.⁴ This practice comes from a decree issued by a Spanish governor in 1849 whereby local Spanish officials, who apparently had difficulty in pronouncing many "native names," were ordered to change these to Spanish names. The governor even provided a list of Spanish surnames, "apparently taken from a Madrid street directory" (Zaide 1956: 80). Many native names were changed, although some continue in the manner of Spanish surnames.

The question arises as to what was the nature of the "native surnames." Were these names transferred through inheritance, and, if so, was it a patrilineal transfer? Did these surnames persist through time or were they constantly changing?

It is probable that these "native surnames" were like a particular form of nickname, the *banság*, which is found in Pulo and throughout the Tagalog area. Charles Kaut (1967: 403) describes this as follows:

First it refers to a nickname the individual inherits from, or through his mother or father. In this sense it is a type of surname. Second, it can refer to a nickname that is not inherited but is acquired during the lifetime of the individual because of some personal characteristic or event pertaining only to him . . . The second, acquired form can become like the first if it is inherited in the next generation

If the "native surnames" were like the *banság*,

they would be passed on through females as well and thus not be patrilineal like the Spanish surnames. Commonly, a *banság*, when it is extended, can refer to a man, his children, and his grandchildren. Thus, a man named Roxas whose *banság* is Goma (rubber tire) might have his immediate family (children and grandchildren) referred to as *silá Goma* (lit. 'they, tire' or 'Tire and his family'), and they might be called "Goma" individually, but this term would not extend to all the Roxas families.

In addition, it does not seem likely that the "native surnames" were assumed by the wife at marriage, because even today women hardly use their husbands' Spanish-type surnames. Most women in Pulo refer to themselves, or are referred to, by their maiden names. Widows always use their maiden names. The custom of using the husband's surname, however, is also understood and sometimes employed.

The Angkán

A limited number of surnames are prominent in the barrio due to several socioeconomic factors⁵ such as preferred virilocal residence, the actual choice of residence, the availability of houselots, good relations with landowners, the availability of farm land, and such factors as several generations in Pulo and many male children. People with the same surname are generally considered consanguineal kin, even if the connections are not known. Thus, people associated with the same surname form groups which are kin groups.

This last statement disagrees with what Kaut (1965: 2) has said on the subject:

Tagalog society, so far as our studies have shown to present, has no segments which are strictly lineal in nature. The patrilineal inheritance of surnames seems to be a recent innovation (in some areas possibly as late as the middle nineteenth century) and is remarkably unrelated to the formation of corporate groups beyond the level of the extended family.

In Pulo, the groups are recognized as kin groups and are referred to by surnames, for example, *mga* Francisco, *mga* Patiag, *mga* Flores, and so on. The term I use for these ambilineal kin groups associated with a particular surname is *angkán*. This Tagalog term is almost equivalent

to the English term "family."⁶ In Pulo, however, it is often used for surname groups, and I shall use it here in this restricted sense. Kaut (1961: 267), however, uses this term for the Tagalog kindred, which he says "consists of all the relatives of an individual and includes the personal kindreds of both the mother and father." In another place, however, he (Kaut 1960: 39) uses the same term for a "descent grouping," which he says "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 sugarcane holdings." This latter is much closer to my use of *angkán*.

Kaut apparently does not make a distinction between the ambilineal kin groups and the ego-centered kindred and between the kindred and "all the relatives of an individual." These are three very different kinds of groupings, not only conceptually but in fact. The ambilineal kin group, or *angkán*, is neither ego-centered nor does it normally extend beyond the *barrio*, whereas the kindred does both. And rather than include "all the relatives of the individual," the kindred is restricted by factors other than the fact of being related.

The concept *isáng tiyán* (lit. 'one stomach'), which was useful in delineating local kin groups (Murray 1973), helps define the *angkán*. People who are *isáng tiyán* are like a segmentary lineage. They are a group which consists of individuals descended from a common ancestor and — by extension — their spouses. *Isáng tiyán*, however, does not necessarily refer to an *angkán*, which can be made up of several *tiyán*. When compared with unilineal descent groups, a *tiyán* is more like a lineage, whereas an *angkán* is more like a sib (Murdock 1949: 47) or clan (Firth 1951: 53).

