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GLENN ANTHONY MAY

Warfare by *Pulong* Bonifacio, Aguinaldo, and the Philippine Revolution Against Spain

This article offers a new interpretation of the much-studied conflict between Andres Bonifacio, the original leader of the Philippine Revolution of 1896, and Emilio Aguinaldo, the man who succeeded him. It argues that a key cause of that conflict was the difference in the way that the two men conducted military operations against Spain: Bonifacio adopted a consultative approach to warfare, derived from a preconquest leadership style, whereas Aguinaldo favored a centralized, hierarchical military approach, relying on bureaucratic arrangements similar to those in the Spanish colonial regime. It suggests too that the Bonifacio-Aguinaldo conflict might best be viewed through a Weberian theoretical prism—as an example of the ongoing struggle between “charismatic” and “bureaucratic” authority.

**KEYWORDS: WARFARE • PHILIPPINE REVOLUTION • MAX WEBER •
MANDALA • CENTRALIZATION**

As every Philippine schoolchild knows, one of the key developments in the Philippine Revolution of 1896 was the conflict that emerged between Andres Bonifacio, the *supremo* of the Katipunan, the secret society that launched the uprising against Spain in August 1896, and Emilio Aguinaldo, a leader of the Filipino forces in Cavite province who replaced Bonifacio as head of the revolutionary movement in March 1897. The conflict between the two had tragic consequences. Unwilling to accept Aguinaldo's ascension to power, Bonifacio challenged his rival, and ultimately he was arrested, brought to trial, convicted, and executed. That last event, Bonifacio's execution in May 1897, continues to haunt Filipinos up to the present. One thing that makes the Philippines unique among the world's nation-states is that one of its leading national heroes—by common consent, hero number two, beaten out only by José Rizal—died at the hands of his own people.

In light of the acknowledged importance of the conflict within the revolutionary camp, it is hardly surprising that many historians of the Philippines have written about it and attempted to explain it. The explanations vary wildly. Some scholars focus on regionalism, arguing that the tension in the ranks resulted from the efforts of Bonifacio, a Manileño, to assert his authority in a place, the province of Cavite, where he lacked a substantial following. Others emphasize the personalities of the major players, singling out Aguinaldo's ambition, on the one hand, or Bonifacio's hotheadedness, on the other. A number see the struggle as a manifestation of class conflict, pitting Cavite's economic elite, that included Aguinaldo, against Bonifacio, a man of relatively humble origins. Still others have drawn attention to the disruptions caused by warfare, arguing that a scarcity of resources (in particular, shortages of rice) and the existence of hundreds of thousands of refugees in the region placed extraordinary strains on the relations between the two leaders (Agoncillo 1956; Joaquin 1977; Constantino 1975; Iletto 1985, 101–17; May 2001, 125–42).

In this essay, I suggest a different explanation. At the heart of the struggle between Bonifacio and Aguinaldo were differences in the way that the two men waged war against Spain: Bonifacio relied largely on consultative decision-making procedures; Aguinaldo championed a top-down, centralized approach to military organization and warfare. The conflict between the two men's approaches to warfare ultimately led to Bonifacio's fall from power. In addition, I discuss a possibly important theoretical implication of my find-

ings: to wit, that if, as I maintain, the struggle between Bonifacio and Aguinaldo concerned decision-making processes and bureaucratic structures, it can perhaps best be understood by viewing it through a Weberian analytical prism. In a brief concluding section, I deal with the connection between the events of 1896–1897 and the sociological writings of Max Weber.

Bonifacio and the Katipunan's Meetings

Let us begin our story by looking at some events that occurred on 3 May 1896, several months before the outbreak of the revolution. Our principal source of information about the happenings of that day is the well-known memoir of Santiago Alvarez, a revolutionary leader from Cavite. Because Alvarez composed his account in the late 1920s, more than thirty years after the events described, we may reasonably wonder whether all the details he provided can be credited. Moreover, as I intimate in another publication, there is good reason to believe that, in at least one other part of Alvarez's memoir, he dissembled a bit, probably to disguise his involvement in events that reflected badly on him. Still, in this particular instance, Alvarez had no compelling reason to dissemble, and, in fact, the few other surviving sources that describe what happened on 3 May 1896 essentially agree with his account (Alvarez 1992, 9–13, 244–48; May 1996, 100–101).¹

On that day, according to Alvarez, a “general meeting” (*malaking pulong*)² of the Katipunan took place in the town of Pasig. In attendance were prominent *katipuneros* from Manila and its suburbs (Santa Ana, Mandaluyong, San Pedro Makati, and other towns) as well as a large contingent from Cavite, including Emilio Aguinaldo and Alvarez himself. Alvarez did not provide an estimate of the number of attendees, but his narrative hints that it was more than fifty. Aguinaldo, who himself wrote a brief account of the meeting, described the assembled *katipuneros* as “delegates” (*mga delegado*), using a word derived from Spanish. He also indicated that each chapter of the Katipunan had sent representatives. At about 9 P.M. those people came together at the place where Bonifacio wanted to hold the meeting, an enclosed yard near the riverbank, but because rain was already falling and the *katipuneros* expected their discussion to go on well into the early morning hours they decided to move the session to the very spacious home of a local *katipunero*, which was located near the Pasig church.

After calling the meeting to order, Bonifacio explained its purpose: the secret society faced a precarious future because the Spaniards were now

aware of its existence. They were watching the katipuneros' every move, and a crackdown was inevitable. Under the circumstances Bonifacio felt that the Katipunan's only choice was to defend itself. To do nothing would be cowardly. Bonifacio ended his opening remarks by posing two questions to the katipuneros: "What is your decision? Do we fight now?" (*Ano ang inyong kapasiyahan? Lumaban na tayo?*).

A long discussion ensued. Aguinaldo expressed strong reservations about opting for a military solution, pointing out that the Spanish forces had modern weaponry while the Filipinos had only "bolos, spears, daggers, and bows and arrows" (*mga gulok, sibat, balaraw, at pana*). Under the circumstances he felt that it was premature to consider going to war with Spain. Alvarez spoke up too, worrying aloud that, if the Katipunan raised the flag of rebellion and failed to defeat the Spaniards, the consequences could be disastrous. He reminded the group of the persecution his own father had endured twenty-four years earlier, when the Spanish authorities had suspected that he had been implicated in the Cavite mutiny. When Alvarez had finished, Aguinaldo rose again, expressing his agreement with the words of his fellow Caviteño and proposing that the katipuneros defer any decision about starting a rebellion until they had first consulted Rizal, then exiled to Dapitan on the island of Mindanao.

At that juncture, several hours into the discussion, Bonifacio called for a brief recess so that everyone could consider how to proceed. The katipuneros continued to discuss the issues among themselves, eventually reaching a consensus that Rizal's views be solicited. Bonifacio then called the meeting to order again and repeated his questions. The group responded as one, favoring the idea of getting Rizal's input before approving a decision to go to war. According to Alvarez, Bonifacio "respected the decision of the meeting" (*ay gumalang sa gayong kapasiyahan ng pulong*), and promptly appointed Pio Valenzuela to go to Dapitan to confer with Rizal. The meeting broke up at 5 A.M., and the katipuneros dispersed to their communities.

