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The Principalia in Philippine History: Kabikolan, 1790-1898*

NORMAN G. OWEN

Note on transcriptions: In the transcription of quotations and titles of documents in Spanish the following general rules have been observed. Documents which can be found by reference to archive numbers alone are cited without titles. When necessary for the location of the document (particularly in the National Archives of the Philippines), the title has usually been given in shortened form. The bureaucratic heading ("Dirección General de Administración Civil," etc.) has been omitted, and the actual documentary title has been shortened (with omissions indicated by ellipses) to a length adequate for identification. In the portions quoted, the Spanish is given as it appears in the original so far as spelling and accentuation, both erratic, are concerned. Punctuation has sometimes been added when necessary for logical clarity, and some of the manuscript marks indicating contractions have been omitted for typographical clarity. Thus the superscript line has been omitted in such contractions as "dha" (for "dicha") and "pra" (for "principalia"), as has the period which on rare occasions is placed under the superscript letters indicating contractions ("sob^e" instead of "sob^e" for "sobre").

Spanish terms used in the text have been appropriately accented when they are first introduced or otherwise italicized (*principalía*). In keeping with current trends in Philippine usage, the accents are omitted as the words are "Filipinized," and written in roman (*principalía*). In personal names, absolute accuracy is impossible and absolute consistency is misleading. Spaniards tend more to insist on the accents, Filipinos to drop them; in this paper names are generally given as they normally appear, with no pretense of definitive or even "correct" usage.

"The *datus*, titles by which among themselves they distinguish the nobility, are almost the only ones who have lands; these are worked for them by the *Timanguas*, or plebeians, who do not

*This paper is based on research toward a doctoral dissertation at the University of Michigan on "Kabikolan in the Nineteenth Century." Financial support for research in Spain, England, and the Philippines was provided by a Foreign Area Fellowship. In the Philippines, research was undertaken as a Visiting Research Associate of the Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University.

have lands themselves, so that in spite of the fertility of the Island, it does not always supply food to its inhabitants. The *tinaguas* [sic] maintain a great respect for their principal nobles, never do they marry with them, they obey them, and cultivate their lands, when they possess public office" (Sorsogon, 1972).¹

Such direct assertions about the social structure of provincial Philippines under Spanish rule are as rare as they are valuable. Our knowledge of stratification in Philippine society is at present largely limited to field research of the past twenty years, creatively combined with a handful of descriptions of the society at the time of Spanish conquest.² For the intervening four centuries, our sources have been the novels of Jose Rizal and a few general descriptions of the country, written, for the most part, by bureaucrats and travellers who never ventured more than a few miles from Manila. As a result, descriptions of social structure under the Spanish regime have often depended on ideological or sentimental preconceptions; the terminology used is sometimes so imprecise as to be of no analytical value. Recent research, making use of the vast and virtually untapped resources of the Philippine National Archives, is just beginning to uncover more documentation shedding light on Philippine society in the long gap between the pre-Spanish *balangay* and the post-Independence modernizing transitional community.³

¹"Apuntes de Sorsogon, en la Prov^a de Albay Ysla de Luzon," Museo Naval [MN] (Madrid), Ms. 136, Doc. 11b. Provenance, handwriting, and internal evidence make it possible to attribute this to Antonio Pineda, a scientist on the Malaspina Expedition, who visited Sorsogon briefly in 1792. The brevity of the stay suggests Pineda may have depended on local residents rather more than on personal observation, but his writings in general show that Pineda was a keen observer who retained a critical attitude toward all "given" opinions, including those of friars and governors.

The term *timangua* (*timawa*) is usually translated as freedman or commoner. The term translated here as "lands" is *tierras*, which normally implied cultivation, especially of rice.

²Frank Lynch, S.J., "Trends Report of Studies in Social Stratification and Social Mobility in the Philippines," *East Asian Cultural Studies* [Tokyo], IV (March, 1965), 163-91.

³See in particular Edgar Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life: 1850-98* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965), especially Chapter 5, "The Cultural and Social Context," and John A. Larkin, *The*

My own research has led me to most of the major collections of historical records for one area and one period — Kabikolan (the Bikol region) in the 19th century.⁴ From this research emerges evidence for only one major rhetorical distinction within that Bikol society, a distinction between the *principalía* and everyone else. This paper is an attempt to explore this critical 19th century concept as an introduction to a more profound understanding of the social structure it represented. Two major limitations of this approach must be immediately acknowledged. First, the sources are predominantly bureaucratic (especially if one considers the church as a bureaucratic institution), and are primarily concerned with the interface between Spanish and Filipino societies. There might be other important distinctions within Bikolano society which are not adequately represented in these sources because they did not affect his area of interaction between lower echelon Spaniards and the local elite. On the other hand, these sources do sometimes purport to describe the whole range of society, and it seems unlikely that a major articulated cleavage would be totally overlooked. These documents were written not only by Spanish administrators and priests, but also by local Bikolano leadership, the *principalía* themselves; the papers

Pampangans: Colonial Society in a Philippine Province (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972). Several other scholars whose research is still in progress have been generous enough to share some of their findings and impressions with me, and have helped me build up a sense of the world outside my own narrow investigations. I wish to thank in particular R. B. Cruikshank, Michael Cullinane, Edilberto C. de Jesus, Jr., Dennis Roth, John Schumacher, S.J., and Peter C. Smith — none of whom is, of course, responsible for the liberties I have taken in interpreting what they told me.

One of the best expressions of our prior knowledge comes from John J. Carroll, S.J., *Changing Patterns of Social Structure in the Philippines: 1896, 1963* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1968), 30—33. His description of "Stratification 1896" is qualified by his statement that "Evidence that this actually was the system in the period under consideration is largely impressionistic," so that it must be bolstered by references to pre-Hispanic society and to studies of 20th century social structure.

⁴Kabikolan, as used here, includes the present-day provinces of Albay, Sorsogon, Catanduanes, and Camarines Norte and Sur, but excludes Masbate. Research has been undertaken in the Archivo Histórico Nacional and the Museo Naval (Madrid), the Archivo General de Indias (Seville), the

of the Revolutionary Government (1898–1901) and testimony before the Shcurman Commission (1899) indicate the extent to which Filipinos had internalized such concepts.⁵ The idea of the *principalia* is clearly something more than a Spanish bureaucratic perception imposed on a misunderstood native society.

The second limitation is suggested by the words we must use in referring to the term “*principalia*” — rhetoric, articulation, idea, perception. Even today, sociologists are by no means unanimous as to the relationship between perceptions and the “real” structure of society, nor have they successfully balanced the claims of class, power, and status. With all the wealth of statistical data now available, all the possibilities of samplings and surveys, there is not even a firm consensus on the existence of a middle class in the provincial Philippines today.⁶ So the historian must first assert that in the 19th century the “*principalia*” was perceived, and that this perception was articulated. He can then proceed to describe, using every type of evidence his sources will provide, the characteristics of *principalia*. He may choose to go further, and investigate as best he can the workings of the whole society. He might conclude that the term “*principalia*” is valuable for social analysis because, being

National Archives and National Library (Manila) and the Lopez Memorial Museum (Pasay City), as well as in other research centers in the Philippines, Spain, England, and the United States. The one major center omitted was the Franciscan archives in Pastrana, Spain; but examination of the “*Indice*” to that collection (made available to me by Father Cayetano Sanchez, OFM) suggests that the documents, though undoubtedly containing unique and valuable data on this subject, are largely of the same *type* as the printed Franciscan material and the manuscripts by parish priests available to me in the archives mentioned above.