Affiliation with an angkán

The *angkan* is similar to what Davenport (1959) has called a "nonunilinear descent group" and to what Firth (1957: 6) and Murdock (1960: 9) have called an "ambilineal descent group." Firth (1957: 4) distinguishes "between descent group systems which do not allow choice in affiliation as regards membership through male and female and those which do."

Similarly, Davenport (1959: 558) defines nonunilinear descent as

ascription or exclusion through specified kin relationships but where societal norms provided more than one possibility or where no single alternative role approaches a frequency of 100 percent.

Such is the case with the *angkán*. Such affiliation and ascription, however, is not enough to make the *angkán* (or any other ambilineal kin group) a *descent* group. Firth and Davenport, I believe, have fallen into the same error of which Leach (1970: 108) accuses Levi-Strauss, that he:

confuses the notion of *descent*, legal principle governing the transmission of rights from generation to generation, with the notion of *filiation*, the kinship link between parent and child.

Ambilineal kin groups are quite different from unilineal descent groups with respect to descent. Descent sets limits on their formation but does not determine it. Unilineal descent groups, however, *are* determined by descent and, therefore, persist through time. Ambilineal kin groups, on the other hand, allow for frequent shifting and realigning. Some groups rise in prestige and prominence while others disappear.

The obvious means of ascription to a particular *angkán* is through the inheritance of one's father's name. The individual's ascription may not be towards the *angkán* bearing his surname, however, if the father is from outside the *barrio* and is not identified with a Pulo *angkán*, or if his *angkán* is insignificant when compared with the mother's, or if the family is living as part of a local kin group whose core members belong to another *angkán*. He may, in these or other circumstances, become identified at birth with the *angkán* bearing his mother's surname or that of either of his grandmothers, especially if the latter are alive. Kin, however, beyond the second ascending generation are generally not known. If they are known, they are frequently not known by their surnames. Thus identification with the *angkán* bearing the name of a great-grandmother is highly improbable, except in cases where this would be the only possible identification. I know of no such case in Pulo.

Besides the consanguineal types of ascription just described, ascription by affines is also possible. A wife brought to Pulo from another *barrio* becomes a member of her husband's

angkán; the same goes for a husband from outside, and there are several of these despite the virilocal ideal. Also, a person from a small or insignificant angkán or someone living in his or her spouse's local kin group will identify with the spouse's angkán. In the case where both the husband and wife come from large Pulo angkán, each will identify with his own angkán, but their children will probably identify with their father's especially if they live in their father's local kin group and his angkán is prominent. This, however, does not mean that the mother's angkán is completely excluded because they maintain ties with it through their own kindreds.

Some Pulo angkán

Although angkán are usually localized to a barrio, they are not localized within it. They usually consist of most of the persons or households in one or more of the local kin groups, plus isolated individuals or households either within or outside of other local kin groups.

As mentioned above, certain angkán are "large" and "prominent" whereas others are not. The three most prominent angkán in Pulo are the Franciscos, the Patiags, and the Floreses. The Franciscos and the Patiags are the first and second largest respectively. There are three other angkán — the Alfonsos, the de la Cruzes, and the Manuels — which are more or less the same size as the Floreses. In addition, there are about seven others scattered through the barrio, usually dominating two or more local kin groups. They are smaller but are also considered important. There are also a few large local kin groups, whose young people are marrying into other groups within the barrio, which are also angkán.

There is not, however, an angkán for each surname. Over 75 of the surnames of both husbands and wives occur in central Pulo alone. Some of these occur only once or twice and belong to a man or woman from outside who has married into the barrio. Some are vestiges of angkán which are on the wane. Others will some day designate a leading angkán, but at present are scattered in single houses through the barrio.

The Patiags is an example of an angkán. Although no one seems to know its etymology,

Patiag is a Tagalog surname which is used in the same way the Spanish surnames are used.