By August 1896 the Spanish authorities had begun hounding and arresting members of the Katipunan. With the situation growing progressively more dangerous for the organization, Bonifacio decided to call another general meeting to discuss what should be done. That meeting, which took place over several days, is the subject of a book by Soledad Borromeo-Buehler (1998), who has examined meticulously and analyzed every known account of it. Let us look selectively at her findings (*ibid.*, 3–69).³

As Borromeo-Buehler tells us, the katipuneros met in Kangkong, in the suburbs of Manila, between 23 and 26 August. More than a thousand katiipuneros came to Kangkong, but only a few dozen of them actually participated in the meeting, the others waiting in the vicinity to find out what had been decided. As was the case at Pasig, participation was limited to a representative group, including delegates from provincial chapters of the Katipunan. As was also the case at Pasig, the principal question to be decided was whether to start the rebellion. The discussion was heated, with a number of people adamantly opposing the idea of going to war. Again Bonifacio's role in the proceedings was primarily that of convener and moderator. Although he was in favor of launching an uprising and was clearly irritated at the amount of time the attendees spent in debating the issues, he was willing to abide by the will of the majority. This time he got the votes; the group decided to go to war.

The delegates reached two other decisions of apparent significance at the same meeting. They made assignments to military commands and ratified the appointments, which had been made about a month earlier, to a "war cabinet" of "a de facto revolutionary government." The "war cabinet" included Bonifacio (who was president), Emilio Jacinto (minister of state), and four other Manila-based katipuneros. According to Borromeo-Buehler, the creation of this war cabinet was one indication of "the existence of a secret revolutionary government before August 1896" (*ibid.*, 26, 33–34, 45).

Here then were two crucial meetings that occurred in the period immediately preceding the revolution. Much about them is worth discussing, but for our immediate purposes let us focus on what they tell us about the Katipunan and Bonifacio. One striking thing about the accounts of both episodes is that they suggest that, when important questions were considered in the Katipunan, the decision-making process was consultative. This is not to say that everything was decided in this way in the secret society; on some matters, as the memoirs of Pio Valenzuela and others indicate, a small group led by Bonifacio met separately and reached decisions on their own (*Minutes of the Katipunan* 1978, 98–99, 117). However, when key policy issues were at stake, a much larger number of katipuneros (including representatives of Katipunan chapters) came together, discussed together, and finally reached a decision together (*ibid.*, 103–4, 170–74; Richardson 2006b). In the Pasig meeting, the decision collectively arrived at was to defer deciding until Rizal's views were known; in the discussions at Kangkong, it was to

launch a rebellion. In both the people assembled were the decision makers. Katipuneros became revolutionaries only after due deliberation and only because a representative group of them had reached a decision to go to war.

The forum for the making of important decisions in the Katipunan was, of course, the meeting—or *pulong*, to use the Tagalog word that was used by the participants themselves. At the time the word “*pulong*” had multiple meanings, as it does today (although today the multiple meanings are somewhat different from those of 1896). It referred, first of all, to conversation, the act of talking together. It also referred to gatherings at which conversations occurred, meetings of very different types. A meeting of a chapter of the Katipunan could be described as a *pulong*, as could the meeting of any other type of association. A *pulong* could be small, involving only a few individuals, but the word was also applied to a much larger gathering, a *malaking pulong* like the ones at Pasig and Kangkong, where a hundred people might be in attendance. What they all had in common was that conversation occurred.

If the essence of the generic *pulong* was conversation, the essence of the Katipunan *pulong* was a particular kind of conversation: consultation. Whatever else it was, the Katipunan was an organization that took consultation seriously. One significant piece of evidence to support that point is linguistic. The one common linguistic denominator in all the terms used by the Katipunan to describe its administrative units—for example, *sangguniang balangay*, *sangguniang bayan*, and *Kataastaasang Sanggunian*⁴ —is the noun *sangguni*, which refers to the act of seeking advice or counsel from someone. Katipuneros expected to be consulted. What is more, as Alvarez’s treatment of the Pasig *pulong* makes clear, they did not expect the consultation to be *pro forma*. As the men summoned by Bonifacio began to convene in Pasig at approximately 9 P.M., they anticipated that the meeting would likely drag on into the early morning hours.

Furthermore, as we have seen, the meetings of the Katipunan could—and, in these two instances, did—involve a good deal more than conversation and consultation. Decisions were also reached at meetings and, significantly, the ones who reached them were the congregated katipuneros themselves. In the Pasig meeting Bonifacio repeatedly asked the attendees to give him their decision and eventually they did. At Kangkong, as one source quoted by Borromeo-Buehler (1998, 36–37) tells us, after enduring several days of discussion Bonifacio finally called for a vote. The katipuneros in attendance received pieces of paper on which to mark their preference; they then voted

yes or no on the question of “whether today is the right time to declare a revolution against the Spaniards”; the ballots were tallied; and the results were announced to the people who were waiting outside the meeting place.

What is perhaps most noteworthy about the accounts of the two meetings is the depiction in them of the *supremo*, Andres Bonifacio. Without question his role was prominent. Both meetings were held at his behest. He convened them, set their agenda, and presided over them. In both he made forceful arguments in favor of his position. But he did not attempt to stifle debate and his presence did not stop other attendees from taking positions that were antipodal to his own. Rather than dictating to the group—a course of action that we might expect from a person holding the exalted title of *supremo*—Bonifacio appeared to take seriously the counsel his fellow *katipuneros* were proffering, even when it conflicted with his own. At Pasig, confronted with strong opposition to launching the rebellion, he agreed to carry out the clear will of the majority by appointing Valenzuela to sound out Rizal. At Kangkong he listened to endless debate before calling for a balloting. Ultimate authority in the Katipunan rested not with its titular leader, but rather with the *pulong*.

A brief comment should be made about Borromeo-Buehler’s discussion of the “war cabinet” (1998, 26, 33–34, 45). Her references to it are intriguing, as is her suggestion that a new revolutionary government had been set up. My own review of those sources leads me to different conclusions. Without question some appointments had been made. However, because of the pressure that Spanish law enforcement authorities were then applying to the Katipunan, nothing had been done beyond that. Nor is it clear what the function of the war cabinet was. That is to say, despite the fact that, for several months, the leaders of the Katipunan recognized that war was imminent they had not put in place a new bureaucratic apparatus to oversee the war effort. Three days before the planned uprising the only thing they had done was to name names. By default, then, the procedures that prevailed within the Katipunan at the time of the meetings at Pasig and Kangkong—consultative, discursive, and not necessarily appropriate for the new circumstances—were being adopted by the nascent revolutionary movement.⁵

Why did the Katipunan under Bonifacio operate in a consultative manner? Over the years, despite the fact that historians have commented at length on various aspects of the Katipunan, they have not paid much attention to its decision-making procedures. True, on the surface, little about

them appeared to be unique or otherwise noteworthy: they were similar in kind to those of other nongovernmental organizations in which Filipinos of that period participated. The associations of Filipinos in Spain that agitated for reform during the 1880s and early 1890s made decisions in large meetings. So too did the Masonic lodges in the Philippines, organizations with which many katipuneros, including Bonifacio, were affiliated (Schumacher 1997, 182–84, 195–211, 254–56; Fajardo 1998, 78, 81–82, 118, 125–36).