⁵The “Philippine Revolutionary Papers” (or “Philippine Insurgent Records”) are now found in the Filipiniana section of the National Library. Testimony of Filipino leaders may be found in United States, War Department, Bureau of Insular Affairs, *Report of the Philippine Commission to the President* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1900), Volume II.

⁶Cf. Frank Lynch, *Social Class in a Bikol Town* (Chicago: Philippine Studies Program, Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago, 1959) and Carol Holtzman Cespedes, “Away From the Land: The Evolution of a Middle Class in a Pangasinan Town” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1971).

articulated, it can be quantified;⁷ that it is vital for defining *status* in that society; but that it seems to slight economic class distinctions which may turn out to be more valuable in our eventual description of the social structure. But he must begin with the central concept, the *principalia*.

* * * * *

The term *principal* was used almost exclusively (the reference above to “*datus*” is highly unusual) to refer to the upper tier of a two-tiered indigenous society in 19th century Kabikolan.⁸ Frequently it was used in combination with its constituent parts: “the *governadorcillo*, *capitanes pasados*, *cabezas de barangay* and (other) *principales . . .*” Witnesses in court would simply identify themselves as “Don _____, native, resident and principal of the town of . . .” Occasionally the term *principales del tribunal* is used, stressing the legal-political function; *puidentes* (“the powerful”) sounds more socioeconomic, but both of these variations are rare. The term “principal” in 19th century Kabikolan, like “gentlemen” in 17th century England, was sufficient in itself and needed no further elaboration.

Much more variety occurs in the terminology for the lower tier, the non-*principales*. *Timawa* was used early in the century, sometimes giving way to the Spanish equivalent, *plebeyo*. A highly significant alternative was *polista* — a person responsible for corvee labor, or *polos*. Sometimes the vague term “other inhabitants” (*habitantes*, *moradores*, or *vecinos*) was used, and sometimes the purely negative definition, “the rest” (*los demás*). We have almost no idea of what these non-*principales* might have

⁷ William O. Aydelotte, *Quantification in History* (Reading, Mass., etc.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, c1971), 49–50, 146–49, discusses the value of replacing vague terms (aristocracy, gentry) with more specific ones (sons of peers, men listed in Burke’s *Landed Gentry*), while adding that the investigator doing so bears the burden of proof that the new categories are “viable and useful.”

⁸ The source for this and the following paragraphs is the entirety of my research, but the rhetoric is perhaps best represented in the section of the National Archives called *Ereccion de Pueblo*. [PNA, EP]

called themselves; they are silent in the records, leaving an occasional priest or *gobernadorcillo* to claim to speak for them, articulate his view of their interests.⁹

The most striking fact about this rhetoric is the virtual absence of any conception of Filipino society as having more than these two classes. There had once been a system of slavery or self-like dependence; by the 19th century it had apparently vanished, except perhaps for a few *negritos* still held under such conditions.¹⁰ Even more surprisingly, there are almost no references to a distinction between local gentry and provincial *ilustrados*, between *cabezas de barangay* with no more evident status than the right to vote and the honorific "Don," and powerful *caciques* who enjoyed great wealth and manipulated local elections. The historian may feel that such a distinction is important, even necessary, but he should be aware it was scarcely articulated at the time. If social class depends upon a common perception of groupings, it would seem that there were only two classes in 19th century Kabikolan; if the term depends on an awareness of common identity and interest, it would seem that there was only one class — the *principalia*.¹¹

The sources available provide two possible bases for identifying the *principalia* — a legal-political definition and social acceptance as reflected in common usage. The former was fairly straightforward, despite some technical ambiguities. The *principalia* consisted of those local officials entitled to take part in

⁹ Lynch, *Social Class*, 118–34, provides a valuable discussion of contemporary (1950's) Bikol usage and the 17th century *Vocabulario* of Fr. Marcos de Lisboa, but no direct evidence on the 19th century. In the 1950's, the "stereotype" term for the lower strata was "little people" (*sadít na tao*) in contrast to the "big people" (*dakulang tao*) on top.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 123–25; Letter from José Ma. Peñaranda to Governor General Pascual Enrile, 29 November 1832, MN, Ms. 2237, Doc. 8; Merton L. Miller, "The Non-Christian People of Ambos Camarines," *Philippine Journal of Science*, VI–6 (December, 1911), 323–24;

¹¹ For a two-class view of Bikol society based on attitudinal surveys, see Lynch, *Social Class*; for the concept of a "one-class society" see Peter Laslett, *The World We Have Lost* (Second Edition, London: Methuen and Company Limited, 1971), 23–54. This social history of England before the Industrial Revolution provides many striking parallels with the Philippines in the 19th century.

elections and other municipal affairs — essentially, the gobernadorcillo, the cabezas de barangay, former gobernadorcillos (capitanes pasados), cabezas with over ten consecutive years of service, and the school teacher. The *teniente mayor* and the *jueces mayores* of fields, livestock, and police were also automatically principalia, since these posts were only open (in theory) to candidates who were already principales. There was, over time, some variation in regulations and legal definition of this group, but almost no variation in practice; these are the true, the hard-core principalia throughout the century.¹² Since there was normally one cabeza to each 45–50 *tributos enteros*, the principalia must have represented a minimum of about 2 percent of all household heads; assuming that not all capitanes pasados and ten-year cabezas were still heading barangays, a more realistic estimate of their proportion might be 3–4 percent.

Common usage seems, in general, to reflect this legal definition of the principalia. It was never more restricted than this; capitanes and cabezas are always called Don. But there were also times in which the concept was apparently expanded, applied to an individual who did not meet the strict legal requirements, or

¹²Before 1846 electoral rights were confined to the twelve senior cabezas and the gobernadorcillo; afterward, they were extended to all capitanes pasados, current cabezas and ten-year cabezas as well, the actual voters being chosen by lot. The Maura Law (Royal Decree of 19 May 1893) added to the "Principalía" and electorate all vecinos who paid over ₱50 in *contribución territorial*. At times, a technical distinction was made between current cabezas (with less than ten years service) and principales, but this seems to have had little effect in Kabikolan practice, where cabezas were always called Don and treated as part of the principalia. For a sampling of the legal confusion, see J[ean] Mallat, *Les Philippines* (Paris: A. Bertrand, 1846), I, 355–56; P[edro] de G[ovantes] y A[zcárraga], "Instituciones Filipinas," *Revista de Filipinas*, I–21 (1 May 1876), 565; Federico Casademunt, "Agapito Macapingan (Memorias de un criado Tagalog)," *Revista de Filipinas*, I–2 (15 July 1875), 52; Camilo Millan, *Reforma Municipal de Filipinas* (Manila: Imprenta de "El Eco de Filipinas," 1893), I, 112–13; José Montero y Vidal, *Historia General de Filipinas* (Madrid: Est. Tip. de la Viuda é Hijos de Tello, 1895), III, 82–83; and Larkin, 92. For Kabikolan practice, see PNA, Eleccion de Gobernadorcillo [EG], Albay, II and V (1889–90).

to a number which far exceeds the proportion we might reasonably expect to be qualified. There were a variety of forms this enlarged usage might take, each presenting its own hazards to the historical or social analyst.