The angkán is made up of the descendants of a pair of brothers from Bulacan whose names have been forgotten. Each of these men had a son who resided in Pulo, and the groups of descendants of each of these sons, Pedro and Guillermo, each consider themselves isáng tiyán, and so, there are two tiyán of Patiags. Pedro had six children; one died during the field period and one is still alive and resides periodically in Pulo. Of these six children, five have descendants in Pulo. Guillermo had nine children, most of whom are alive. Three of these live in Pulo and have offspring there. A fourth also has offspring in Pulo.

Figure 1 shows the relationships of heads of households (male heads or widows) included within the angkán. The numbers on the chart refer to households; numbers in parentheses indicate that the individual or couple is not the head of the household.

One need not possess the name Patiag to belong to the group. Of the 28 houses, in fact, only 12 are headed by a person named Patiag (see Table 1). This is due not only to the financial ability of the angkán to keep their married daughters at home,⁷ but also because certain sons and husbands of Patiag women have chosen to identify with their mother's or wife's angkán. For example, the name Buenaventura occurs in Table 1 four times. Prior to the Japanese occupation the Buenaventuras were a large and prominent angkán in Pulo. When the barrio was evacuated, however, the Buenaventuras of Pulo moved to another barrio where most of them have stayed until the present. The four Buenaventuras now in Pulo consist of a man married to a Patiag (house 36); his two sons (19, B3) who are, thus, Patiags on their mother's side; and the son of his deceased brother (70) who was also married to a Patiag. Two of these men live on Patiag-owned land (19, 70). Since there are no other Buenaventuras in central Pulo or the immediately surrounding sitios, these men have chosen to identify with the Patiags, a large and prominent angkán.

The Flores angkán — sometimes called "the

Floreses and Fernandos" — presents a different picture from the Patiags, but is still a representative angkán. Instead of being descended from two brothers, it is descended from two entirely unrelated families, between whom two marriages took place. The Fernandos were a Tagalog family, some of whose ancestors came from Bulacan. The Floreses were from Pampanga. The parents of the present older generation in Pulo (houses 37, 179, and so on) spoke Kapampangan, and their children understand it. The younger generations in Pulo (houses 38, 166, 142, and so on), however, speak only Tagalog.

Figure 2 shows the relationships of the heads of household included in the angkán plus the households in which the angkán has married daughters. The house numbers enclosed in slashes (/39/) show that a young girl from the angkán is living in her father-in-law's house in keeping with the practice of temporary virilocal residence. The women in houses 147 and 164 are a niece and aunt respectively married to two brothers from the important de la Cruz angkán. These two women identify with the Flores angkán, but their husbands — in whose local kin group they reside — and, most likely, their children identify with the de la Cruzes. The widow in house 76 lives in her father's local kin group, uses her maiden name, and is usually identified with her father's angkán — the Punos. Her children, however, are Fernandos and may identify either way.

Although the Floreses and the Fernandos can be considered separately, and occasionally they are, the two are normally considered, and consider themselves, a single angkán. I call them "the Floreses" here, because, although there are as many as five households with the name Fernando as compared with six with the name Flores (see Table 2), the Flores name predominates. This is because several Flores men who live outside the barrio keep close contacts with Pulo. House 179, furthermore, is an extended household containing three adult Flores men. But equally important is the fact that, especially in the past, the Floreses have enjoyed prestige and leadership in Pulo.

As in all Tagalog kin groups, the angkán are

exogamous, because the rule of exogamy includes all known relatives. In addition, there is a taboo on marriages between people who are neighbors or who are very "close." Members of the same angkán are considered close so that Fernandos do not marry Floreses even when there is no consanguineal connection.