Still, although it may be tempting to view the Katipunan's procedures merely as variants of those of other nongovernmental organizations in that era, some uniquely Filipino and Southeast Asian cultural factors may also have played a role in shaping them. As we learn from the late Oliver Wolters (1999), leadership in precolonial Southeast Asia had a strongly consultative character. Rulers in the region were not autocrats. Power was decentralized and delimited. Wolters referred to the local leaders as "men of prowess," asserting that their claims to authority were based on demonstrated performance (*ibid.*, 18–20, 112). In practice, rulers in the region—whose domains Wolters called *mandalas* (*ibid.*, 27–40)—shared power with many groups, consulting with them frequently. According to Wolters, within the mandalas "there was the minimum of bureaucratic procedures and the maximum amount of discussion, for consultation in societies knit together by personal ties was bound to be a prominent feature of public life. Everything depended on man-to-man relations" (*ibid.*, 30). Wolters explicitly included the Philippines in his discussion of this consultative style of leadership, and other accounts support him (*ibid.*, 33–34, 133–35; de la Costa 1965, 14–15; Aguilar 1998, 28–29, 54–55, 64, 173; Junker 1999, 15–16, 57–84; Angeles 2007, 10–13).

Rather than being simply a mimicking of the practices of other contemporary organizations, then, the Katipunan's use of consultative procedures should perhaps be understood as the embodiment of a preconquest leadership style. The appeal of those procedures, and their power, rested on the fact that consultative leadership by men of prowess had long been, and still evidently was, the cultural norm in the Philippines. All that may help to explain some of the seeming contradictions of Bonifacio's behavior (and of other people's behavior toward Bonifacio) that historians have had such difficulty in explaining—on the one hand, the reverence of the crowds for him and the haughtiness and arrogance he displayed on occasion; on the other, his repeated insistence on holding meetings, consulting with others, and abiding by the will of the majority. Bonifacio fits no easily identifiable

pattern of a modern man because he was not exactly a modern man. Both before and during the revolution, he seemed to be closer to a traditional Philippine man of prowess, a distinctive mix of leader and consulter.

Bonifacio's Conduct of the War

Now let us move ahead to the early acts of the revolution. Our initial focus will be on military developments in the environs of Manila, Bonifacio's area of operations, where the katipuneros fought a series of battles against the Spanish forces. While a variety of sources on those encounters exist, the one that will receive most of our attention here is again Santiago Alvarez's memoir, which is based not only on his own observations but also, as he tells us repeatedly, on his reading of unpublished reminiscences and other documents written by his fellow katipuneros. In his treatment of this phase of the revolution, Alvarez relies heavily on accounts provided by several important commanders, including Ramon Bernardo and Genaro de los Reyes. He even includes lengthy excerpts from the reminiscences of both (Alvarez 1992, 4, 135, 145, 221, 239–40, 370, 380, 455).

One thing we learn from Alvarez is that, even after a decision had been made to go to war at Kangkong, Bonifacio continued to rely on the existing administrative structure of the Katipunan to gain the cooperation of his followers. After an early skirmish with the Spaniards, his forces were desperately short of food and supplies, so he dispatched Genaro de los Reyes to get the needed items from the Katipunan chapter in the town of Mandaluyong. De los Reyes met with Laureano Gonzales, the leader of Mandaluyong's sangguniang bayan, and explained what Bonifacio needed. Gonzales then convened a pulong of the local katipuneros, who promptly decided to send the supplies (*ibid.*, 21–22, 256–57). Two days later, Bonifacio himself convened a special meeting of that same Katipunan chapter to enlist its help in communicating with katipuneros in other provinces during the rebellion (*ibid.*, 25, 260).⁶

More than a month later, after the katipuneros in Bonifacio's zone of operations had suffered a series of battlefield reverses and most of the survivors had gone into hiding, Ramon Bernardo, one of Bonifacio's generals, managed to make contact with the supremo at Balara, located in the hills outside Manila. According to Bernardo, who is quoted at length by Alvarez in his discussion of this phase of the war, Bonifacio continued to hold meetings for a variety of reasons. On the morning of 5 October, he and Emilio

Jacinto presided over a meeting of the troops in Balara for the purpose of electing officers they trusted and respected, and later that same day he held another meeting with the troops defending Mount Tungko for exactly the same purpose (*ibid.*, 151–52, 386–87).⁷ In November Bonifacio planned and led an attack on Spanish forces in the town of San Mateo. When the operation bogged down and enemy reinforcements started to arrive, he held a meeting with the troops to decide what tactics to adopt in order to defeat the Spaniards as quickly as possible. The unanimous decision reached was to continue their siege until the enemy ran out of food. Eventually the Spanish reinforcements attacked and overwhelmed the katipuneros, and Bonifacio's men retreated to Balara in disarray (*ibid.*, 153–57, 389–93). Not long after that, he and the remaining troops under his immediate command, thoroughly beaten, left the Manila region and went to Cavite.

While Bonifacio continued to hold meetings for specific purposes in the early stages of the revolution, it should be understood that he also made many decisions of various kinds on his own. Alvarez's memoir tells us, for example, that, just before the outbreak of hostilities, Bonifacio ordered de los Reyes to organize the katipuneros of Santolan. In the fighting around Manila he ordered a retreat after an aborted attack, and then a few days later ordered another retreat after the Filipino forces had been thrashed on the battlefield. In October 1896 he ordered Bernardo to construct some homemade cannons and also ordered katipuneros in Manila to assist Bernardo in the project. In November he planned the attack on San Mateo, and in preparation for the battle gave orders to de los Reyes and another officer about where to deploy their troops (*ibid.*, 24, 29, 31, 152–53, 153–54, 164–65, 259, 264, 267, 388, 389, 400–401). Thus, Bonifacio was not without authority, and a good deal of the time he acted as we might expect a military leader to act. However, on other occasions he held meetings. In some cases the meetings dealt with obviously important matters; in others a compelling reason for calling them is not readily apparent.

Significantly, things began to change in the Manila zone only after Bonifacio had left it. A document recently uncovered by Jim Richardson in the Spanish military archives reveals that on 3 December 1896, at a time when Bonifacio was either about to leave for Cavite or was already there, a group called the Mataas na Pamunuan (High Board of Officers), which included Isidoro Francisco, Julio Nakpil, Hermogenes Bautista, and two other men based in the environs of Manila, drew up a plan for an attack on the

town of Pasig (Richardson 2007c). We also learn from Richardson that, at approximately the same time, a larger organization called the Mataas na Sanggunian (High Consultative Body) was also functioning in that northern zone of operations. Again, Francisco, Nakpil, and Bautista were members (as was Emilio Jacinto), but the total membership of this organization was close to thirty. The Mataas na Sanggunian had a range of functions: it chose various officials, including new members of the organization; made military appointments; appealed to people in the area for donations; and planned military operations. It also corresponded with Bonifacio, who approved its appointments and decisions, and gave it all manner of instructions (Richardson 2006a, 2006c, 2007d, 2007e, 2007f).