Perhaps the most common variation was the simple extension of the term "Don" to past officials or other persons of prestige or of minor rank who happened, at the moment, to fall short of the legal requirements of the *principalia*. Such ascription might be made by either a generous scribe or a self-assertive *vecino*, while a sterner authority might withhold the honorific. The size and composition of this "penumbra" is almost impossible to ascertain; fortunately for the historian, most of the really influential *Bikolanos* seem to have been genuine *principales* (often as *capitanes pasados*), unlike the elite of Central Luzon, who are said to have avoided public office entirely by the end of the century.¹³ The penumbra would have included the minor town officials (*subalternos*) that so proliferated in Kabikolan: *teniente 2°* to *teniente 9°*, lesser judges, *barrio* lieutenants, public witnesses, all the way down to constables in charge of vagrants (*alguaciles de vagamundos*).¹⁴ The *servientes de iglesia* — sacristans, wardens, choirmasters — may also have been called "Don"

¹³The assertion that the real Filipino leaders shunned the posts of *cabeza* and even *gobernadorcillo* is made by Govantes y Azcárraga, 564, Casademunt, 51-54, and Millan 117, 129, among many others. It has become a commonplace of Philippine history without, to my knowledge, ever having been tested. Such avoidance may well have taken place in the Tagalog areas close to Manila, where the processes of commercialization, modernization, and alienation seem to have been further advanced, but there is no evidence it was happening in Kabikolan. Although there is no disproving the theoretical possibility of rich families who kept their influence well hidden, almost all the identifiable *Bikol* elite held municipal posts at one time or another. Some seemingly tried to become *gobernadorcillos* quickly, and thus *principales* for life (as *capitanes pasados*), but Mariano P. Villanueva of Tabaco — who had already been *gobernadorcillo* — was still serving as a *cabeza de barangay* in 1891 when he was sole manager and half owner of Villanueva & Co., a firm worth over ₱400,000. PNA, Protocolos, Albay, 1026.

¹⁴In 1816 the parish priest of Tabaco accused the *Alcalde Mayor* of creating "innumerable officials" in the towns, including 80 in Tabaco (24 of them *tenientes*), "and with this they all become *principales* and the poor *timawas* that remain are overburdened." PNA, EP, Albay, III,

by virtue of their closeness to the priest, or the *personeros* of a Spanish merchant may have been honored for their similar access to power. Only a far more detailed local study than any yet undertaken will enable us to quantify or analyze the penumbra; in the meantime, we can only assert that a generous usage of the term "principalia" might add 2 percent, 5 percent, even more to our estimate of its size.

A far more blatant, and therefore less analytically troublesome, expansion of the concept is found in some petitions to the government purportedly signed by the *común de principales*. This *ad hoc* town council was summoned by the *gobernadorcillo*, either on his own initiative or on orders from higher up, to deliberate and decide on important questions. If local leadership had little interest in the matter, only a handful of principales — perhaps the half-dozen or so living closest to the *tribunal* — would sign. But on a deeply felt local issue, the number could multiply astonishingly, far beyond any likely estimate of principales and penumbra combined, in an effort to sway administrative opinion by a show of massive solidarity.¹⁵ The authorities frequently indicated that they were aware of the deception that they knew many so-called "principales" were but common *polistas* ordered or tricked into signing a document they could

"Espediente . . . del Gobernadorcillo y cura de la Cavecera, quejandose de los procedimientos del Alc^e mor."

In 1835 Corregidor José Ma. Peñaranda complained of the "terrible disproportion" of minor officials in towns, down to *tenientes* of firewood, charcoal, rattan, and chickens! All were then exempt from *polos* and *servicios* while in office, and afterwards at least from guard duty (*tanorias*), "because they all call themselves Don so-and-so." (*por que todos se llaman D.N.*) PNA, EP, Albay, III, "Espediente promovido á oficio del Correg^t de Albay en que propone se disminuya el N^o de Ministros de Justicia . . ."

¹⁵The most extreme case of expanded usage came in an 1861 petition from the "principales" of *visita* Joroan, Tiwi, Albay, requesting establishment as a separate pueblo. A governmental investigation revealed that of the 82 signatories, only 5 (all *cabezas*) were actually principales, "and the rest are *polistas*." It was also shown that about half of the "signatures" were signed by someone else on behalf of individuals absent from town at the time. PNA, EP, Albay, VI, "Espediente promovido por varios individuos de la visita de Yoroan . . ."

not even read.¹⁶ Even so, the sheer show of numbers might impress, might suggest that the petition had the backing of at least the few who controlled the many. Thus a petition by a self-admitted *común de principales y plebeyos* could normally expect a reception similar to one purporting to be by *principalia* alone; the difference in nomenclature seems purely one of rhetorical preference.

Mere inclusion of a signature on such a list, then, is no index to the status of the signer. But ordinal position does seem significant; nearly all identifiable *capitanes* and *cabezas* would sign at or near the head of the expanded *común*. A strong correlation can usually be found between the first twenty or so names on two or more contemporary petitions from the same town.¹⁷ We may suspect the existence of some genuine "comun," a council of the real decision-makers of the town, all but buried in these petitions, under political featherbedding. But we cannot even prove the existence of such a directorate, much less imply that it corresponded to the legal *principalia* as we know it.

The most obscure, and possibly most significant variant usage

¹⁶ "These Natives are governed by the Elders [*Viejos*] of their Town so that the Heads of Factions [*Cabezas de Partido*] obtain as many signatures as they desire for their purposes, and everyone longs to sign, without taking the trouble to ascertain the contents; thus it happens one can see very hundreds of real, or supposed, signatures entirely contradictory." Letter from Bishop Domingo Collantes to the parish priest of Cagsaua, 5 March 1801, PNA, EP, Albay, V, "Camarines. Año de 1803. Expediente sobre traslacion del pueblo de Cagsaua, al sitio de Daraga."

¹⁷ In the complicated Lagonoy incident of 1806, the "Común de Principales" presented four long petitions within a space of two months. The number of signatures ranged from 120 to 151, although a total of 335 different persons signed at least one of the four petitions. A group of 24 signatories can be selected who signed the four petitions in the ordinal positions indicated:

- I. 1-14, 16-22, and third from end. Two did not sign.
- II. 1-17. Seven did not sign.
- III. 1-24.
- IV. 1-13, 15-16, 18-19, 21, and three of last four. Three did not sign.

This group includes all six identifiable *capitanes pasados*, PNA, EP, Albay, I, five separate expedientes.

of the term "Don" is found in some isolated lists of taxpayers apparently written with no political purpose in mind. These lists label nearly half the population as Dons, suggesting some submerged sense of the word which differs drastically from normal usage. A hint as to this alternative definition may be found in the fact that the title Don is awarded far more often to the married than to the single *tributantes*; maturity and/or economic security is implied.¹⁸ A similar conception may underlie a "Relación" of the signers of a certain 1843 petition, written in response to an order to distinguish the principales from the timawas; the scribe listed as Dons all capitanes, cabezas, and *vecinos* (including one cook!) with only a handful of timawas lacking the honorific.¹⁹

Despite this tantalizing suggestion of a class system defined by something (economics?) other than political position, it must be realized that such usage is extremely rare in these 19th century documents. In the vast majority of cases, the term "principal" was essentially political (or sociopolitical) in content. It was also absolute, not relative, unlike our term "upper class" today. There might be variation in application from scribe to scribe, but each of them seems to have had a clear idea of who was, and who was not, entitled to be called a Don; rare is the document in which either everyone or no one receives this title. It is clear that the principalia did have a strong economic base, as we shall see; there is a sense in which a poor principal is almost a contradiction in terms. Yet before a wealthy man could obtain recognition as a principal he had to transmute this wealth, by a process difficult to document but not to imagine, into political and social currency. Our subject, then, is the respected

¹⁸ In three *padroncillos* from visita Montufar in 1833, 50 of 74 married couples (67 1/2 percent) are listed as Don and Doña, but only 27 of 115 (23 1/2 percent) bachelors and spinsters. PNA, EP, Albay, V, "Espediente promovido por los principales de la visita de Montufar, pidiendo separarse de su matriz Bacon." See also the *Libro de Almas* for the town of Libog (Sto. Domingo), now in the Bishop's Palace, Legazpi City.

