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Hollnsteiner: The Dynamic of Power in a Philippine Municipality

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SMALL-TOWN POWER PATTERNS

THE DYNAMICS OF POWER IN A PHILIPPINE MUNICIPALITY. By Mary Hollnsteiner. Community Development Research Council, University of the Philippines, 1960. 295 pp.

THE DYNAMICS OF POWER IN A PHILIPPINE MUNICIPALITY examines the structure and the process of power and political influence in a Bulacan town which is undergoing a transition from a primarily agricultural to an increasingly commercialized or market economy. As such, the study is probably the very first intensive investigation of the structure and workings of community power in a transitional Filipino society. Like other recent empirical works in sociology and political science, it is a departure from the conventional studies of Philippine society which are purely descriptive, formalistic, and heavily moralistic or reformist in style and purpose.

The author begins by reviewing theories and concepts relating to peasant society and culture, and typologies regarding communities in varying stages of socio-economic development. Right here the author suggests the value of a sophisticated and realistic view of particular communities for purposes of planned social change, whether by government or by civic stimulation.

The central concept of "power", as defined by sociologists like Max Weber, Talcott Parsons, and E. Abrahamson, is briefly discussed. This is followed by an illuminating summary of two community power studies in so far as they suggested to the author significant hypotheses and concepts for her analysis of power structure and function. These studies are (1) Floyd Hunter's **COMMUNITY POWER STRUCTURE: A STUDY OF DECISION MAKERS** (a study of power in an American city) and (2) Robert G. Schulze's "The Role of Economic Dominants in Community Power Structure," *American Sociological Review* (Vol. 23, No. 1, Feb. 1958).

The concepts of "community" and "social interaction" are clarified by reference to known definitions and by an adaptation to the Philippine community under study. Having thus cleared the theoretical underbrush, the author emphasizes that her primary purpose is to discover the interrelation of three factors: (1) power, (2) a transitional community, and (3) social interaction therein.

In classifying the Bulacan town as a "transitional society", she means that it is "neither urban nor rural but contains characteristics of both which, when merged, show a resultant structure reflecting the compounded elements while yet possessing its own unique characteristics."

Empirical studies are often guided by hypotheses which are explicitly stated at the outset as propositions to be tested by the data. Sometimes, however, they do not formulate hypotheses in prospect, but, proceeding within a broad framework, end up by suggesting worthwhile hypotheses for further study. Mrs. Hollnsteiner set forth with a number of hypotheses and carefully showed in conclusion how these were substantiated or proved erroneous.

To disguise the identity of the town that was studied, the author calls it *Hulo*. In a class in anthropology the author had studied part of the town and was therefore familiar with some aspects of its leadership patterns. Actual field work for the study of *Hulo's* power structure lasted from November 1957 to April 1958.

Participant-observation in several activities was used extensively to learn the social system, as the basis for an analysis of the town's politico-economic structure. Also used extensively was the "key informant" technique, whereby she sought information from persons who were reputedly knowledgeable in the areas under study. Government, school, and organization records and reports were also consulted.

Quantitative methods were used to supplement the qualitative data derived from participant-observation and selected interviews for particular topics. For the specific objective of identifying who composed the town elite or the decision-makers, four panels of judges were chosen, namely: (1) municipal and barrio level officials, (2) national officials resident in the municipality, (3) school principals and teachers, and (4) heads of voluntary agencies.

As a whole, the study may be divided into three parts. The first consists of the theoretical considerations and the methodology already described, and a general description of *Hulo*, its history and its community activities and associations. Together they form the first three chapters.

The second or main part comprises chapters 4 to 6, embodying the substantive description and analysis of *Hulo's* political background; its system of politics, prestige, leadership and power; the relationship between its power system and group action in the community.

The third and last part contains the author's generalizations, her evaluation of the initial assumptions and hypotheses against the data, and her comments on the bilateral kinship system of Filipino families and on Filipino values as they tend to bias local research.

The rather impressive historical and sociological data on *Hulo* politics from Spanish times to about 1958 lead the author to interesting and revealing generalizations on: how popular elections formalize

traditional social cleavages; how the emergence of a new elite based on entrepreneurial or occupational success increasingly diminishes the old elite's dominance, especially because of the high cost of election campaigns; how political candidates are chosen and how party alignments follow local personal loyalties; and what factors make political groupings fluid and unstable. The changing composition of the contemporary elite in Hulo is related to the transitional character of Hulo society and economy, it being close enough to Manila to encourage cottage industries, fish ponds, and other income-producing activities.

A crucial finding of the study is that political leaders in Hulo, and probably in many parts of the country, derive their power and influence from certain key factors—kinship, *compadrazgo*, and the workings of *utang na loob* and *hiya*. To gain political support the political elite cultivates and extends its kinship and *compadrazgo* systems. By creating numerous relationships of mutual personal indebtedness or *utang na loob*, through the bestowal and acceptance of favors, politicians put to use an expected sense of personal shame or *hiya* on the part of most people. Through the dynamic operation of these interacting and complementary variables, Filipino political and social behavior is described and explained by the author quite convincingly.

Apropos of insights into the political behavior of Filipinos, the author has drawn upon Carl Lande's unpublished doctoral thesis at Harvard, entitled "Politics in the Philippines". The Lande study is seminal: it is a thorough analysis of the bilateral kinship basis of Filipino politics which culminates in a cogent theory that puts a lot of sense and order into several bewildering manifestations of Filipino politics and group life.

Community associations in Hulo exhibit similar leader-follower patterns to those in the local political alignments. The resulting groups are not as impersonal as are urban, business-type organizations; they retain much of the character of kinship-based political factions, modified by some kind of generalized civic or professional purpose. Contractual relations do exist; formal government and legal requirements for business operations also inject elements of the impersonal organization of more complex societies.

Hardly any attention has been given to the role of ideology (principles of representative democracy as perceived) in the political behavior which is the subject of the Hollnsteiner study. One wonders how it is being articulated, observed or rationalized in the actual practice. This is a fertile area for exploration in any community power study but especially in a society in which Western democratic institutions are being adapted.

Also left out of the analysis is the way in which legal and administrative rules affect the selection of candidates and election personnel and the very exercise of suffrage.

Accustomed ways of selecting leaders are usually modified as they are channeled into prescribed procedures. This latter variable, like the ideology on which it is based, cannot be taken for granted in any thorough treatment of the dynamics of politics.

These omissions do not, however, detract from the over-all merit of the research. Filipino students in particular will profit greatly from a reading of Mrs. Hollnsteiner's study for its substantive, empirical and theoretical content as well as for the methodology employed. It is a most heartening local example of what empirical research by a perceptive student of social science can do to illumine the basic local processes of a society. In a country so lacking in reliable social studies it is an encouraging and refreshing piece of research. Using the author's hypotheses, fruitful follow-up studies in other communities can be made.

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THE BIBLE COMES ALIVE

WITNESSES TO GOD. By Leonard Johnston. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1960. 174 pp. \$3.50.

THE OLD TESTAMENT AND OUR TIMES. By Margaret T. Monro. London: Longmans, 1960. 104 pp. 15 shillings.

In the steady stream of books flowing from the pens of authors professionally engaged in or thoroughly conversant with the modern Biblical renaissance two recent volumes from England stand out remarkable for their differences as well as for their similarities. *WITNESSES* has for author a priest and professor of Sacred Scripture, touches upon both Old and New Testaments in chronological order, emphasizes the content of the chapters and books discussed in the light of God's witness to himself through his Word—spoken, active, and Incarnate. It is written in a witty and chatty style, but aims