Unlike the Patiags, most of whom live in Patiag-dominated local kin groups, the Floreses have daughters married into local kin groups dominated by other angkán (see Tables 1 and 2). The Floreses do not own houselots nor are they considered well-to-do by barrio standards; thus they are not able to keep their daughters at home. On the contrary, their daughters marry into the well-to-do angkán — two each with the de la Cruzes (houses 147 and 164) and the Sebastians (/149/ and /178/). The latter two angkán are considered the "richest" in the barrio. Thus, alliances have been formed between the prestigious and rich angkán, forming an interest group which offsets the larger angkán, the Patiags and the Franciscos.⁸

The angkán as an interest group

The angkán differs from the family and the local kin group, which function on a day-to-day basis and are concerned with basic needs and economic life, and from the kindred, which focuses on the individual at times of crisis. It is for the most part barrio-oriented, although it could in some cases be extended to a neighboring barrio. It is an interest group which is concerned with barrio politics and the attainment of status and patronage.

An angkán develops a certain amount of prestige in the barrio depending on its size, connections, and age. Some, therefore, have higher status than others. The status of an angkán plays an important role in the decision of an individual, who has the proper kinship connections, to align himself and his local kin group with the angkán. These decisions are not made formally but emerge as a result of other choices and actions. An example of this would be the choice of postmarital residence. An important factor in this choice would be the availability of housing or a houselot for the couple. Just as important, however, would be

