

# philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

---

## Democratic Political Cultures: The Civic Culture

Review Article: Frank Gniffke

*Philippine Studies* vol. 14, no. 2 (1966): 326–328

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

---

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at [philstudies@admu.edu.ph](mailto:philstudies@admu.edu.ph).

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>  
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

# Book Reviews

## DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL CULTURES

**THE CIVIC CULTURE: POLITICAL ATTITUDES AND DEMOCRACY IN FIVE NATIONS.** By Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963. xi, 562 pp.

In *The Civic Culture*, Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba strive to give quantitative meaning to many common sense notions about the democratic political culture and the political attitudes that support and shape it in various countries. This is not their only goal. "But our interest is only partly to analyze attitudes as well as to explain why attitudes are the way they are." Their study was inspired by the work of the Social Science Division of the University of Chicago and by "the work of Charles E. Merriam. His *Civic Training* series formulated many of the problems with which this study is concerned, and his *New Aspects of Politics* suggested the methods that have been used in its execution."

The major method of data collection used by Almond and Verba was the large-scale interview survey. The authors, by their own admission, are building on the pioneer work done in the development of interviewing techniques in the voting studies of recent years. Roughly five thousand interviews were made by professional polling agencies in Germany, Italy, Mexico, Great Britain, and the United States. In each case, the attempt was made to obtain a stratified, multi-stage, random sample which would represent a cross-section of the nation.

The interview schedule itself was painstakingly revised (seven times) and the interviewers were thoroughly trained in an effort to remove cross-national differences in language, political objects and interview techniques. To obtain a more complete sampling, approximately ten per cent of the questions were open-ended in form and a small number of longer follow-up interviews was made in each coun-

try. In the appendices the authors discuss the sampling techniques and reproduce the interview schedule.

The information collected in the interviews is basic and significant. For example, the patterns of political cognition are plotted, the sense of civic competence is examined, and the relationship between organizational membership and civic competence is discussed. Various "citizen-types" and political cultures also are described and illustrated. As might be expected, the United States and Great Britain consistently score high. The Italian data reveal "relatively unrelieved political alienation and social isolation and distrust." The Mexicans are alienated from the political system and yet show high political aspirations. The Germans, although well-informed and confident in dealing with government bureaucrats, generally are politically detached and passive.

Results of the study, however, seldom fulfill the promise of the authors' method and goals. The cross-national nature of the study partially is to blame. The authors, to be certain they are describing the same or equivalent attitudes in each country, are forced to "take general dimensions of political behavior," to "concentrate on the behavior or attitudes that are least determined by the structure of the situation," to "[minimize differences in political structure] by concentrating on the individual as object of orientation," and to "[make not] direct comparisons of variables cross-nationally, but cross-national comparisons of the *pattern* of relations among variables." Each of these adjustments discriminates against existing and relevant types and aspects of political attitudes.

The study also suffers because generally the description and analysis of political attitudes are relatively rudimentary and repetitious. Much excellent material has been collected, but the presentation of this material tends to be stiff and self-conscious. Almond and Verba, in their analysis, are handicapped by the lack of sufficient, significant demographic information. Most attitudinal differences are explained in terms of differences in education and sex only (and, occasionally, age and occupation). Too often attitudes in Germany and Italy are credited to the influence of World War II, or, in the case of Mexico, to the Mexican Revolution. What precisely about World War II or the Mexican Revolution explains the attitudes in question? Are there other possible explanations? These questions are never answered.

*The Civic Culture* contains yet another less obvious and more serious flaw. The authors have another goal in addition to the mere describing, analyzing and explaining of political attitudes. They desire a better, more quantitative understanding of the democratic political culture (i.e. the civic culture) because "what is problematical about the content of the emerging world culture is its political character . . . . The emerging nations are presented with two different models of the modern participatory state, the democratic and the totalitarian."

Thus the concept of the civic culture, "a mixed modernizing-traditional" culture, is to be developed, empirically supported and readied for export to the emerging world.

This goal leads to a revision of the classical participatory theory of politics in the manner of Berelson *et. al.* in *Voting* and James Q. Wilson in *The Amateur Democrat*, among others. This goal forces Almond and Verba to draw a series of conclusions regarding democracy and the democratic citizen which do not grow from their data naturally. For example, they write: "In light of an individual's nonpolitical interests, it might be quite irrational to invest in political activity the time and effort needed to live up to the rationality-activist model. It may just not be worth it to be that good a citizen." The authors have abandoned their concern, as behaviorists, with what is, and now are using what is as the basis for statements about what ought to be.

Almond and Verba have done their work conscientiously and competently. Anyone interested in the technique of interviewing and the behavioral approach in general should find the book instructive. The cross-national nature of the study is distinctive, and the information collected shed new light on the structure of several different democratic political cultures. Unfortunately, the shallowness and stiffness of the analysis often overshadow these virtues; and, particularly in the latter portion of the book, the authors' missionary zeal for democracy and the civic culture completely overwhelms them.

FRANK GNIFFKE

## CHURCH HISTORY AND AGGIORNAMENTO

**CHURCH HISTORY: HISTORICAL PROBLEMS OF CHURCH RENEWAL.** Edited by Roger Aubert. *Concilium: Theology in the Age of Renewal*, vol. 7. Glen Rock, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1965. ix, 179 pp.

Many who have been interested in the series *Concilium* as a means of being brought up to date with the theological developments leading to and given expression in Vatican II, may wonder at the inclusion of a volume on Church history. Yet the fact is that recent historical studies have been a major factor in the theological developments associated with Vatican II. Conversely, the theological and pastoral questions raised in the course of the Council have sent historians and theologians alike back to a re-examination of many a phase of Church history for the light it might throw on the questions at hand. Only thus is it possible to distinguish what in the theology and practice of