¹⁹ PNA, EP, Camarines Sur, II, "Solicitud de los prales de Oas pidiendo se reintegre sus dineros de propios mandado librar p^a gastos de alg^os prales en el pleito contra su cura fr. Mig.¹ Barcela . . ."

Don; we must ask what besides political position his characteristics were, and of these, which were necessary, which contingent?

Although to us the predominant characteristic of the principalia would be wealth, at the time this took rhetorical second place to the right of exemption, especially from polos, *servicios personales*, and other forms of compulsory labor. Tribute exemptions and escape from the draft (*quintas*) were also much sought after, but these were apparently not so essential to the principalia as labor exemption was.²⁰ The principales themselves occasionally made the point that they did not do communal work; priests and Spanish officials claiming to speak for the "poor polistas" often objected indignantly to the same fact.²¹ It is not possible here to trace all the shifts of official Spanish policy toward various obligations of the Filipinos, nor would it necessarily be entirely relevant to the realities of life and status in the provinces. Certain special groups — subalternos, sirvientes de iglesia, Spanish mestizos, and the infirm — were at times legally exempt from polos and yet were not considered principales as such; on the other hand, those legally obligated in theory might well obtain (legally or otherwise) exemption through payment. But the point is made often enough, the

²⁰In an election complaint against the gobernadorcillo of Cagsaua in 1890, it was alleged, among other charges, that he had named the 18-year-old illegitimate son of his cousin as a cabeza de barangay with the object of "freeing him from the draft." PNA, EG, Albay, V, "Acta de eleccion para Gobernadorcillo ... verificado en 31 de Mayo en el pueblo de 'Cagsaua!'"

²¹See note 14, above. For another clerical statement on behalf of the overworked polistas ("... at all times we see that they never escape from misery ...") see the letter of Pedro Licup (parish priest of Albay) and other priests to Bishop Collantes, 23 March 1801, in *expediente* cited in note 16, above.

In 1859 visita Danlog could only obtain the services of a priest by carrying the coadjutor of Gubat there in a hammock. The principales stated that they paid the fees and provided the meals demanded by the priest, but that in the weekly rotation of carriers (*cargadores*) involving all the other men in the visita, they were omitted, "because they don't carry." PNA, EP, Albay, V, "Los naturales de las visitas de D[an]log, Malotayo y Tagdon, piden separarse de su matriz Gubat en Albay."

principal-polista distinction so belabored, that it is tempting to define a principal as one who did not have to do polo labor, just as an English gentleman was one who did not have to work with his hands.²²

No such volume of rhetoric attends the question of whether or not the principalia had landed wealth — but landed wealth they had, nevertheless. The 1897 “Estadísticas de Terrenos Agrícolas” are revealing: in Oas, Albay, some 116 Dons (about 18 percent of listed landowners, and 3-1/2 percent of estimated household heads) owned 60 percent of all the cultivated land listed. Sixty-five percent of the Dons owned over 5 hectares, the mean size of a Don’s combined landholdings was 13.3 hectares; of the other landowners, only 7 percent owned over 5 hectares and the mean holding was 2.0 hectares. Roughly 80 percent of the households appear to have been completely landless.²³ Other documents refer in a less numerical manner to principales owning nearly all the land, in both the poblacion and the outlying visitas.²⁴ The Spanish bureaucracy reinforced

²² Laslett, 30. There is evidence to suggest a Bikol principal might work in family fields, e.g., the statement of Don Gregorio Borja (age 33, married, literate) that he “dedicated himself to farming [*labrar*] the rice fields of his father Don Juan Borja, and to working lime for the maintenance of his wife and children.” PNA, Provincias, Ambos Camarines, I; Court of First Instance, Case No. 583 vs. D. Gregorio Borja, for gambling. (1865)

Lynch, “Trends Reports,” 166, discusses the social significance of not being dominated by others; perhaps it was most important for a principal not to labor for anyone else, even for the community at large.

²³ For Malinao, Albay, the comparable figures were: 74 Dons (12 percent of landowners, 2-1/2 percent of household heads) owned 49 percent of cultivated land; 80 percent of them owned over 10 hectares, and the mean size of landholdings was 29.8 hectares; of others, only 11 percent owned over 10 ha. and mean holding was 4.4 ha.; again 80 percent were landless. PNA, Estadísticas, Albay, II. Household estimates are based on the 1896 census, divided by average household size from the 1903 census. My thanks to the Population Institute, University of the Philippines, for making available data processing.

²⁴ “. . . of more than 2000 tributos that the provincial capital [Albay] has, hardly more than a very small [*cortísimo*] number of principales own rice-fields.” Letter, Peñaranda to Enrile, 18 July 1834, MN, Ms. 2228. Cf. quotation at the beginning of this paper.

In the proposal for the creation of the town and parish of Gainza,

this natural tendency by insisting that local government officials possess sufficient *bienes de fortuna* to cover any tax shortages that might be attributed to them. A cabeza de barangay could normally get by with his nipa house, house lot, one or two parcels of agricultural land, and a few carabaos, horses, or cows.²⁵ In a good-sized town, a candidate for gobernadorcillo with less than ₱2000 worth of real property would be considered on the margins of poverty.²⁶

The Protocolos (notarized documents) in the National Archives throw some light on other forms that principalia wealth could take, though it should be remembered that probably only a very small fraction of local transactions were ever notarized. Wills show principales owning not only extensive lands (usually in the form of multiple small plots rather than large haciendas), but also large houses and warehouses (some with galvanized iron roofs), cattle and boats, furnishings and jewelry — and a catalogue of credits. Many principales were clearly functioning as moneylenders (whether for monetary interest or for favors past or future is usually not indicated), and it is not uncommon to find literally scores of debts listed, ranging from one or two pesos to several hundred. Other documents show principales buying and selling abaca (often involving a complicated set of cash advances), bidding for public contracts (cockpits, market tax, opium monopoly), and establishing merchant companies for the sale of all manner of goods. If ordinary vecinos show up in these documents at all, they tend to be sellers of lands once obtained through cultivation or inheritance, or as accused criminals being bailed out by the principalia. Occasionally

Camarines Sur, it was objected by some opponents that the residents of the various visitas comprising the proposed town owned hardly any of the land, most of which belonged to the cabezas of the towns to which the visitas were attached. Archivo Histórico Nacional, Sección de Ultramar [AHN-U], Legajo 2212, Expediente 28.

²⁵ PNA, Protocols, Albay, 953-956C; seventy *fianzas* (bonds) put up by cabezas de barnagay of various towns, 1870.

²⁶ No official statement was made as to the minimum property requirement for a candidate for gobernadorcillo, but inventories of the goods of nominees in Albay province, 1889, and comments on their economic sufficiency are found in PNA, EG, Albay, V.

documents from other sections of the archives also illuminate the varieties of principalia wealth: when there was a shortage of coconut oil in Albay, the principales were allocated the imported oil; when there was a shortage of rice, the principales owned what rice there was.²⁷

There are, of course, enough exceptions and omissions in these sources to indicate that the correlation between wealth and status, though real enough, was not perfect. Some Oas Dons are listed as owning less than one hectare of agricultural land; some non-Dons have more than ten. Principales are debtors as well as creditors, some clearly over-extended to other principales, Spaniards, Chinese; they sell their land; perhaps (these sources fail to say) they even wind up landless.²⁸ Occasionally, a merchant or landowner of moderate wealth will be listed without the "Don" — is this a snub or a clerical slip? And, of course, many principales do not enter the records at all, notarize no wills or powers of attorney, bid for no contracts; the varieties of wealth suggested above are optional for a principal, not essential to his status.

