

The prehistory and origin of the Tagalog people

R. David Paul Zorc

I am most pleased to have this opportunity to dedicate an article to Prof. Dahl, a colleague and friend. He is a wonderful person, an esteemed Austronesianist, and an enviable father whose children most admirably called for these papers. I trust that this contribution reflecting our shared interests in the prehistory and place of origin of Austronesian peoples, despite its brevity, may bring him some of the joy that I have felt in reading his admirable studies, especially Dahl 1991.

1. Philippine prehistory

The Filipino is a child of many languages. He is the descendant of a rich and shared heritage of cultures, languages, and peoples. His history is akin to a delicate tapestry, fragile (because for the most part it was oral and subject to embellishments and lapses based on the needs of the times) but exquisite (because of the multilingual and multicultural adaptations and adoptions as contact was made with diverse tribes and peoples through the centuries).

Scott (1968:139) has pointed out that

[there is] a considerable discrepancy between what is actually known about the prehispanic Philippines and what has been written about it. The popular texts present a picture of law codes, membership in Asian empires, and political confederations projected against a background of 250,000 years of migrating waves of Filipino progenitors, almost complete with their points of departure, sailing dates, and baggage.

Apart from a few early Chinese and Indonesian documents concerning trade contacts with the early Filipinos, the bulk of any scientifically-derivable historical knowledge or evidence of early

Philippine life must come from two sources: *linguistic* and *archaeological* evidence.

The historical picture that I will be sketching here is based solely on linguistic evidence, which is derived from the extensive run-through I have done on Tagalog in the preparation of the *Core Etymological Dictionary of Filipino* (Zorc 1979–85). Although only four (of a projected six) fascicles have appeared to date, the bulk of the research is finished. The historical-linguistic conclusions that have struck me over the last twelve years of research, when added to another five-years of research on Bisayan, have made me both ecstatic and enthusiastic about the prehistory of the Tagalog people. I am filled with awe and respect for the Philippine nation, because about 8000 years ago, as I see it, when my own European ancestors were still relatively primitive, Filipino-Austronesian forebears enjoyed a comparatively sophisticated existence in smallish social groups that were tied together by moieties (social "halves" that co-existed in both cooperation and conflict,¹ and which adapted to new and far-flung environments not only by hunting² and gathering, but by agriculture, animal-husbandry, sea-faring and fishing, trade, and house-construction. When any given social group became too large to support itself from the immediate environment, it fragmented, with select members going off to establish a new settlement – far or near did not matter much with the wisdom of the ocean currents and seasonal winds so firmly entrenched. Similarly, rifts in the social, political, or moiety-balance occasioned the establishment of new communities (with new contacts). A detailed example of reconstruction of this kind along with supporting evidence can be found in Blust (1976), Dyen (1976), or Zorc (1979 and in press).

The words "civilized" and "civilization" are based on the Latin *civitas* for "city." I suppose that some anthropologists or political historians would therefore not apply these terms to early Austronesians or Filipinos, because society was structured in such a way that a settlement (rather than a city) was the highest unit of social organization. But this is perhaps an overly demanding application of the etymological semantics of the word. The early Austronesian ancestors of the Filipino people, given the time-period 5000 B.C. (or 7000 B.P.), must have been among the most highly "civilized" or sophisticated peoples in the world at that time. The linguistic

evidence for this consists of cognate vocabulary in specific domains widely distributed in Philippine, Indonesian, Polynesian, Micronesian, and Formosan languages, which descend from etyma that probably existed in the parent language of highest order (PAN).

2. Tagalog genetic affiliation and migration

But all of this has to do with the common history of all Austronesian peoples, be they Tagalog, Ilokano, Bisayan, Malagasy, Malay, Formosan, Fijian, Hawaiian, etc. The specific prehistory of the Tagalog people begins slightly over a thousand years ago, when Tagalog can be identified as an individual or emerging Philippine speech variety. A summary of my conclusions is found in Table 1. Such chronology is only approximate and a leeway of at least 20% is necessary.³ Statements about months, or years, are impossible when they have not been recorded in writing, so that exact dates should be viewed with skepticism,⁴ and the lack of them should not be considered disappointing.