Unfortunately, these sources do not tell us why those changes (which, as we shall see, resembled some that were introduced earlier in Cavite) were made in the Manila region. It is possible that the katipuneros there had belatedly come to the conclusion that the existing revolutionary organization was deficient and that new bureaucratic structures were needed. However, given the timing of the changes—the fact that they went into effect *after* Bonifacio had made a decision to go to Cavite—it seems more likely that they were simply efforts to cope with the new circumstances created by Bonifacio's departure. Because Bonifacio would no longer be available to hold meetings and to issue orders, it was necessary to create some new standing organizations to deal with any military and administrative problems that might arise. It is worth pointing out, too, that the creation of these new organizations in the Manila zone did not necessarily signify that the katipuneros in that zone, or Bonifacio, had abandoned their attachment to the preconquest model of leadership. While the new Mataas na Sanggunian made plans, appointments, and decisions, it continued to serve an essentially consultative/advisory function vis-à-vis Bonifacio—or such, at least, is how Bonifacio conceived of its function, as he revealed in his correspondence. Since face-to-face consultation with Bonifacio was no longer possible, the members of the Mataas na Sanggunian would meet on their own, decide how best to proceed, and convey their decisions in writing to Bonifacio, who then had the option of approving or disapproving those decisions.

What then can we conclude about Bonifacio's conduct of the war in the period before his departure for Cavite? Clearly, for as long as he remained in the environs of Manila, Bonifacio relied a great deal on the existing structure and the consultative procedures of the Katipunan. Just as clearly, dur-

ing that period, the war-making ability of the troops under his command deteriorated. There was a connection between Bonifacio's choices and his army's battlefield performance. It is difficult for a commander to fight a war if he finds it necessary to meet regularly with groups of all kinds to get their input and secure their approval. And it is especially difficult to do that if, as was the case after the initial reverses suffered by Bonifacio's forces in the fighting around Manila, the commander was unable to communicate with most of his army for long periods of time because he was trying to evade capture by the enemy. All that does not mean that Bonifacio's commitment to consultation was alone responsible for the reverses suffered by the troops in the Manila sector: weapons and ammunition shortages, lack of training, the inexperience of commanders, and a number of other problems also contributed to the failures of the Filipinos forces. Unquestionably, however, it had a significant effect on the outcome of the fighting.

The Centralization of Authority in Cavite

While Bonifacio was suffering reverses in his sector of operations, the katipuneros in Cavite were experiencing somewhat more success. In that province, at the beginning of the rebellion, there were two large chapters of the Katipunan: the Sangguniang Magdiwang, which was based in the town of Noveleta, and the Sangguniang Magdalo, with its headquarters in the municipality of Kawit. Mariano Alvarez and his son Santiago led the first; Emilio Aguinaldo and his cousin Baldomero Aguinaldo were the key figures in the second. Shortly after the outbreak of the revolution armed units organized by both chapters, operating separately, engaged in a series of skirmishes with Guardia Civil units in the province. Cavite's katipuneros managed to prevail in those encounters. By the end of September 1896 they had effectively eliminated any Spanish military presence in the province (Alvarez 1992, 33–48, 267–83; Aguinaldo 1964, 63–108; Ricarte 1927, 7–24; Ronquillo 1898, pt. 1, 84–107).

To a certain extent the success of the Filipino forces in Cavite was due to the fact that the Spanish military units they faced were small in size. In addition, they benefited from superior military leadership because their commanders, unlike Bonifacio, had some experience with military operations. In the years immediately preceding the outbreak of the revolution, a number of the military leaders of the Cavite forces like Emilio Aguinaldo and Mariano Alvarez had served as *gobernadorcillos* (or *capitanes municipa-*

les) of their native towns, positions that required them from time to time to lead the local police force in operations against bandits. As a result they were familiar with firearms, a reasonably rare quality among the native population of the colony, and knew something about small-scale military operations (May 1991, 48–51).

As Cavite's two large Katipunan chapters battled to secure control of the province, they decided to do something else. Realizing that the organizational structure and procedures of the Katipunan were not appropriate for the waging of war, both of them, acting independently of each other, held meetings for the explicit purpose of changing the way they conducted business. That is, these two groups of katipuneros used the existing decision-making process, the *pulong*, to transform the Katipunan in Cavite. In the end, as several sources tell us, the two of them came up with new organizational structures that were remarkably alike. Both chapters became something akin to local governments that included one set of officials that dealt with military affairs and a second set that dealt with nonmilitary matters. Then, having made those organizational changes, they proceeded to hold elections for the major posts in the new local governing bodies, which were still called the Sangguniang Magdiwang and the Sangguniang Magdalo. In both cases the transformation was complete by the end of September 1896. At the same time, both organizations gradually extended the geographical scope of their authority. The Sangguniang Magdalo assumed jurisdiction over several municipalities of eastern Cavite; the Sangguniang Magdiwang took charge of western Cavite (Alvarez 1992, 47–48, 77; Ricarte 1927, 16–17; Aguinaldo 1964, 103, 142–44).

Why did the katipuneros of Cavite move so quickly in the direction of centralizing authority? Why, that is, did they reject warfare by *pulong* at a time when the katipuneros in Manila appeared to be so deeply attached to it? First of all, it should be recognized that, although consultation had long been a cultural norm in the archipelago, many late-nineteenth-century Filipinos—in particular, elite Filipinos—also had a great deal of exposure to and firsthand experience with bureaucratic centralization. One recurrent theme in the ongoing Spanish colonial project had been an effort to centralize political authority in the archipelago, an effort that had taken on added steam in the nineteenth century (Robles 1969). As we have already seen, many leaders of the Katipunan in Cavite had held the position of *gobernadorcillo* (or *capitán municipal*) in their native towns and hence had been active participants in the Spanish colonial administration. Given their expo-

sure to Spanish administrative practices, they did not have to look far to find the procedures and bureaucratic structures they ultimately adopted.

However, that explanation alone is insufficient, for the simple reason that experience with administrative centralization and Spanish bureaucratic practices was not confined to the province of Cavite. In fact, as Richardson (2007a) has shown, the Katipunan chapters in Manila and its environs were filled with dozens of clerks and other employees of the Spanish colonial regime. All of them were at least as familiar with Spanish ways of doing business as the Caviteños.

Two situational factors also contributed to the turn of events in Cavite. For one, in the early acts of the revolution the level of conflict in Cavite was minimal compared with that in Bonifacio's zone. That meant, among other things, that the katipuneros in Cavite, unlike those in the Manila region, had the opportunity to hold large meetings and consider new ways of coping with the new challenges. Second, for the first three months of the uprising Bonifacio, the "man of prowess," was not present in Cavite. That fact made it easier for Caviteños to challenge his approach to waging war, something that they now might have been more inclined to do since Bonifacio's repeated retreats on the battlefield hardly qualified as the demonstrations of achievement that were expected of men of prowess.

Thus, dramatic changes had occurred in the revolutionary organizations of Cavite. Chapters of a secret society had now become mini-states of a sort, staffed with elected officials who had the authority to govern within their jurisdictional boundaries without a resort to meetings. The katipuneros of Cavite had taken a significant step in the direction of bureaucratic centralization. But, it must be emphasized, these changes occurred only within Cavite. And even within Cavite, there were limits to the extent to which authority had been consolidated and centralized, since the two nascent mini-states continued to operate independently of each other. Thus, while the transformation of Cavite's two sangguniang bayan doubtless made it easier for those two organizations to govern and wage war, it did not improve the ability of the entire revolutionary movement to do such things.