Outside the narrowly economic sphere, the principalia also exercised the kind of predominance that tends to reinforce the theory that they descended from *datus*. Within the municipality they were largely free to do as they wished, so long as they turned over the requisite taxes and manpower to the government. Abuses of their control over polos and servicios personales were endemic; the priest might complain, the alcalde might (even with taxes paid up) be moved to investigate, but who dared to testify?²⁹ Collectively, the principalia would not

²⁷ PNA, EP, Albay, III, "Espediente . . . del Gobernadorcillo y cura de la Cavecera, quejandose de los procedimientos del Alc^e mor.,"; PNA, EP, Albay, II, "Sobre palay llevado a dha prov^a por cuenta de la R¹ Hacienda."

²⁸ One insolvent abaca-stripper, "who does not possess any type of property and pays his taxes by his daily wages [*journal!*]" had "Dons" as his paternal grandparents; PNA, Provincia, Ambos Camarines, I, Court of First Instance, Case No. 2905 vs. Aguedo Baens for attempted theft. (1887). In the available sources only such judicial cases are likely to show downward mobility; the non-criminal poor rarely appear in the records.

²⁹ Letters, Peñaranda to Enrile, 25 August 1832 and 18 February 1834; MN, Ms. 2237, Doc. 5 and 17; letter from Manuel Esquivel to

hesitate to defy either the priest or the alcalde (though usually not both) if they felt they had a good case to argue higher up; so long as they made no outright declarations of rebellion, Manila would not send in troops, and provincial authorities were weak on coercive power.³⁰ The spread of new settlements throughout 19th century Kabikolan might have diluted principalia power, but in some cases there is evidence that principales sponsored, protected, and even led these settlements.³¹ When the Revolution came, the Spanish rulers turned the government of Albay over to the principales, who ran it confidently for nearly a year and a half before the Americans came; principales officered the army that resisted the Americans for years, while

Enrile, 10 September 1833, MN, Ms. 1740, Doc. 1. (Another copy of the first Peñaranda letter is found in PNA, EP, Albay, V.)

³⁰PNA, EPA, V, "Camarines. Año de 1814. Expediente creado a representación del Cura de Cagsaua, sobre los perjuicios que resultan de establecer este en la Visita de Daraga; y pide se traslade al sitio de Putiao, por hallarse en la hermosa situación." This representation, despite approval by Manila, was totally unsuccessful in getting the inhabitants to leave Daraga; the principales even suggested that if Father Aragonese did not care for the climate there, he should go where he would be happier, "leaving us in peace and justice."

There are cases of the principalia initiating bitter civil complaints against priests; PNA, EP, Albay, III, "Albay. Oficio del Alcalde mor. acompañando testimonio del escrito presentado por el Común del pueblo de Vega, pidiendo se les ponga por Cura propietario al que lo es interino." (1772-73); see also the case cited in note 19, above.

For resistance to the alcalde see in particular the Bulusan incident of 1841, in which the principalia not only refused to order the polistas to work on a project which was objectionable, but were actually said to have advised them to flee to the hills or to Samar rather than report to work. PNA, EP, Albay, IV, "Oficio del Gob^r Velarde dando p^{te} de que los de Bulusan resistieron sus ord^s negándose a trabajar en la obra del puente . . ." See also the cases referred to in notes 14 and 17 above.

³¹" . . . the richest man, the most disinterested, the most compassionate, has them [the new visita of Buga] under his protection . . . All know that Captain Antonio takes care of the two settlements, and because they do not fear oppression, every day their number increases." Letter of Fr. Francisco Valverde (parish priest of Oas) to the Franciscan provincial, 16 April 1829, MN, Ms. 1662, Doc. 58. Cf. PNA, EP, Albay, V, "Expediente creado á solicitud de la comunidad del Pueblo de Ligao de Camarines, sobre la Poblacion que intentan los de Maninila en el citio de Bubulusan . . . Año de 1809."

other principales, who had surrendered earlier, ran the local government for the Americans. When the smoke cleared and provincial elections were held, the same principales who had been gobernadorcillos under Spain and colonels under Aguinaldo wound up as mayors and congressmen under the United States.³²

All of this may, however, be more tautological than it sounds. Our present evidence as to the origins, mobility, and continuity of the principalia is simply not sufficient, and it may be just as meaningful to say "Those who owned land, influenced elections, and were exempt from polos were called principales" as to say "The principales owned land, . . ." The Spaniards had apparently created the original principalia from the pre-existent ruling class, and there are suggestions that it was once hereditary and even endogamous, but by the 19th century there are also signs that this closed system may have been collapsing. The Spanish satirist Pablo Feced, whose Philippine experience was largely in the Bikol region, said of the principalia:

It is not a privileged and exclusive caste, nor does its predominance have anything to do with tradition and inheritance

The plebeian *indio* who by unexpected inheritance acquires, a fortune, or stumbles across it in the plains or on the mountains, usually feels the spur of vanity, capital sin of his race; he dreams of the principalia, and right away, he lengthens his trousers to the ankles, extends his shanty a couple of meters higher, buys a ten-peso horse and makes himself visible and presentable.

When the inhabitants of visita Capuy moved to Bolabog (Castilla) to form a new pueblo there, the governor ordered that D. Juan Francisco, a principal of Capuy, should be the *Caudillo* until the pueblo was formally established, and should allot lands, choose sites for public buildings, etc. PNA, EP, Albay, V, "Año de 1826. Expediente relativo a la creacion de Bolabog en pueblo, separandolo de su matriz Sorsogon."

³² See Elfas M. Ataviado, *Lucha y Libertad* (2 vols., Manila, 1937 and 1941; Vol. I translated by Juan T. Ataviado as *The Philippine Revolution in the Bicol Region*, Manila, 1953; Vols. 3 and 4 available in typescript rough draft from Juan T. Ataviado, Manila). The classic case of principal continuity was Ramon F. Santos, who was a highly controversial Gobernadorcillo of Ligao in 1891, exiled to Jolo in 1896, pardoned in 1897, Presidente of Ligao in 1899, a ranking officer in the Revolutionary Army 1900-01, and the first Filipino governor of Albay under American rule in 1903; others parallel his career in a less spectacular manner.

At these heights, a good report and a favorable recommendation are already easy, and as there abound Cabezas who have embezzled and even been tried (and exonerated) over questions of accounts, he obtains at last, after posting an adequate bond, a title and an account book from the provincial government, and, from the hands of the Gobernadorcillo, forty or fifty families, like the flock of a shepherd.

And from that day he is another man. He wears the official jacket on feast days; he puts a fat *Don* in front of his name; he visits his subjects like a great Pasha³³

There were certainly theoretical paths of upward mobility in the 19th century — a man could become a principal by teaching school, or a cabeza de barangay by killing three crocodiles — but at the same time there remained official recognition of some hereditary rights to principal status.³⁴ We have scarcely begun to examine empirically the question of social mobility in Kabikolan, or elsewhere in the Philippines.

We have considerable evidence of the mobility of the principalia across geographic or ethnic lines. Several of the richest and most powerful families in 19th century Kabikolan were Tagalogs, Ilongos, or Chinese mestizos from Manila and Molo; some of them produced gobernadorcillos within the first generation.³⁵ Within Kabikolan, geographic mobility was even easier; although officials were supposed to be vecinos of their towns, residence requirements were interpreted very loosely.³⁶ But other than

³³ Pablo Feced [y Temprado], *Filipinas: Esbozos y pinceladas por Quioque* (Manila: Estab. Tipog de Ramirez y Compania, 1888), 63—64. It should be noted that Feced was notoriously hostile to Filipinos and that his views on social mobility are likely to reflect superficial appearances rather than any sympathetic insight into local conditions.