Tagalog is incontrovertibly a Central Philippine language and belongs in a subgroup with the Bikol, Bisayan and Mansakan groups. This was established in Zorc (1977:223–240) on the basis of lexicostatistical and functor scores as well as exclusively shared innovations (such as Tag *balahíbo* < PCP **badahíbu* 'body hair, feathers', *mali7ít* 'small' < PCP **diét*). However, Tagalog was, even then, part of a complex dialect community, where a form like Tag *ma-dámi* 'many' now has cognates among only Central Bisayan dialects, while Tag *buhángin* 'sand' only among South Bisayan dialects.

The most probable single locus for early Tagalog development and emigration would be southern Leyte, but more widely the eastern Visayan region or northeastern Mindanao. Around this same period the Tausug emigrated from the Butuan City area, and the Kagayanen-Manobos from northern Mindanao (currently Agusan or Misamis areas). The Hiligaynons are also reported to have come from Leyte (Kobak 1969:22), and Tagalog appears to have a special affiliation to Hiligaynon (among other Central Bisayan speech varieties, such as Waray or Samar-Leyte,

Masbateño, and Romblomanon). The sound system of old Tagalog (see Table 2) is virtually identical to that reported for inland dialects of Waray, and must have been the same for old Hiligaynon. The formation of the numerals 'one' (isá), 'four' (ápat), and 'six' (ánem) is identical in Hil and Tag, while Tag pronouns are closely matched to both Hil and War (witness War *íyo* 'your', which became singular in Tag, but Hil *ínyo* which remains the plural form in Tag; Tag *kanyá* 'to him/her' finds a counterpart in Northern Samar *kánya* or Tausug *kanya*, while Tag *kanilá* 'to them' in N-S *kanirá*, Tsg *kanila*. The possibility that Tausug participated in the same dialect area from which Tagalog came is further strengthened by the shift of *l > zero, even in an environment with *i; witness Tag *taʔénga*, Tsg *taingah* 'ear', Tag *uwíʔ*, Tsg *uwiʔ* 'return (home)' – a change that is not noted in any other CPh language, where *i otherwise preserves the character of *l intact.

The demonstrative system of Tagalog shows a considerable amount of innovation, but related forms ambiguously indicate various connections:

Tag *arí* 'this' (S-L *adí* 'this')

Tag *díni* 'here' (Hil, S-L, But, Sur *dínhi*)

Tag *itó* 'this' (S-L *itú* 'that (not far)')

Tag *iyán* 'that (not far)' (Tsg *iyán* 'this', But *iyán* 'that (not far)')

Tag *iyón* 'that (far)' (Gubat *yuʔún*, Tsg *yaʔun*, Sur *yaʔún* 'that (not far)')

Tag *doʔón* 'there (far)' (Gubat *duʔún*, Tsg *duʔun* 'there (not far)')

The system of singular personal name-marking (*si*, *ni*, *kay*) points to Hil or Sur, which have identical forms, while the plural name markers (*sina*, *nina*, *kina*) suggest Rom; the common noun markers (*ang*, *nang*, *sa*) point to Sur and Rom.

All of this evidence indicates that there was considerable dialect diversity at the time of the emigration of the Tagalog-speaking peoples, but cautions against the isolation of any given spot of embarkation. Negative evidence is also helpful, in that no particularly close connection is exhibited between Tagalog and any of the following CPh groups: West Bisayan (e.g., Kinaray-a, Aklanon, Kuyonon), Cebuano [see Zorc (1977)], or Bikol (including both coastal and inland varieties) [see McFarland (1976)].

3. Subsequent contacts

Upon arrival in the southern Luzon area, Tagalogs made contact with members of a subgroup including Kapampangan, Sambal, and others called "Sinauna" (Tag for 'those from the beginning'). This South Luzon group⁵ is itself a microgroup of Northern Philippine.