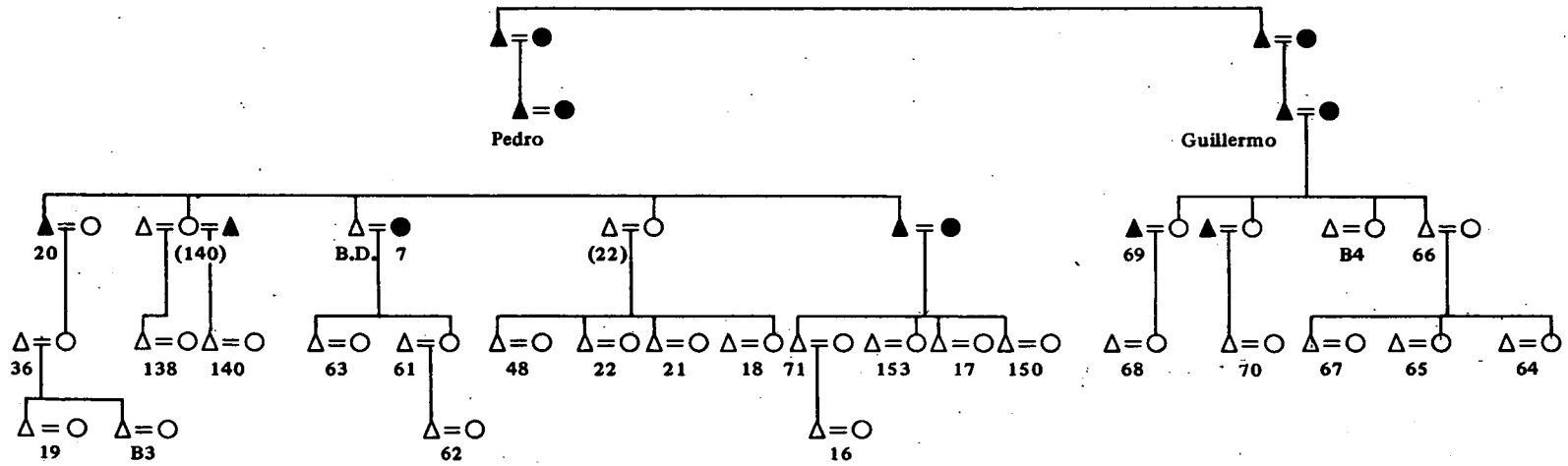


Fig. 1 - The Patiags

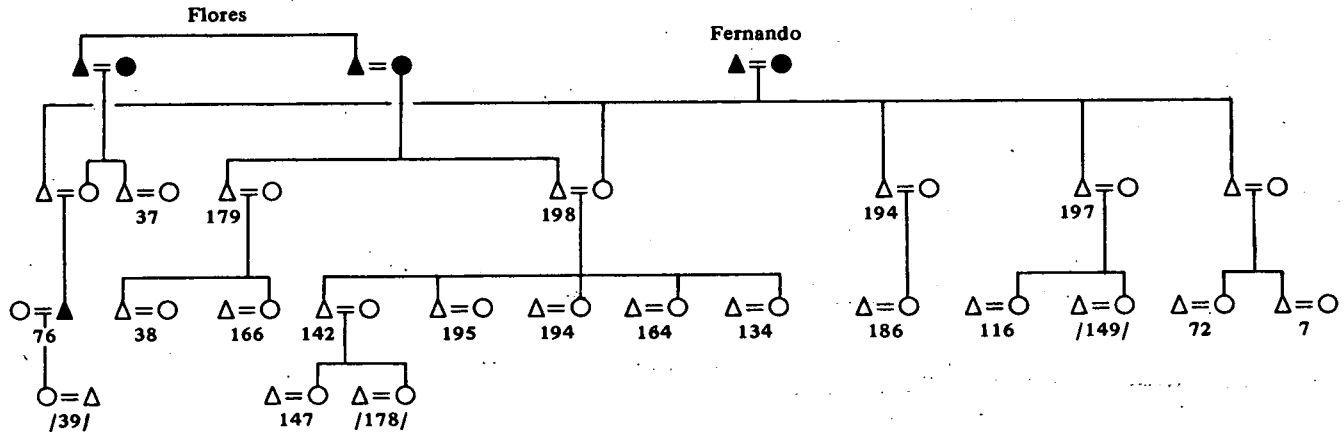


Fig. 2 - The Floreses and Fernandos

Table 1
The Patiags

House number	Local kin group	Household head's surname	Household head's identification with Patiag name ^a
16	D	Patiag	I
17	D	Patiag	I
18	D	Mallyare	WM
19	D	Buenaventura	M
20	D	Empaynado (Patiag's widow)	H
21	D	Perez	M
22	D	Perez	M
36	H	Buenaventura	W
48	A	Perez	M
61	H	Francisco	W
62	H	Francisco	M
63	H	Patiag	I
64	H	de la Peña	W
65	H	Puno	W
66	H	Patiag	I
67	H	Patiag	I
68	H	de Guzman	WM
69	H	Patiag (Impanya's widow)	I
70	H	Buenaventura	M
71	H	Patiag	I
85	K	Patiag	I
138	P	Patiag	I
140	P	Gatbunton	M
150	-	Patiag	I
153	-	Patiag (Hippolito's separated wife)	I
B3	-	Buenaventura	M
B4	-	Antonio	W
BD7	-	Patiag	I

^aThe meaning of the letter-symbols is as follows: I - I am a Patiag; M - My mother is/was a Patiag; H - My husband was a Patiag (said by widow); W - My wife is/was a Paitag; WM - My wife's mother is/was a Patiag.

the proper connections with a landlord who can provide nearby farmland. Thus the choice of residence involves settling in a particular local kin group that has available space and whose members have good, longstanding relationships

with a landlord. If these relationships are sufficiently longstanding they will be shared by a group larger than the local kin group. This is, I believe, Kaut's (1960: 39) "descent group" which "seems to have been composed of several

Table 2

The Floreses and Fernandos

House number	Local kin group	Household head's surname	Household head's identification with <i>angkán</i> ^a	
			Flores	Fernando
7	A	Fernando		I
37	E	Flores	I	
38	—	Flores	I	
41	—	Vallarta (widow of Flores)	H	
72	—	Ramirez		W
76	I	Puno (widow of Fernando)	(HM)	H
116	—	Fernando		I
134	—	Cruz	W	(WM)
142	—	Flores	I	(M)
147	S	de la Cruz	W	
164	S	de la Cruz	W	(WM)
166	—	Alcantara	W	
179	—	Flores	I	
186	V	Alfonso		W
194	X	Millar	W	(WM)
195	X	Flores	I	(M)
196	X	Fernando		I
197	X	Fernando		I
198	X	Flores	I	(W)
199	X	Fernando		I
/39/ ^b				
/149/ ^b				
/178/ ^b				

^aThe meaning of the letter-symbols is as follows: I — I am a Flores/Fernando; M — My mother is/was a Flores/Fernando; H — My husband was a Flores/Fernando (said by widow); HM — My husband's mother was a Flores; W — My wife is/was a Flores/Fernando; WM — My wife's mother is/was a Fernando.