³⁴ Montero y Vidal, III, 258—59, 408—09; on the general subject of cabeza heredity and elections, see also MN, Ms. 1662, Doc. 39, "Estado Politico," and Govantes y Azcárraga, *op. cit.*

³⁵ Among the better known immigrants were Tagalogs Ramon F. Santos, Aniceto Gomez Medel, Manuel Abella, and the parents of Jose Ma. Panganiban; Ilongos Domingo Baylon, Felix Melliza, and Mariano Perfecto; Manila-born Chinese mestizos Domingo Samson, Rufino Soler, and the Villanueva brothers; and Molo-born Chinese mestizos Ramon Manuel Locsin, Joaquin Anson, Felipe Leyson, and the Jaucians.

³⁶ Eugenio Das was elected Gobernadorcillo of Manito although his "fixed residence" was in Albay; Jose Riosa, scion of the powerful Tabaco family, received the most votes for Gobernadorcillo of nearby Tiwi where he had lived less than two years, only to be disqualified for being under

Feced's hypothetical fortune-finding plebeyo we have almost no evidence of principales who started out as polistas, landless laborers. The typical "rags to riches" story, not just for Kabikolan but for the whole country, almost invariably turns out, on closer examination, to relate movement from the lower principalia or penumbra into the top levels of provincial or even national influence; perhaps, in a sociometric simile, from the 90th to the 99th percentile.³⁷ This is not in any way to denigrate the talent or drive of those who did make this move, the sons of cabezas who rose far above their peers, but it is misleading to imply that they came from the "masses." But our current ignorance is so vast that we may still discover, by far more detailed investigation than any yet undertaken, that such movement did in fact take place, in somewhat less dramatic fashion. Perhaps mobility over generations — landless laborer to tenant farmer, smallholder to cabeza — could be documented by making use of parish records (baptisms, marriages, burials, the *Libro de Almas*) as well as protocols, estadisticas, and even oral history.³⁸ Until

legal age (25); even the Tagalog Ramon Santos managed to be a cabeza of Legaspi while residing in Ligao. When Santos, born in Binondo, was later elected Gobernadorcillo of Ligao, Manila authorities refused to uphold the protest that he was "not a true vecino" of Ligao. PNA, EG., Albay, V, "*Pueblo de Manito. Expediente de elecciones de Gobernadorcillo y demas ministros de justicia para el bienio de 1889 á 1891*"; "*Pueblo de Tiui. Expediente . . . 1890 á 1892*"; II, "*Pueblo de Ligao. Expediente . . . 1890 á 1892.*"

³⁷ Among the regional leaders who rose from the lower echelons of the principalia one might cite Father Jorge Barlin Imperial, the first Filipino bishop, and General Simeon Ola, the great Bikol resistance leader; on the national scene the case of Apolinario Mabini is similar. It should be noted that all three of these achieved their greatest glory only after the Spaniards were gone. Although Gregorio F. Zaide claims that Manuel Abella "migrated to Naga when he was still a poor man," the fact is that Abella's father was twice Gobernadorcillo of Catanauan, Tayabas (Quezon), and Manuel himself, not long after his arrival in Camarines, owned one of only 17 carriages in the province. Zaide, *Great Filipinos in History* (Manila: Verde Book Store, 1970), 323; AHN-U, Legajo 2327, "*Don Manuel Abella Escribano Publico de Camarines Sur . . .*"; Newberry Library (Chicago), Ayer Collection, Ms. R. 124, 130.

³⁸ The important demographic technique of "family reconstitution," developed in France and England, may prove to be suitable for the parish

then we are in the dark; we can only assert that the principalia, whoever they were, dominated the Filipino community in a way that Spanish alcaldes and friars, American merchants and Chinese shopkeepers, were never really able to alter.

The Filipinos — lowland, Christianized “Malays” — represented about 98 percent of the population of 19th century Kabikolan; thus the social position of the other 2 percent can best be described in terms of — in, on, under, outside — this indigenous structure.³⁹ The Spanish stood above it all; a Spaniard was never a *principal*, he was a *peninsular* or *español filipino*, the claim of blood automatically obviating the need for the lesser marker of status. He preferred to be called “Señor Don,” rather than “Don,” but never failed to enjoy at least the latter honorific.⁴⁰ Not all Spaniards were as rich as Muñoz Hermanos y Sobrinos, but there is no indication that any of them was ever poor by Filipino standards. In terms of legal and social status, they were at the very pinnacle of local society, but it would be misleading to define this microscopically thin superstructure, a fraction of one percent of the total population, as the “upper class,” with the implication that all below them were no better than bourgeoisie at best. The Spanish interacted extensively with the

archives of the Philippines; if it can be done, it may produce a breakthrough in the history of social classes as well as of population dynamics.

³⁹ According to the *Census of the Philippine Islands . . . 1903* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1905) the total population of Kabikolan was 600,000, of whom 93-1/2 percent were classified as “Bicols,” 4-1/2 percent were others of the “Brown” race (primarily Tagalogs, in Camarines Norte), 1.1 percent were “infidels” (mostly negritos) and only 0.9 percent were mestizo, white, yellow, or black. There was apparently considerable understatement of the number of mestizos throughout the country (*Census*, II, 47), but this very fact emphasizes the extent to which they identified themselves as racially Filipinos.

⁴⁰ In one case two Spanish ex-soldiers being deported back to the Peninsula for drunkenness and general misbehavior were referred to with no honorifics. PNA, EF, Albay, II, “El Gobernador militar y politico de Albay consulta la separacion de la Provincia á los españoles procedentes del resguardo Antonio Monsarrat y Ramon Borrés.” (1851–52).

During the Revolution and for a short time afterward, in *Protocolos* and *Revolutionary Papers* the term “Don” virtually disappears, to be replaced by either “Señor” or “Ciudadano”; it appears that the Bikolanos were aware of the inferior status implied by their former title. Cf. Larkin, 124n.

upper principales, in business, church, and bureaucracy, as partners and as rivals; this interaction produced most of what we know of Philippine history. But it is interaction within the upper class; the ilustrados shared with this Spanish elite (upper crust of the upper class, perhaps) all but the very highest prerequisites of office and status. The eventual rivalry and conflict between the races is a key element in the coming of the Revolution, but it is hardly a "middle class" movement against a quasi-feudal aristocracy.

It is similarly misleading to see the Chinese as the "middle class," although they did fulfill some of the retailing functions associated with the bourgeoisie. No matter how wealthy, how Christian, a Chinese merchant would remain "el Chino," not "Don." He might have a business partnership with a Bikolano, have a principal as baptismal sponsor, marry a local *mestiza* or *india*, entertain the Alcalde and his guests, but he would remain outside the indigenous social structure, take no overt part in local politics, and be called "chino" to the end.⁴¹

Below the Bikolano social structure, as the Spaniards were above it, and the Chinese outside it, were the hill peoples of Camarines and Albay — called variously *agtâ*, *monteses*, *cimarrones*, but above all *infielos*. These were actually mixed groups of semi-negroid hill peoples and lowland renegades or refugees; they spoke local dialects of Bikol as well as their own language, and some of them were physically indistinguishable from the *Bikolnon*.⁴² They played a significant role on the margins of Bikol history as purveyors of mountain products and contraband

⁴¹ PNA, Protocolos, Albay, *passim*. Cf. also Wickerb, Chapter 6, "The Position of the Chinese." Joseph Montano, *Voyage aux Philippines et en Malaisie* (Paris: Librairie Hachette, 1886), 92–100, reflects this usage when he refers to Spanish officials as M[onsieur] and to a Filipino *mediquillo* as D[on], but to the man whose luxurious hospitality he enjoyed in Daraga as either "the Chinese businessman Narcisso" or just "Narcisso."

