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Some Rural and Urban Housing Differences in the Philippines¹

D. C. BENNETT

Cities are focal areas of change, the places where foreign or extra-local influences are most apt to be introduced into a region. Building styles are one of the components of a city that reflect these influences. Most phenomena, however, in the diffusion from their place of origin do not stop at city boundaries but are diffused into (or accepted by) part of the rural population as well. It is our purpose to examine the extent to which strong building materials, introduced by the Spanish, have been adopted in the urban and rural areas.

Our data are from two sources. Those relating to the municipality level are from the 1960 Census of Population and Housing;² those relating to the urban areas are from a field investigation.³ Fifteen urban places in Central Luzon were selected to represent towns from the smallest to the largest in the region. They are also reasonably representative of urban centers throughout the lowland Philippines except for the half dozen largest cities.⁴ In addition, the urban centers

¹ This study was supported by a Fulbright-Hayes Research Award and by the International Affairs Center, Indiana University.

² A municipality is an administrative aggregate of several barrios, similar to a U.S. County, and usually has one urban center. This urban center always includes the barrio which is called the poblacion and may include several adjacent and nearby barrios to form a large urban area.

³ See D. C. Bennett "The New Official Definition of the Urban Population in the Philippines: a critique", *The Philippine Geographical Journal*, Vol. IX, nos. 1-2 (January-June, 1965), pp. 3-10. The municipalities selected for study (Table 1) are located in Bulacan, Pampanga, Tarlac and Pangasinan Provinces.

⁴ We shall use the terms "city, town, urban place, urban center, urban area" interchangeably. They refer to areas which were determined to be urban by observation and interview. No reasonably accurate definition of urban areas exists among the official data collecting agencies in the Philippines. We proceeded by determining, by observation, which barrios (the lowest order administration area for which data are collected) had an urban style of residential proximity and density; then determined, by interview, those among them which had a majority of their population engaged in non-agricultural activities. Our cities, however small, are thus defined in terms of physical compactness and non-agricultural pursuits.

were selected to typify all parts of Central Luzon in order that the influence of Manila might be examined.

DIFFERENCES IN RURAL AND URBAN HOUSING

The Philippines does not have an indigenous domestic urban architecture because the Filipino peoples had not developed an urban style of life in the pre-Legaspi period. The great majority of urban settlements in the Philippines are of Spanish origin and there was a mixing and blending of Spanish urban and indigenous rural house styles in the new urban settlements from the beginning.

Spanish, American and Chinese housing styles and influences are largely concentrated in the urban centers because it is in these areas that the foreign groups overwhelmingly resided as well as being the areas where those Filipinos who were most influenced and able to adopt these more expensive styles lived. This has produced an assemblage of housing types in the urban centers that is substantially different from those in the rural areas. Rural housing is still overwhelmingly traditional while urban housing shows a much greater adoption of foreign styles and materials.

For the physical makeup of housing, the census data distinguish only three categories of materials: light, strong, and a mixture of the two.⁵ Light materials include bamboo, palm products and grass; strong materials are wood, cement, stone, brick, or metal. Light materials are commonly available in the local area; strong materials are much more expensive and are manufactured or available only in the larger urban centers.

The traditional lowland rural house, made entirely of light materials, is square or rectangular and uses large bamboo as the basic upright and cross beam supports and split bamboo for the flooring. The walls are of palm fronds or bamboo while the roof is of palm fronds or grass. Strong materials will most often be incorporated into this structure by using corrugated iron sheets for the roof, wooden posts for the vertical supports and horizontal beams, wooden planks for the floor, and possibly wooden siding for part or all of the walls.

⁵ In order to compare urban and rural housing we used the Bureau of Census criteria in our field examination of housing in the 15 urban places studied. Altogether, approximately 20,000 houses were categorized and mapped by one field investigator and so there is reasonable consistency in the data. Since our data were collected four years after the census data, we adjusted the *municipality* figures by changing them at the same rates as the municipalities changed population between 1939 and 1960.

Some combination of light materials has been traditional in the housing of virtually all lowland Filipinos. The Spanish introduced the use of other materials both in their homes and in the various other buildings which they constructed. The acceptance of strong materials by Filipinos has been gradual as their appreciation and ability to purchase has increased. By 1960, strong materials were a part of 43 percent of all homes in the 15 municipalities studied. Only 10 percent of all homes were built entirely of strong materials while 57 percent were made entirely of light materials.

When we look at the rural and urban components, we see that in the rural areas 59 percent of the homes are built entirely of light materials and only 4 percent are made entirely of strong materials. The houses in urban places show a much greater incidence of strong (45 percent) than of light (28 percent) materials. Table 1. Further, houses of mixed light and strong materials are 38 percent in the rural but only 27 percent in the urban areas. To summarize: 96 percent of all rural houses contain some light materials, while only 65 percent of the urban houses are so made; 72 percent of the urban houses have strong materials while only 42 percent of the rural houses do.