^bThree newly married girls from the *angkán* are each residing in one of these houses — their husbands' fathers' houses — in keeping with the practice of temporary patrilocal residence.

bilaterally defined lineages, all having mutual interest in maintaining tenancy rights to a number of rice paddies . . ." It is the *angkán*. Thus, the choice of residence involves identifying with a particular *angkán* — husband's versus wife's, husband's father's versus husband's mother's, and so on. The identification does not become final all at once, however, but happens over a period of time, being recognized only after the fact.

Landlords, of course, distribute patronage; patronage is also distributed through politics. It is not surprising, therefore, that the *angkán* play an important role in elections. *Angkán* tend to vote as a block, and when they split over a particular candidate they tend to do it along *tiyán* lines (see Murray 1970: 248–55).

Because kin groups are exogamous and the individuals and local kin groups represented by

the several *angkán* aspire to a limited number of positions or favors — a seat on the barrio council, a piece of land from a particular landlord — these groups tend to balance themselves within the barrio. Thus, an individual or local kin group that has the choice might not align itself with a large *angkán* which must distribute patronage among many persons. Instead, they might take their chances on a smaller *angkán* which might not be so prestigious or so well-connected but which has fewer persons or local groups to look out for, and in which they might be able to attain a more prominent position.

As interest groups, the *angkán*, although definable at any given moment in time, are frequently shifting and realigning, with some groups rising in prestige and prominence while others disappear. The barrio with its kin-based interest groups can thus, perhaps, be seen as a kind of microcosm of Philippine society, where kinship and patronage play extremely important roles in the constantly shifting alliances that influence all phases of life.

Notes

This is a revised form of a paper which was presented at the annual meeting of the Northeastern Anthropological Association, May, 1970, in Ottawa, Canada. The data presented here were gathered in Pulo, San Isidro, Nueva Ecija, Philippines between November 1966 and January 1968. The research was supported by U.S. Public Health Fellowships from the National Institutes of Health (Nos. 1-F1-MH-30, 483-01A1 and 5-F1-MH-30, 483-02) and a supplemental grant from the National Institute of Mental Health (No. MH-13, 091). Parts of my doctoral dissertation (Murray 1970) have been modified and incorporated into this paper.

1. Although the meaning of Eggan's "bilateral descent groups" is perfectly clear, I prefer "ambilineal" to "bilateral" because it stresses the lineal aspects of these groups. I use "kin" groups rather than "descent" groups for reasons which appear in the text. This latter represents a change from my doctoral dissertation (see Murray 1970).

2. See Murray (1973) for a slightly more detailed description of Barrio Pulo.

3. Kindreds include the individual's siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, first cousins, and so on, who are not necessarily members of his local kin group, ambilineal kin group, or even his barrio, but

with whom he maintains close, intimate ties (cf. Murray 1970: 214-21).

4. There are exceptions, however, as in the case of a woman who took a second husband while her first husband was still alive; her children by the second husband took her maiden name.

5. Each of these factors is discussed in Murray (1970), most of them in Chapter VI, "Marriage and Residence".

6. Laktaw (1914) includes the following as meanings of *angkán*: *linaje*, *parentesco*, *casta*, *parentela*, *progenie*, *prosapia*, *raza*.

7. Although virilocality is the ideal, it occurs only 62 percent of the time in Pulo; uxori-locality, 29 percent; neolocality, 9 percent (cf. Murray 1970: 145-54). One of the reasons for this is that nuclear families tend to be very close, and are eager to stay close together even after marriage. Thus, houselots and farms are made available for married daughters as well as married sons when possible.

8. The author has complete data on the Franciscos, but they are not included here because of the limited space and because they would be redundant in the context of this paper.

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