One revolutionary leader in Cavite—Emilio Aguinaldo, the Sangguniang Magdalo's military commander—favored even more sweeping administrative changes. On 31 October 1896 Aguinaldo issued an extraordinary manifesto to the "Filipino people," calling for a general uprising against Spain and the establishment of an entirely new military organization and a

new form of government. In that document of 753 words, only slightly more than half of it is devoted to describing the new military and civil institutions. Not surprisingly, the information provided about both of them is succinct, general in nature, and incomplete. Moreover, sometimes it is ambiguous; at other times, seemingly contradictory. Rather than painting a full-sized canvas, Aguinaldo produced only a hasty sketch (Achútegui 1972, 34–40).⁸

Still, its general outlines seem clear enough. According to Aguinaldo, the prosecution of the war against Spain was henceforth to be directed by a “central revolutionary committee” (*comité central revolucionario*), which was to be composed of seven members, one of whom was to have the title of “president” (*presidente*). Aguinaldo did not specify how the committee was chosen; he stated merely that it was already in existence and that he was a member of it. In addition to conducting the war, the committee was charged with organizing an army of 30,000 men, with rifles and cannon. The army was to be composed of three “corps” (*cuervos*) of 10,000 men, each of which would be led by a general. The entire army was to be commanded by a “general in chief” (*general en jefe*), who was also one of the seven members of the central revolutionary committee. All things considered, the system described in this manifesto represented a giant step toward military centralization. It would unify the army under a single commander and give to a seven-person committee the power to direct the war effort.

However, having opted for the concentration of power in the waging of war, Aguinaldo was not—or at least his manifesto indicated that he was not—opting for concentration of power in governing the Filipino people. According to the document, at the same time that the new army was fighting the Spaniards, a new “republican government” (*gobierno republicano*) would be establishing order throughout the archipelago. Aguinaldo asserted that this government would be “similar to that of the United States of America, based essentially upon the strictest principles of liberty, fraternity, and equality” (*semejante á la de Estados Unidos de América, basada esencialmente en los principios más estrictos de Libertad, Fraternidad e Igualdad*).

From the manifesto itself, brief as it is, it is difficult to see exactly how this new government resembled that of the United States. True, it would have certain democratic features. Each town would elect a “municipal committee” (*comité municipal*), composed of seven members, which would be “completely independent of the central committee” (*completamente independiente del comité central*). The municipal committee would govern, over-

see the administration of justice, appoint a captain of the civil guard (which would be composed of all citizens of the town), and provide the central committee with soldiers, food, and money in order to sustain the army. Each municipal committee would also name a delegate, and all the delegates so named would, together with the central committee, form a “congress” (*congreso*) that would deliberate about “the sending [to the central committee] of troop quotas, provisions, and war taxes” (*el envío de contingentes de tropas, víveres y contribución de guerra*). Thus, the congress would have the job of deciding how many people and how much food and money each town would supply to the army. It is unclear, however, if that governmental body had any other responsibilities; in his manifesto Aguinaldo did not indicate that it did.

To summarize, what we have here is a manifesto that concentrated military authority in a few hands, called for a major expansion of the army, and established a system of recruitment and supply. In effect, Aguinaldo was attempting to create a centralized, top-down military organization that had some of the characteristics of a European army. The manifesto made the claim that a government modeled on the United States was being established at the same time, but, while that government had certain democratic features—the election of municipal committees, the sending of delegates to a congress—the principal stated function of its congress and a major function of the municipal committee was simply to support the war effort.

In his lengthy memoir of the revolution, Aguinaldo was silent about the manifesto. One historian suggests that the silence was intentional, Aguinaldo recognizing later in life that the manifesto could be read as an early sign of his desire to challenge Bonifacio for leadership of the revolutionary movement (Constantino 1975, 179–81). Although Aguinaldo’s ambition should not be discounted, we should also acknowledge that his manifesto proffered a solution to a readily observable problem—the relative ineffectiveness of the revolutionary movement, except in the province of Cavite, to cope with the challenge of Spanish military power. That Aguinaldo proffered the solution might have been due not only to his desire for power but also to the circumstance that only in Cavite, which had been virtually liberated for about a month, did the *katipuneros* have the luxury of devoting their attention to the matter of improving the prosecution of the war.

The surviving records do not tell us how Aguinaldo’s fellow *katipuneros* received his manifesto. But two other things are clear. First, the specific organizational changes discussed in the manifesto were not put into practice.

Despite Aguinaldo's assertion that the central committee had already been established, there is no other evidence of its existence. There is also no evidence of a congress like the one described in the manifesto or a general in chief. In Cavite, as was the case before, there remained two entirely separate *sangguniang bayan* that continued to operate independently of each other. That was especially apparent in early November 1896, when the Spanish forces led personally by Governor-General Ramón Blanco attacked by land and sea the two northern Cavite towns of Kawit and Noveleta. After several days of heavy fighting, the invading force was finally repulsed. But during the battles there was no coordination at all between the Filipino forces; they fought as the two entirely distinct military organizations that they were (Agoncillo 1956, 185–86; Zaide 1968, 124–26; Aguinaldo 1964, 124–32; Alvarez 1992, 63–65, 298–301; Ricarte 1927, 28–30).

Second, having failed in this initial effort at unification, Aguinaldo and the other leaders of the *Sangguniang Magdalo* turned their attention over the following six weeks to consolidating their control over the war effort in the area under their jurisdiction. They did so by sending circulars, orders, and proclamations to the heads of municipalities and military units. So, for example, at the end of November 1896 the new minister of war of the *Sangguniang Magdalo*, Daniel Tirona, issued a circular instructing civilian and military officials in the *Magdalo* zone to provide the towns with enough rifles and bows and arrows so they could defend themselves; to choose as military recruits only men who were courageous and loyal to the cause; to submit to headquarters their estimates of their needs for food and supplies; and to inform headquarters of all fortifications constructed in the towns (Achútegui 1972, 64–68). In December 1896 the president of the *Sangguniang Magdalo*, Baldomero Aguinaldo, sent a directive to municipal officials requiring all adult males, except the very old and those already equipped with rifles, to carry bows and arrows with them (*ibid.*, 81–87). He also issued a formal proclamation ordering the inhabitants of the towns administered by the *Sangguniang Magdalo* to show respect to the government's military and civilian officials and prescribing stiff penalties for anyone who failed to do so (*ibid.*, 144–48, 195–97). Gradually and inexorably, by coercion if necessary, the leaders of the *Sangguniang Magdalo* were mobilizing the resources of the region, including the human ones, to carry on the struggle against Spain. Something akin to the hierarchical, centralized system of decision making called for in Aguinaldo's manifesto was being put in place. Of course, it was

only being put in place in Cavite. While some bureaucratic changes were by now being introduced in the Manila zone, these were hardly comparable to the well-advanced centralization program in Cavite.

At this juncture, let us review what we have established thus far about the revolution that was taking place in the Tagalog provinces of Luzon. We know that, for the first three months of the uprising, in the region around Manila, Bonifacio's sector, the organizational structure and decision-making procedures of the Katipunan remained in place. For as long as he stayed in that area Bonifacio conducted war as he had earlier run the Katipunan, relying heavily on the *pulong*. In Cavite, by comparison, a different approach toward warfare and military organization was gradually emerging. After about a month of fighting, the two *sangguniang bayan* of that province had undergone a transformation and now bore a closer resemblance to mini-states than to chapters of a secret society. Beyond that, within the *Sangguniang Magdalo*, the organization headed by Baldomero and Emilio Aguinaldo, there was a growing certitude about the advantages of centralization and consolidation and an apparent desire, as manifested in Aguinaldo's manifesto, to preach the gospel of centralization to people outside the boundaries of Cavite.