Geographic variations in materials are larger among rural than urban areas. In the rural areas (municipalities), houses built entirely of light materials varied from 36 to 86 percent while in the urban areas the range was only from 14 to 50 percent. Similarly, housing of mixed materials varied from 12 to 57 percent in the rural but only from 16 to 41 percent in the urban areas. There is little geographic variation in rural areas with respect to houses built entirely of strong materials because a very large part of the rural housing everywhere incorporates some light materials for whatever reason: cost, availability, traditional preference.

The large metropolitan area of Manila, situated immediately to the south of Central Luzon, exerts a pronounced influence on the housing in nearby municipalities in both the rural and urban areas. Strong materials are much more frequently used in these areas than in those more distant. For example, while 72 percent of the urban houses examined have some strong materials, this rises to 80 percent for the 8 closest urban centers and drops to 62 percent for the 7 most remote urban places. In like fashion, 47 percent of the rural homes in the nearest 8 municipalities had strong materials whereas only 37 percent of the homes in the more remote municipalities were so constructed.

In order to summarize the differences between rural and urban housing materials usage, we have calculated an Index of Concentration for each type of material for each of the 15 cities studied. Table 1.

The Index shows (1) that there are five times more houses in the urban areas made entirely of strong materials than a proportionate distribution in the municipality would produce, (2) that the proportion of mixed housing is the same in urban and rural areas, and (3) that the urban areas have only half as many houses made entirely of light materials as a proportionate distribution throughout the municipality would bring about. The eight urban centers nearer Manila have lower Concentration Indexes for strong materials than the 7 further removed, with means of 3.7 and 6.6 respectively, proof that houses made entirely of strong materials are much more concentrated in the urban areas away from Manila than in those within commuting distance from it. In other words, strong materials tend to be more identified as an urban phenomenon the further one is from Manila.

Table 1

Municipality	Housing Materials in Rural and Urban Areas, Central Luzon, 1964															
	% of Municipality Housing which is			% of Rural Housing which is			% of Urban Housing which is			% of all houses which are in Urban Areas				Concentration Index* of Housing materials in Urban Areas		
	light	mixed	strong	light	mixed	strong	light	mixed	strong	light	mixed	strong	Total	light	mixed	strong
Bacolor	76	22	2	83	17	--	28	38	34	8	36	99	21	3.8	1.7	4.7
Baliuag	37	44	19	50	50	0	20	36	44	22	34	99	42	.52	.81	2.3
Bocaue	36	42	22	41	49	10	18	21	61	11	11	66	23	.48	.48	2.9
Dagupan	59	27	14	63	28	9	20	16	64	3	5	43	10	.3	.5	4.3
Gerona	58	34	8	60	35	5	36	22	42	5	6	44	9	.56	.67	4.9
Guagua	45	42	13	51	44	4	14	30	56	5	11	68	16	.31	.69	4.2
La Paz	70	25	5	74	25	1	50	19	31	9	10	80	13	.69	.77	6.1
Malasiqui	44	13	3	86	12	12	37	23	40	3	11	84	6	.5	1.8	11.0
Malolos	39	56	5	43	57	0	14	38	48	9	17	25	24	.37	.71	1.0
Mapandan	59	25	16	62	25	13	26	23	39	4	8	29	9	.44	.89	3.2
Minalin	45	48	7	48	49	3	23	41	36	5	9	53	10	.50	.90	5.3
Plaridel	44	48	8	48	52	0	24	32	44	9	11	99	17	.53	.65	5.8
San Carlos	86	10	4	36	55	9	40	21	39	3	14	64	6	.50	2.3	10.2
San Fernando	50	44	6	54	46	0	21	23	56	14	17	99	32	.44	.53	3.1
Victoria	64	25	11	69	27	4	43	20	37	13	16	68	20	.65	.80	3.4
Mean (\bar{x})	57	34	9	59	38	4	28	27	45	8	14	68	17	.48	.95	5.0

$$* C_x = \frac{\frac{U_x}{N_x}}{\frac{U}{M}}$$

Where: U_x = urban houses made with material x
 M_x = municipality houses made with material x
 U = urban houses
 M = municipality houses

This concentration index ranges from 0 to infinity. When a given type of material, e.g. strong materials, has the same proportion in a city as in the total municipality, then there is no urban concentration and the index is 1.0. An index of more than 1.0 indicates an urban concentration; 2.0 would mean that there are twice as many x in the urban area as there would be if they were proportionately distributed between the rural and urban areas of the municipality; 0.5 means that there are only half as many x in the urban area as there would be if they were proportionately distributed.