Words within the basic vocabulary that Tagalog has borrowed from SLz include: bibíg 'mouth',⁶ búkas 'tomorrow', butó 'bone', da7án 'hundred', gúlat 'surprised', ilán 'how many?', ka'ilán 'when?', káyo 'you [plural]', lamán 'meat, flesh', lu7ób 'inside'.

Contact with Kapampangan must have been the most extensive over the intervening centuries because of intimate loans like: akyát 'climb', at 'and', bába7 'chin', bákit 'why?', bundók ~~Q~~ 'mountain', dagdág 'add', damdám 'feel', gúyam 'ants', íbon 'bird',⁷ kapatíd 'sibling', katawán 'body', páwis 'perspiration', tuyó7 'dry'.

Although there is also a wide representation of Northern Philippine loans in Tagalog, most of these must have been borrowed via Kpm (or other SLz languages): alípin 'slave', apóy 'fire',⁸ áso 'dog',⁹ ba7itáng 'steps, stairs', balát 'skin', darás 'adze', galáw 'move', ígat 'eel', kalúban 'sheath', kúlam 'witchcraft', táyo 'we [inclusive]', úlap 'cloud', úsok 'smoke'.

4. The intensity of Malay influence

Wolff (1976) has set out in a most important paper over 300 loans from Malay (specifically the Brunei dialect) into Tagalog. The intimate nature of these shows the degree to which Malay life and culture pervaded and influenced the Tagalog community: binibíni 'woman', buntót 'tail', kánan 'right (side)', káya 'can, able', kúlay 'color', lá7ot 'sea', súlat 'write', tangháli7 'noon'. Wolff stresses that forms of wider foreign provenance all come via Malay, e.g., ása 'hope', bása 'read', bathála7 'deity', gandá 'beauty', hína7 'weak' (< Sanskrit), álak 'liquor', báro7 'shirt' (< Persian), bilanggó7 'prison', bágay 'thing' (< Tamil), or akála 'opinion', hukóm 'judge' (< Arabic).

5. The reliability of pre-historic dating

Postma (1992) reports on a copper plate in the Kawi script dating from 900 A.D. found near Lumbang, Laguna Province and written in old Malay, apart from two words (ngaran 'name' and pam(a)gat 'leader, chief') which could have been old Javanese. The presence of Javanese words in modern Tagalog (e.g., *daliri* 'finger') probably indicates the extent of Srivijaya influence on Bornean dialects of Malay. This archeological find tends to indicate that the dates I have assigned may be conservative, and we are dealing with considerably greater time depth.


Table 1. Brief historical survey of the Tagalog people

- 2500–2000 B.P. Settlement of southern Luzon region by Sambal, Kapampangan, Sinauna groups with expansion into Mindoro.
- 1200–1000 B.P. Migration of Tagalogs from the eastern Visayas (Leyte) or northeastern Mindanao to southern Luzon.
- 1000–800 B.P. Establishment of a Malay community from Brunei in or near Tondo; gradual and limited expansion of Islam into southern Luzon, with much greater activity in Mindanao. Continued expansion of the Tagalog community across southern Luzon and into Marinduque, resulting in the extinction of several "Sinauna" (aboriginal) speech varieties, but numerous Tagalog dialects begin to differentiate themselves (borrowing from SLz, but also through natural linguistic changes arising from isolation).
- 700–600 B.P. Brunei-Malay communities in Manila-area and on Jolo begin to thrive and intermarry. Malay briefly becomes the lingua-franca and wields strong influence on Tag and Kpm. Tagalogs emulate the practices of the Malay traders, with influences in the social-political structure and increased contacts in the entire archipelago. Malay, via Tagalog, makes its mark on many Philippine languages.
- 500 B.P. The Spanish arrive in the Philippines and introduce Christianity to the Luzon lowlands and the Visayas. The political, sociological, and economic center becomes Manila (now primarily controlled by the Tagalogs). The process of linguistic differen-

tiation is changed in favor of Spanish, and later of Manila-Tagalog.

