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Philippine Community Structure: Social Class in a Bikol Town

Review Author: Vicente Encarnacion, Jr.

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prologue, consisting of extracts from letters, is not clear; and I confess I do not understand the epilogue.

These, if N.V.M. Gonzalez will forgive me, are criticisms which might be made of his otherwise excellent book. To mention these defects is not to say that the book is uninteresting. The dialogue is natural and realistic. I myself have read the story twice. And no student of Philippine affairs could probably afford to omit it.

MIGUEL A. BERNAD

PHILIPPINE COMMUNITY STRUCTURE

SOCIAL CLASS IN A BIKOL TOWN. By Frank Lynch, S.J., assisted by Augusto V. Plopinio and Wilfredo F. Arce. Philippine Studies Program, Research Series, No. 1. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1959. ix, 175 p. multilithed.

It should be stated at the outset that the reviewer comes from the other side of what the author, a social anthropologist, calls the "low fence separating anthropology from sociology" (p. 2). Philippine sociologists will profit from Fr. Lynch's effort to be "neighborly", to combine the methods of the social anthropologist and the sociologist in the study of social stratification in a Bikol town.

Closely following the order in which the author presents his report, this review considers the research problem, the methodological procedure employed to pursue the problem, the findings, and the significance of the study as a whole.

The Problem. The town studied is Canaman, a población about five kilometers from Naga City, in the province of Camarines Sur. At the time of the investigation (1956-58) its population was a little over 2,000, distributed in four adjoining barrios. The author tells us that from a pre-fieldwork plan to investigate the relationship between religion and social structure he shifted to the study of the nature of social stratification in the town. This is a laudable attempt to put first things first. Especially in a community that has never before been systematically studied, one should start with more manageable concepts and indicators before proceeding to the more theoretical aspects of the community structure.

In the first chapter the author places the study in the context of social theory and previous research done elsewhere. The framework he utilizes is the system of social stratification, with its key concepts of *status* and *class*, and the functional theory of interdependence. The questions raised by Fr. Lynch are theoretically relevant. His hypotheses are explicit, although they are more strictly

statements of empirical fact than of expected relationships between independent and dependent variables. Formulation of generalizations of the latter kind is, however, influenced by the state of knowledge existing in a given society at a specified time. In Chapter II the author describes some aspects of the larger natural and social environment affecting the social class system of Canaman.

The Methodological Procedure. Given the research problem—the nature and function of social stratification in Canaman—Fr. Lynch utilizes the qualitative methods of the social anthropologist and the quantitative approach of the sociologist. Thus he uses extended participant observation (12 months' residence with a Canaman family, eight months' visiting from nearby Naga City), along with the technique of the "rating panel" to formulate questions and to probe into the nature and function of the social class system. Two features of the latter method as used by the author deserve comment: the panel was a selected, or purposive, and *stratified* sample of 20 "judges," or informants, and with each of the raters so chosen *unstructured* and *depth* interviews were conducted. The manner employed to select judges was aimed at overcoming a common deficiency in earlier uses of the technique by other investigators; namely, under-representativeness of the rating panel. This reviewer feels that this procedure, together with depth interviews in which the informants were free to describe the status system in their own terms, increased the validity and reliability of the findings.

The author goes beyond the data furnished by raters, however, and by presenting another type of evidence gathered from statistical breakdowns and further qualitative sources such as linguistics and history, validates the problems which he set up at the beginning of the study. In the light of the research problem and the kind of conceptual system used, the methods employed by the researcher appear to be appropriate. Sociologists have something to learn from the anthropologist's many-sided approach to, and dogged pursuit of, his problem.

The Findings. The principal findings reported in Chapters IV and V follow from the data analysis and pertain to the initial problem of the research. They are the following:

1. The community of Canaman is composed of people who see themselves as members of one or other social class....;
2. The number of these social classes is two;
3. The function of these classes is to complement each other socially, economically, and politically; and
4. Families are placed in this system with satisfactory agreement among raters. (p. 133).

The findings are placed in the context of other studies to become accretive. Proposals for further research are made in Chapter V.

Some of the core findings, as well as others that I have not mentioned here, are important in the practical realm of community development with which I am presently involved. Thus Fr. Lynch's

delineation of a social unit, or sociological community, has implications for barrio government as well as the national program of community development related to it. One of the difficulties encountered in the last barrio council elections was the varying interpretation of what constituted the boundaries of a barrio. Another finding that I would like to extend concerns the relation between social classes as "function-sets" and attitudes toward education, politics, and the broad area covered by the term, economic development. The functional interdependence of social classes helps explain, for instance, prevailing relationships between landlord and tenant and between government official and barrio citizen. There are other roles in the society, such as those requiring independence and initiative, which may be related to the values of Philippine social classes.

Significance of the Study. Among the contributions which the study makes to our knowledge of Philippine society, and to theory and research, the following may be mentioned: it is found that in certain types of Philippine communities less importance is attached to ascribed status than is commonly believed; the complementary nature of social classes is described, with the implications that flow from this; some avenues of movement from one class to another are explored, and the basis of membership in each is explained. In terms of methods, Fr. Lynch uses a multidisciplinary approach combining elements of manifest and latent structure analysis. Yet he realizes that more work needs to be done here:

Expeditious methods are needed, then, for delineating the social class structure of Philippine communities, and of placing members within it. The Canaman experience has put us well on the way to these goals; interdisciplinary cooperation and further fieldwork should bring us all the way (p. 140).

The text is enhanced by the addition of seven maps and four figures, and by six appendices presenting new materials on the Bikol area of Luzon. Included in this last category are a system of writing Bikol adapted to the National Language orthography, and a dialect geography of the Bikol area based on fieldwork conducted by Barbara Anderson, Fulbright scholar 1957-59 at the Ateneo de Manila. There is an extensive bibliography but no index.

The Philippine Studies Program of the University of Chicago is to be congratulated for publishing this report, the first in its new Research Series. Similar basic studies dealing with the structure and functioning of Philippine communities are a prerequisite for sociological theories relevant to the Philippines.

VICENTE ENCARNACION, JR.