⁴² Manuel Ma. Crespo, *Memoria sobre la reduccion de Monteses del Isarog en Camarines Sur* (Manila: Establecimiento Tipográfico de Ramirez y Giraudier, 1881), 14–18; Lynch, "Some notes on a brief survey of the hill people of Mt. Iriga, Camarines Sur, Philippines," *Primitive Man*, XXI-3/4 (July & October, 1948), 65–73; see also Peñaranda and Miller cited in note 10, above.

tobacco, as a threat to the safety of travellers and livestock, perhaps as a safety valve for dissidents or criminals. But despite this fringe symbiosis with the system, they remained forever below it, uncivilized, "infidel."

The relationship of Chinese and Spanish mestizos to Bikolano society is more complex, more difficult to assess. There were changes in legal status over time, and presumably shifts in social position as well, but the fragmentary data available make these hard to define or date. Chinese mestizos seem to have been subsumed in Bikol society throughout this period; no references to a separate *gremio* have been found, and mestizos were holding local government offices by at least the first decade of the 19th century.⁴³ Tentative hypotheses about these *mestizos de sangley* remain to be more thoroughly tested — that they tended toward endogamy (but is this ethnic or class endogamy?), that they were more commercial and less agricultural than the *indios* — but it is clear that their status, whether principales or not, was largely defined in Filipino terms. The position of the Spanish mestizos was, at the turn of the 19th century, more distinctive; they had their own gremios in some towns, and were exempt automatically from tribute and polos.⁴⁴ Yet there is no proof that prestige went with this privilege; some were called "Don," many were not, and none seemed to enjoy the same aura of respect that surrounded a full-blooded Spaniard. During the

⁴³In 1809–10 the Alcalde Mayor of Albay complained in a somewhat paranoid manner that the gobernadorcillos of Albay and Bacon, an important capitan pasado of Albay, and the authorized agent of the investigating judge, among others, were all *mestizos de sangley*; PNA, EP, Albay, III, "Expediente promovido por Dⁿ Domingo Navea Alc^e MOR de Albay contra el comisionado de su residencia Dⁿ Franzco Velasco."

Larkin, 48–56, dates the rise of the Chinese mestizos in Pampangan politics to about 1765; my Bikol investigations do not go back that far. The most powerful Chinese mestizo families by the end of the Spanish period were those named in note 35 above, who appear to have arrived from Molo and Manila between about 1830 and 1870.

⁴⁴PNA, EP, Albay, I, "Albay. Año de 1799. Juntas celebradas por los Governllos y Prales de la Prov^a de Albay, so^e la necesidad de Vintas . . ."; II, "Andres (Gregorio) . . . pide se declare exento de polos y servicios en calidad de mestizo español . . ." (1851). By the time of the latter document, the polos exemption no longer obtained, at least in Albay.

course of the century they lost most of their privileges, and retained one disability — ineligibility for office in the indigenous communities — so that we find late in the century the anomaly of Spanish mestizos attempting to qualify as *indios*.⁴⁵ It should be pointed out that many, perhaps a majority of the “Spanish mestizos” of Kabikolan had only a very small percentage of Spanish blood, since the privilege was held to continue indefinitely through the legitimate male line. The large 19th century influx of peninsulares in the region produced a generation of genuinely half-Spanish mestizos who may have enjoyed a prestige their darker cousins did not.

* * * * *

But this simple model of 19th century Kabikolan society — 98 percent Filipinos (*principales* and *timawas*), with Spaniards above, *monteses* below, Chinese outside, Chinese mestizos inside, and Spanish mestizos ambiguous — hardly tells the whole story. A full analysis of the social structure is not only beyond the scope of this paper but beyond the possibilities of two years’ research, yet some further observations may be ventured. It is obvious that by the end of the century there were a number of “super-principal” families in the region, distinguished by such great wealth, power, and/or education that they seem to have more in common with the Spanish overlords than with the ordinary *cabezas de barangay*. In terms of wealth one might perhaps distinguish those with over 100 hectares of agricultural land, or those whose total estates were valued at over ₱20,000.⁴⁶ Politically, the super-principales would include

⁴⁵ Pedro Morales was nominated for *Gobernadorcillo* of Legaspi in 1887, 1889, and 1890; the first two times he was disqualified on the grounds that he was a Spanish mestizo like his father, but in 1890, the ruling was that “D. Pedro Morales is not a Spanish mestizo, but is the son of someone who was”! Opinion of *negociado* Jose Martos O’Neale, 17 July 1890, in PNA, EG, Albay, v, “*Pueblo de Legaspi . . . 1890 á 1892.*”

⁴⁶ At the death of the Tagalog-Chinese mestizo merchant Vicente Villanueva in 1891, he left an estate valued at over ₱200,000. PNA, Protocolos, Albay, 1026. The *Estadísticas* provide evidence of a few

families such as the Durans of Polangui, who almost completely controlled one town, and those who had considerable influence in two or three neighboring towns, such as the Jaucians of Cagsaua, Guinobatan, and Albay.⁴⁷ Local families boasting a son trained as a lawyer in Manila or Madrid (the Abellas of Nueva Caceres, the Samsons of Camalig) would add this prestige to that already obtained by the wealth that provided the education. In contrast to these, the average principal owned less than 20 hectares of land, never governed more than the 50 families of his barangay, and knew no Spanish — in fact a substantial number of cabezas could not even sign their names.⁴⁸

Much discussion, though somewhat less analysis, has gone into the definition and nomenclature for this highest provincial elite. The term “ilustrados” stresses their education, while “caciques” emphasizes local political power (with an implication of excess, misuse);⁴⁹ “oligarchy” avoids such distinctions but leaves the

Filipino families (as well as a number of Spaniards) with landholdings in excess of 100 ha., but no one is listed with the kind of landed wealth — 500 ha. or more — characteristic of the super-principales of Negros, for example.

⁴⁷ For Duran predominance in 1890 see the letter of Fr. Vicente Sangrador (parish priest of Polangui) to the Governor General, 22 April 1890, PNA, EG, Albay, II, “Acta de elecciones de Gobernadorcillo del pueblo de Polangui”; for their persistence in public office over nearly two centuries (1780-present) see the typescript “Historical Data. Albay” in the Filipiniana section, National Library.

In 1898 Balbino Jaucian was *teniente primero* of the Ayuntamiento of Albay, while Calixto and Cirilo Jaucian were Municipal Captains. (= Gobernadorcillos) of Daraga (Cagsaua) and Guinobatan, respectively. Ten years earlier Telesforo Jaucian had been the Gobernadorcillo of Libog (Sto. Domingo).

⁴⁸ Eighty-two percent of the principalia landowners listed in the 1897 *Estadísticas* for Oas owned less than 20 hectares, and 53 percent of those for Malinao. Cabeza illiteracy and inability to speak Spanish is documented in PNA, EG, Albay, *passim*, where parish priests regularly signed ballots for electors unable to do so, and governors complained that the requirement that gobernadorcillo candidates be Spanish-speaking was often a dead letter, since there were in some towns only a handful of men who might qualify. Feced, 68, satirizes the non-Spanish-speaking principalia whose only contact with the official language was through the local *directorcillo*.

⁴⁹ Larkin, 96–98, makes the important distinction between the ordinary principales and the provincial elite, but falters, in my judgment, by referring

question open. Detailed examination of the composition of this group would be valuable for any study of the national elite — the Propaganda movement, the Malolos government, the 20th century politicians — but is of marginal relevance to the majority of the provincial population, even of the principalia. Despite the theoretical possibilities of a bright boy from the penumbra or even the peasantry obtaining, by the sponsorship of a priest or secular patron, an education that would give him entry to the fringes of this group, the fact remains that higher education was normally the prerogative of those already holding wealth and power.