Thus far, the two approaches—one largely consultative, the other hierarchical—had existed side by side, the first in the area around Manila and the second in Cavite. But that was about to change. Toward the end of 1896 Bonifacio arrived in Cavite.

Aguinaldo and the Victory of Centralization

It is difficult to determine precisely when Bonifacio arrived in Cavite. We know for sure that he was there at least a few days before 12 December 1896, but it is possible that he may have arrived sometime in the last half of November (Richardson 2006c).⁹ In fact, there is much about Bonifacio's stay in Cavite that we cannot be certain about, partly because of a paucity of surviving contemporaneous sources and partly because the memoirs written by Bonifacio's fellow revolutionaries, which have figured prominently in historians' accounts of the revolutionary period, are often unreliable. Even so, as I have tried to demonstrate in an earlier book, despite the many difficulties posed by the sources, it is possible to discern some fundamental truths about important events in that period as well as about the general direction of developments. In the pages that follow, I attempt to do a bit of both, focusing on the resolution of the emerging conflict over how to fight the war.

Bonifacio came to Cavite at the invitation of Mariano Alvarez, the president of the Sangguniang Magdiwang, who was related to Bonifacio's wife, Gregoria de Jesus. We know that some soldiers from his army accompanied him, but we do not know how many. From the start there was tension between Bonifacio and members of the Sangguniang Magdalo. There was also tension between Magdiwang and Magdalo and, to some extent, within the Magdiwang itself. In other words, the revolutionary army, a fragile and somewhat fractured military organization, was showing unmistakable signs of dysfunctionality.

Fortunately for the revolutionary forces, at the time of Bonifacio's arrival in Cavite (regardless of whether it was in November or early December), there was a lull in the fighting in the area, the Spanish army having postponed its campaign to recapture the province after Blanco's failed invasion in early November 1896. Still, as the revolutionary leaders knew, the lull would not continue indefinitely. Each week the Spanish forces were receiving additional reinforcements from abroad, and a major Spanish advance into Cavite was expected early in 1897. According to Aguinaldo's own account, he was so concerned about an impending invasion that, shortly after Bonifacio's arrival, he met with the Magdiwang and Bonifacio to urge that the province's two mini-states work together to build fortifications, but the overture was rebuffed (Aguinaldo 1964, 135–51; Alvarez 1992, 67–70, 302–5; Ricarte 1927, 31–35; Ronquillo 1898, pt. 2, 2–4).

In that context—with the revolutionaries unable to cooperate and with a renewal of hostilities expected soon—Baldomero Aguinaldo, the head of the mini-state that had been pushing hardest for centralization, invited the Sangguniang Magdiwang and katipuneros from other provinces to a large meeting at the friar estate-house in Imus, a town in the Magdalo jurisdiction. It took place in the final days of December 1896, most likely on either 28 or 29 December. Although the accounts of the meeting differ on a host of details, they agree on some basic points—that it was held for the purposes of resolving differences and promoting cooperation among the revolutionaries and considering changes in military organization and government; that it was presided over by Bonifacio; and that katipuneros from all areas were in attendance. In fact, this gathering—which has always been referred to in the scholarly literature as the “Imus Assembly,” a designation that suggests that it was a meeting of a legislative body or a constitutional convention—was nothing more nor less than a *pulong* of the Katipunan: a “*malaking pulong*” like the ones at Pasig and Kangkong earlier in the year. What was happening

was that the Sangguniang Magdalo, believing that the revolution could no longer be run in the way that Bonifacio had run it, was attempting to use the instrument of the *pulong* to introduce important institutional and procedural changes (Aguinaldo 1964, 150–55; Ricarte 1927, 35–37; Alvarez 1992, 70–72, 306–7; Ronquillo 1898, pt. 2, 4–5).

The effort failed. The Magdalo leaders proposed their changes, but there were objections to many of them. Some *katipuneros* were not yet ready to replace the institutional structure of the *Katipunan*; there was apparently disagreement about Bonifacio's role in the proposed new revolutionary organization. Ultimately, nothing of consequence was decided at Imus. Issues had been raised, but no consensus existed at the time. The net result was that the old arrangements were left in place: Magdalo and Magdiwang continued to operate independently, as did Bonifacio's troops in Cavite and forces in other provinces; big decisions about war and peace would be left to future big meetings of the *Katipunan*. The proponents of centralization had suffered a defeat.

However, the issues raised at the Imus meeting did not go away. Whereas the threat of invasion and the arguments of the Magdalo leaders were not sufficient to convince a majority of *katipuneros* of the need for change in late December 1896, the invasion itself would convince them. On 15 February 1897 Camilo Polavieja, Blanco's successor as Spanish governor-general of the Philippines, launched an offensive in southwestern Luzon, aimed at recapturing Cavite from the revolutionaries. Two forces under his command converged on the province from different directions, one under Brig. Gen. Francisco Galbis probing Filipino positions at the Zapote Bridge, near Bacoor in northeastern Cavite, and the second under Maj. Gen. José Lachambre moving on Silang from the east and south. Overmatched by the now-reinforced Spanish Army, the Filipino forces were beaten decisively in several battles (Monteverde y Sedano 1898, 97–104, 130–41, 145–321, 379–80, 458–573; Achútegui 1972, 233–91; May 1991, 54). Contributing to the Filipinos' problems was a lack of cooperation among the (now) five separate Filipino commands that were operating in the area—the forces of the Sangguniang Magdalo and the Sangguniang Magdiwang, the troops led by Bonifacio, and two sizable military units from the nearby province of Batangas that had been drawn into the fighting in Cavite. Joint operations could not be conducted; calls for assistance from a unit under attack were routinely turned down. All the while the Spanish army moved forward, recapturing

town after town and inflicting heavy losses on the Filipinos (Aguinaldo 1964, 159–76; Ronquillo 1898, pt. 2, 4–6; Alvarez 1992, 78–82, 313–18; Ricarte 1927, 46–52; May 1991, 48–58).¹⁰

By mid-March 1897, with much of eastern Cavite under enemy control, tens of thousands of civilian refugees flooding the roads ahead of the advancing Spanish forces, and rice and other comestibles in short supply, an important attitudinal change had occurred in the revolutionary ranks. Since Bonifacio's arrival in Cavite at the end of 1896, most of his support in the province had come from the Sangguniang Magdiwang, led by his wife's uncle Mariano Alvarez. Bonifacio had resided in Magdiwang territory and interacted rather little with the Magdalo. At the Imus pulong, members of the Magdiwang had opposed the Magdalo proposals to alter the revolutionary organization and resisted their efforts to place someone other than Bonifacio at the head of the revolutionary movement. Now, however, faced with the Spanish army, the Magdiwang leaders were the ones pushing for change. Having reached the conclusion that extraordinary measures were needed to prevent their section of Cavite from falling to the enemy, Mariano Alvarez, president of the Sangguniang Magdiwang, called a meeting of katipuneros, which was to be held in the friar estate house in Tejeros, located near the Magdiwang town of San Francisco de Malabon (Achútegui 1972, 342–44; Alvarez 1992, 82, 317–18; Ricarte 1927, 52; Ronquillo 1898, pt. 4, 1).