Table 2: The sounds of Tagalog 1000 years ago

Voiced stops:	b	d ¹⁰	g	
Voiceless stops:	p	t	k	7 ¹¹
Nasals:	m	n	ng	
Fricatives:		s		h
Lateral:	l ¹²			
Semivowels:	w	y		
Vowels:	u	i	e ¹³	a



Abbreviations

- B.P. Before the present
- But Butuanon (South Bisayan)
- CPh Central Philippine
- Hil Hiligaynon (Central Bisayan)
- Kpm Kapampangan
- N-S Northern Samar (Central Bisayan)
- PAN Proto-Austronesian
- PCP Proto Central Philippine
- Rom Romblomanon (Central Bisayan)
- S-L Samar-Leyte (Waray)
- SLz South Luzon
- Sur Surigaonon (South Bisayan)
- Tag Tagalog
- Tsg Tausug

Footnotes

1. See Blust (1980b) where the PAN etymology *baliw is proposed; the Tag cognate of this is ibayó 'other side'; note also Tag balíw 'demented, insane.'
2. As an illustration within just this field witness Tag búzog 'bow' < PAN *búsuR, Tag pána7 'arrow' < PAN *panaq, dilís 'bowstring' < PAN *Delés. Although without etymological precedent, Tag alinaynáy

'motion of the tips of grass (due to the passing of animals below)' versus *wagaywáy* 'waving motion of grass (leaves, etc.) in the wind' confirm the predilection of Tagalogs for hunting.

3. The range of lexicostatistical scores between Tagalog and members of the Bisayan subgroup is from 65% with Masbate to 55% with Butuanon, yielding an average of 61.15%. To the extent that time computations by this method may be reliable, that average suggests a separation of 1,129 years, with a range of 1400 to 900 B.P., an estimate which Postma (personal communication) believes to be acceptable on archeological grounds.
4. As Scott (op.cit.) has pointed out, Filipinos are used to reading about explicit names, dates, points of departure and arrival, despite the lack of documentary evidence. Such fabrications misrepresent the historical picture now obtainable from linguistic evidence, which among other things, has the Malays coming from the Philippines (at a much greater time depth in excess of three millennia) rather than vice versa (which popular beliefs maintain based on associations with Brunei traders within the last millennium).
5. The evidence for a SLz group includes: the shift of PAN *R > y; the innovation of *butʔul 'bone', morphological formative on *ka-dáRum 'needle'.
6. An example of a borrowed semantic shift reflected in the SLz languages; originally from PAN *bibíR 'lips'; cf: PMP *baqbaq 'mouth'.
7. With independent semantic shift in Tag from Kpm ébon 'egg'.
8. Although possibly a retention of PAN *Sapúy 'fire', all known CPh speech varieties have an innovation replacing this term (cf: Bisayan and Bikol *kaláyu and Mansakan *atulun).
9. Although possibly a retention of PAN *ásu 'dog', all known CPh speech varieties have replaced this form (cf: *qayam or *iduʔ).
10. Possibly had [r] as an allophone in some dialects, cf: bakoʔór 'stony shore'; this later changed to [l] as in Tag ulán 'rain', lánaw 'lake'.
11. Note that while this is an original reflex of PAN *q or *ʔ, a glottal stop is often found on vowel-final loanwords from Malay or Spanish, presumably dating to the late-Malay, early-Spanish period of contact (c.600–400 years B.P.); cf: Tag tangháliʔ 'noon', múraʔ 'young; unripe' from Malay, Tag bintánaʔ 'window', kandílaʔ 'candle' from Spanish.
12. Possibly had a weak or slightly fricative articulation, witness the shift to zero in Tag buwán 'moon' < PAN *bulaN, Tag puwíng 'blinded by mote in eye'; some dialects then inserted [h], as in báhay < baláy 'house', sáhing < *saleng 'resin', sahíg < *saléR 'floor'.
13. Witness the independent shift to [i] found only in Tagalog; Cf: káʔin 'eat', bituwín 'star', but only after contact with South Luzon languages when early borrowings like Tag páwis (Kpm páwas < *páwes) 'sweat', báhid (Kpm bálad < *baled) 'stain' could undergo independent developments.