It has sometimes been suggested, though not yet proved, that this super-principal group first emerged in the second half of the 19th century, in response to the opportunities of expanding commercial agriculture and bureaucratic liberalization. This view is certainly attractive — a new class develops, not a “middle class” between Spaniards and peasants, but an indigenous upper class rising out of local gentry and merchants to contest an alien hegemony for room at the top. Such a view is consistent with what is known of Bikol history; most of the great families are only identifiable as such late in the century, and many did not even arrive in the region until the mid-century abaca boom. By contrast, only a few super-principales, such as the Durans and the Imperials, can be traced back locally to the beginning of the century.⁵⁰ However, the sources for the earlier period are fewer, more scattered, and less detailed; and they do provide glimmers of what sounds suspiciously like *caciquismo* and *ilustradismo* well before the growth of commercial agriculture; we must not generalize too soon.⁵¹

to the latter as *ilustrados* and then defining this in terms of wealth rather than education. He also uses the term *caciques* (e.g., 76, 118n) without indicating how he differentiates it from *ilustrados*.

⁵⁰The Decree of 11 November 1849 by Governor General Clavería ordering the adoption of approved surnames causes considerable difficulties in tracing family histories, but for most of the superprincipales enough evidence survives to make generalization possible, if tentative.

⁵¹For *caciquismo* see the local dominance demonstrated by Gobernadorcillo Antonio Laurenciano in the Lagonoy incident of 1806–07

Even in the second half of the century, no distinctive terminology for this elite was current in the region. Apparently *ilustrado* (as a noun) was not used; I have found only two contemporary references to *caciquismo*, and in one of these a Spanish colonel claimed that a Spanish commercial house (Muñoz) was trying "to import [it] from Spain"⁵² Perhaps we should re-examine the use of the term "pudientes" or seek further for non-bureaucratic sources, such as private letters (if they exist) or oral history, which would reflect some distinction the Spaniards missed with their over-simple view of the dangerous native element — "Watch out for everyone who *wears shoes!*"⁵³ But the suggestion remains that the principal-timawa distinction was still felt to be adequate, that in Kabikolan the super-principales were still too few or too recent to be identified as a distinctive class requiring a name of its own.

On the lower end of the spectrum, an even more difficult problem exists, that of defining the relationship between stable peasantry and marginal members of society, between the *vecino* and the *vagamundo*. It is extraordinarily difficult to find contemporary descriptions of Bikol agricultural labor and tenure, but there was apparently some mix of smallholders (more than 80 percent of landowners were not Dons), tenants and wage laborers subsumed under the general term *timawas*; there may

(note 17, above). For *ilustradismo* see Father Aragonese's warning against the "half-dozen intriguing *Bachilleres*" who opposed his proposed move to Putiao (note 30, above), and Peñaranda's complaint that the preference for Spanish-speaking *gobrnadorcillos* produced only "cavilling little lawyers and pettifoggers" (*letradillos cavillosos y picapleytos*). Letter to Enrile, 18 February 1834, MN, Ms. 2237, Doc. 8.

⁵² Col. Isidro Gutierrez (Guardia Civil), *informe* of 29 August 1889, in PNA, EGA, V, "Pueblo de Bacacay. Expediente de elecciones de Gobernadorcillo . . . 1889 á 1891." The other reference occurs in Juan Alvarez Guerra, *Viajes por Filipinas. De Manila á Albay* (Madrid: imprente de Fortanet, 1887), 69, where it is prefaced by the qualification "if our use of the term is admissible" (*si nos es admisible aplicar la palabra*).

⁵³ "... conviene vigilar a todos los que usan zapatos." Ricardo Lacosta (Civil Governor, Ambos Camarines) to Governor General, 28 February 1898, AHN-U, Leg. 5157, "Memorias sobre la situacion politica de las provincias del Archipiélago." Feced, 67-68, also comments (rudely) on this and other distinctive sartorial habits of the principalia.

have been artisans and petty abaca-buyers (*personeritos*) as well. In the abaca districts particularly, wage laborers (*jornaleros*) seem to have been much more prevalent than fixed tenants — what was their status during periods of unemployment? Abaca-stripping was the chief occupation of many of them; what happened during the great depressions (1857–64, 1873–78, etc.) that hit the abaca industry?⁵⁴ Both Spaniards and principales were obsessed with the problem of these men “without known means of livelihood,” yet it is not clear whether they were regarded as a class apart or simply as low-level polistas. It seems unlikely that a significant number of Bikolanos could have been “hiding” from authority (as the priests and alcaldes feared) without the connivance and protection of principales; perhaps the whole situation is problematical only in terms of bureaucracy, perfectly logical within the framework of Bikolano society in which all the lower classes were dependents of some patron, whether or not technically employed at a given moment. All this is still quite unclear; what is clear is that the basic principal-timawa distinction, especially with stable vecinos normally included in the lower tier, does not in itself explain all we would like to know about social class in Kabikolan.

This crude analysis, then, suggests four levels of Bikol society which might warrant further examination, two within the principalia and two within the timawas. At the top are the super-principales, perhaps only three or four families in a town of 10,000, numerically insignificant but the group that would emerge to dominate Filipino society and eventually the government itself. Below them, the principales, including the penumbra — another 10 percent perhaps — who had economic security, some land, some status, but no real influence or ambition

⁵⁴ Although Cagsaua (Daraga) was one of the largest and richest towns in Albay, and although 1890 was not a bad year for abaca prices (though they were falling from an 1888–89 peak), the parish priest commented that “the immense majority of this town is composed of miserable *braceros*, who when they work, eat, and when they do not, pillage the haciendas of their neighbors.” Letter from Fr. Julian Gutierrez to the Civil Governor, 21 April 1890; PNA, EG, Albay, v, “*Pueblo de Cagsaua*. Expediente de elecciones de Gobernadorcillo . . . 1890 á 1892.”

beyond the town level. Then the timawas — who knows how many? — who had some kind of stable place in the society, whether as smallholders, tenants, or regular employees (either agricultural *jornaleros* or domestic *dependientes*) of someone higher up the ladder. Finally the vagamundos — drifters, marginally or seasonally employed laborers, fading off into the “lost tributos” the Spanish worried about and perhaps even into *cimarrones*.⁵⁵ It is certainly premature to identify these groups as “classes”; they are offered here as apparent strata whose size, composition, development over time, and relationship with each other all remain to be further explored. Only by further examination of the actual documentation of the time can we further refine our understanding; only thus can we empirically evaluate the two-tiered social perception of the era — the *principalia* and the rest.

⁵⁵The eastern slopes of Mt. Isarog are “divided in three steps [*escalones*] with the town as the base [*peana*]. From this the first step of the mountain is inhabited by townspeople [*poblanos*] or Christian taxpayers who have abaca fields. The second step is inhabited by Christians, from whom it is difficult to collect tribute and to compel labor service, and by hill people [*monteses*], mixed together. They grow abaca, tobacco, camotes, and cacao in this zone. They have contact with the towns, so they know what a civilized and Christian population is, and with those of the third step However much they may have to live on, they go about poorly clothed and badly fed, because of their many vices, for they are gamblers, drunkards, and idlers, . . . not wanting to live as subjects; to them are brought for sale the animals stolen by thieves from the town and those of the first step. The third step is inhabited by true renegades [*cimarrones*], of little or no intelligence; they wear loincloths and live in wretched huts; they are lazy, wandering Jews without a fixed abode; . . . their principal commerce is tobacco, which, although of poor quality, is accepted by those living in the mountains.” Unidentified priest, from Lagonoy district (probably Fr. Dámaso Martínez of Goa), quoted in Crespo, 17.