The meeting at Tejeros, which took place on 22 March 1897, is one of the most-written-about events in Philippine history. It may also be one of the most widely misunderstood. One reason for the misunderstanding has been the tendency of historians to rely heavily on the narrative of events found in the memoir of the famous revolutionary Artemio Ricarte, an account that is problematic in many ways. A case can also be made that the most serious deficiency of standard accounts lies in the way the meeting has been labeled.

In history books the meeting at Tejeros is called the “Tejeros Assembly”—a label that, like the label “Imus Assembly,” imparts to it the aura of a late-eighteenth-century American/West European constitutional convention. The label is misleading. Like the meeting at Imus, the one at Tejeros was simply a “malaking pulong” of the Katipunan. Without question it is the best-known meeting of the Katipunan, but, partly because of the established label, it is not generally understood to be one. Also like the Imus meeting, the one at Tejeros was called by katipuneros who were attempting to use the Katipunan's own instrument, the pulong, to transform the revolutionary

organization. This time, however, the katipuneros who pushed for change were Bonifacio's closest allies.¹¹

To a large extent they succeeded. While the pulong at Tejeros was not the last malaking pulong held during the revolution against Spain—one took place a day later, at the parish house at Tanza, to ratify the decisions made at Tejeros, and a second was held at Naik, several weeks after that, in which Bonifacio attempted to challenge them—the events that transpired on 22 March 1897 represented a decisive victory for Aguinaldo and his policy of centralization and a crushing defeat for Bonifacio and the primacy of the pulong. That defeat, which both alienated and marginalized Bonifacio, led ultimately to his death.

More than 250 revolutionaries gathered at the Tejeros estate house on 22 March. Some of them, like Mariano and Santiago Alvarez, had been members of the Katipunan before the outbreak of the revolution. However, a sizable number had not been affiliated with the secret society in prerevolutionary days. Also called katipuneros, they had joined or been recruited to the revolutionary cause after the fighting had begun.¹² Among the non-Caviteños in attendance, there was a very large delegation from the neighboring province of Batangas led by the Cavite-born commander Santiago Rillo. Like many of the Magdalo and Magdiwang leaders, Rillo was committed to unifying the revolutionary movement in order to improve the Filipinos' performance on the battlefield. One important figure not present at Tejeros was Emilio Aguinaldo. He was aware that the meeting was taking place, but at the time he was conducting military operations against the Spanish army in the vicinity of Imus.

To understand what transpired at Tejeros, we need to take note of two verifiable facts. The first is that, even before the katipuneros arrived at the Tejeros estate house on 22 March, many, perhaps most, of them were aware that the meeting was not being held merely for the purpose of discussing how to fortify the area under the Magdiwang control (which was, according to Ricarte, the reason for Alvarez's decision to invite the revolutionaries to Tejeros). The source that tells us of that fact is a brief note sent by Baldomero Aguinaldo to two important members of the Sangguniang Magdalo, Felix Cuenca and Mariano Noriel, on 21 March 1897. In that document the Magdalo president informed his colleagues that Mariano Alvarez, the head of the Magdiwang, had just invited him to a meeting at Tejeros on the following day at which elections would be held for officials in the central and provincial revolutionary governments. Aguinaldo asked Cuenca and Noriel to consider which people deserved to be elected to such posts and urged

both to attend the pulong. He also instructed them to “inform the heads of other towns [about the meeting] and to tell them not be absent” (*pagsabihan mo po ang mga G. Plo ng taga ibang bayan di[y]an at ipag[p]auna na huag mag culang*). Hence, a significant number of the men who attended the Tejeros meeting—Mariano Alvarez, Baldomero Aguinaldo, Cuenca, and Noriel; various people spoken to by Aguinaldo, Cuenca and Noriel; and, most likely, a host of other revolutionaries who had been contacted by Alvarez and other leaders of the Magdiwang—knew beforehand that a major item on the agenda of the Tejeros meeting was elections, including elections for the leading positions of the revolutionary government.

The second fact, which is supported by just about every extant source except Ricarte’s memoir, is that the elections that took place at the Tejeros meeting were rigged. Telesforo Canseco, an employee of the Dominican Order who lived only a few miles from the meeting place, learned from a friend who observed the proceedings that there were “many disturbances and intrigues to get votes for oneself in the elections” (*muchos disturbios e intrigas al buscar para si votos en las elecciones*). Santiago Alvarez, who attended the pulong, likewise indicated in his memoir that the elections were marred by irregularities. For one, when slips of paper were distributed to the attendees on which to mark their preferences, many of the slips already had writing on them. Other observers of the meeting witnessed ballot tampering, voting by unqualified voters, and assorted improprieties.

That such things occurred at Tejeros is not surprising *if* we keep in mind the fact that the katipuneros who took part were aware before the pulong that elections were going to take place. Irregularities such as those described above were widespread in Philippine municipal elections in the late nineteenth century (May 1988, 13–40). Furthermore, many of the katipuneros who attended the Tejeros pulong—men like Mariano Alvarez and Baldomero Aguinaldo—had more than a little special knowledge about how to guarantee favorable results in electoral contests, because they had risen to positions of power in their own towns’ local governments during the Spanish era by engaging in all manner of electoral shenanigans. Thus, when Baldomero Aguinaldo and other Cavite influentials were told before the Tejeros meeting that elections would be held, they conducted themselves at Tejeros in much the same way as they would in any other electoral contest: they lobbied, cajoled, possibly threatened, drew up slates of candidates, and, if presented the opportunity, engaged in ballot tampering.

The results of the Tejeros meeting were largely preordained, given the reality that there was now a consensus among the revolutionaries that a different leader and a different approach to military organization were needed. In the voting for the top position in the revolutionary government, Emilio Aguinaldo prevailed. The three next most important posts went to members of the Magdiwang: Mariano Trias, Artemio Ricarte, and Emiliano Riego de Dios. The two sangguniang bayan of Cavite had placed their own in charge of the reorganized revolutionary government. Only then was Bonifacio elected to a position, the relatively minor one of director of the interior. After that, a quarrel broke out between Bonifacio and Daniel Tirona, a leading Magdalo, and Bonifacio left the meeting, announcing that everything done there had been nullified. By then, however, no longer the *supremo*, Bonifacio lacked the authority to nullify the result of a *pulong*, even if the decisions made by the attendees were reached by collusion, conspiracy, and all manner of un-*pulong*-like practices. In effect, the *pulong* of Tejeros had been conducted like a municipal election in order to insure that the war against Spain was no longer run by *pulong*.

As leadership of the revolutionary movement was transferred from Bonifacio to Aguinaldo, centralization at last had prevailed over consultation. Nonetheless, Aguinaldo's victory did not bring immediate unity to the revolutionary camp. Displaced and dissatisfied, Bonifacio refused to accept the verdict of Tejeros, and relations between him and other military commanders, including Aguinaldo, steadily grew worse. Meanwhile, rumors of the wildest kind about Bonifacio's actions and intentions circulated in Cavite. Eventually, superior force won out and Bonifacio was eliminated.

Nor did the decisions of the Tejeros meeting bring improved fortunes on the battlefield. By the end of May 1897 all of Cavite province was once again in Spanish hands and Aguinaldo himself was on the run. He surfaced in Bulacan, north of Manila. Toward the end of 1897 he worked out peace terms with the mother country. In exchange for money payments and empty promises of reform, he and his principal lieutenants agreed to go into exile in Hong Kong. So ended, in rather ignominious defeat, the first phase of the revolution against Spain.

A Weberian Tale

Some of Max Weber's most influential writings relate to the role of "charismatic" leadership in human history. As Weber tells us, charismatic leaders often pose challenges to, and sometimes overthrow, existing regimes. Weber

tells us too that these leaders, however energetic and creative, are invariably more successful in destroying old structures than in establishing new ones. Charismatic leaders challenge, disrupt, destroy, and then, one way or another, pass from the scene, leaving it to others, bureaucratic elites, to rebuild. The great, typically insuperable challenge to charismatic authority is what Weber calls the “routinization of charisma” (Weber 1947, 324–92; Weber 1968, ix–lvi, 3–77).

The story I have told in this essay is, in a certain sense, a Weberian tale.¹³ It does not follow the Weberian scheme exactly, of course. Some readers might question whether Bonifacio should be considered a “charismatic” leader. Others might argue that the removal of Bonifacio had less to do with his inability to create new bureaucratic structures than with the way he ran the revolution. The truth of the matter is that no real-life historical case study corresponds in every detail to the Weberian model. It is, after all, only a model, its value being to allow us to see crosscultural patterns and not merely single-society particularities.

And what do we see? We see a man, Andres Bonifacio, who led a secret society, the Katipunan, which posed a serious challenge to the Spanish colonial state. Something of a firebrand, Bonifacio pushed the society doggedly in the direction of rebellion, but he was initially unsuccessful, in part because his powers were circumscribed. The Katipunan operated along decidedly consultative lines, placing ultimate decision-making powers in the *pulong*, which included representatives of the constituent units of the larger secret society. The Katipunan’s organizational structure was, as I have suggested, modeled to some degree on the mandalas of preconquest Southeast Asia, which were led by men of prowess who sought to achieve their ends through consultation, rather than compulsion. In effect, Bonifacio’s authority rested on preconquest foundations: he was a charismatic leader who relied on a traditional organizational model.

We then see a revolution break out, which presented Bonifacio with new circumstances and a new set of challenges, essentially bureaucratic in nature. Bonifacio struggled with those challenges. He fought the war in pretty much the same way he had run the secret society, and his results were disappointing. In time, some of his fellow revolutionaries, operating in a different area, came up with a different approach, calling for the adoption of a new organization, new procedures, and new leaders. The end of charismatic authority came at a *pulong* in Tejeros, at a point in the revolution when

it was obvious to any Filipino with functioning eyes that the Katipunan's onetime man of prowess did not demonstrate prowess on the battlefield. At Tejeros, the former rivals, Magdiwang and Magdalo, came together to vote against Bonifacio and in favor of centralization. Bonifacio, the charismatic leader, had succeeded in raising the flag of rebellion, but it was left to a new bureaucratic authority, exemplified by Aguinaldo, to attempt to finish the job.¹⁴

In short, we see a revolution and a set of historical circumstances that do not seem all that different from those found in other places and other times. The details are unique, but the processes are familiar. At bottom the conflict between Bonifacio and Aguinaldo was but one brief skirmish in the perennial struggle between the charismatic and the bureaucratic.

Notes

This article is a much-revised version of a conference paper I delivered at the 19th conference of the International Association of Historians of Asia, held in Makati, Metro Manila, in November 2006. In revising the paper for publication, I benefited greatly from the criticisms and suggestions of Jim Richardson; Jun Aguilar, editor of Philippine Studies; and the two anonymous referees who commented on my submission to this journal.

- 1 This edition of Alvarez's memoir includes a copy of the original text (entitled "Ang Katipunan at Paghihimagsik") that was published in serialized form in the Tagalog weekly *Sampagita* in 1927–1928, and a translation prepared by Paula Carolina S. Malay. In this article I provide my own translations of passages from the memoir, which differ somewhat from those of Malay. In my references to this source, I cite page numbers for both Alvarez's Tagalog version and Malay's translation. In constructing my account of the May 1896 meeting, I have also included information taken from the memoir and assorted statements of Pio Valenzuela (see *Minutes of the Katipunan* 1978, 89–90, 147–48) and the account by Emilio Aguinaldo (1964, 42–44).
- 2 Alternative translations of the phrase *malaking pulong* would be "large meeting" or "mass meeting."
- 3 I also consulted: *Minutes of the Katipunan* 1978, 100, 117, 149–50, 173–74, 237–38; Aguinaldo 1964, 57–58; and Alvarez 1992, 17–20, 252–55.
- 4 I would translate the words "Kataastaasang Sanggunian" as "Highest Consultative Body." In much of the literature on the Katipunan, the name of this organization is rendered in English as "Supreme Council," words that seem to convey the impression that it had a great deal of authority. My own more literal translation suggests that its power was more limited.
- 5 See, for example, *Minutes of the Katipunan* 1978, 117, 173–74.

- 6 For another example of decision making by *pulong* (in this case, a *pulong* of the Kataastaasang Sanggunian) in the early stages of the revolution, see Richardson 2007b.
- 7 Also see Genaro de los Reyes's account of the same episodes in Alvarez 1992, 164, 400.
- 8 The only surviving text of the document, written in Spanish, appeared in a book published in Madrid in 1897. The original was almost certainly in Tagalog. My translations of the Spanish text differ slightly from those of Achútegui and Bernad.
- 9 Richardson (2007c) discusses the date of Bonifacio's arrival in a lengthy endnote. Before the appearance of Richardson's piece (which includes an important document written by Bonifacio), historians had to rely on the memoirs of revolutionaries—specifically, those of Carlos Ronquillo, Emilio Aguinaldo, Santiago Alvarez, and Artemio Ricarte. Ronquillo placed Bonifacio's arrival as early as 17 November. The other three came up with dates in December. See Ronquillo 1898, pt. 2, 1–2; Aguinaldo 1964, 135; Alvarez 1992, 67, 302; and Ricarte 1927, 31.
- 10 While the sources agree that there was a lack of coordination, they disagree about who was at fault. Aguinaldo and Ronquillo claim that Bonifacio and the leaders of the Magdiwang refused their appeals for assistance. Alvarez and Ricarte indicate that there were in fact combined operations by Magdalo and Magdiwang units but that the Magdalo forces could not be trusted to perform their assignments.
- 11 This discussion of the Tejeros meeting is based on May 1996, 83–111, 183–87.
- 12 This distinction between “true” katipuneros, those who were members of the secret society before the revolution, and those who joined later is doubtless important. According to Aguinaldo (1964, 150–55) there was considerable discussion of the question at the Imus *pulong*.
- 13 In this article I have focused on the applicability of Weber's models to the Philippine Revolution. It is worth pointing out, however, that other theoretical writings may be just as applicable and potentially even more useful. In the modern literature on social movements, there is much discussion about organizational styles, popular mobilization, centralization, and bureaucratization. Especially intriguing is Sidney Tarrow's (1998, 123–38) discussion of the role of “informal connective tissue” in social movements. Tarrow's analysis may help us to understand not only the strength of support for Bonifacio in the prerevolutionary period but also the limits of Aguinaldo's power once he managed to eliminate Bonifacio.
- 14 It might be argued that Aguinaldo's principal effort to do that occurred later, after his return from Hong Kong in May 1898. Again, there was a battle over centralized control, and again Aguinaldo and centralization prevailed. Even so, the result was similar. Despite having a more centralized war effort in the struggle against the United States, the Filipinos were beaten.

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