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EDILBERTO C. DE JESUS

The Western powers which carved up the Southeast Asian region into separate colonial spheres differed among themselves in political culture and organization. But within the colonies they all faced a common problem; each had to locate the structures necessary to maintain order and to mobilize raw materials or manpower resources for the benefit of the colonizer. In some cases, the colonial rulers found traditional structures suitable for their purposes; in others, they had to develop and impose new administrative mechanisms to achieve their objectives.

Two basic approaches or strategies were possible, the system of Indirect Rule followed by the British in the Malay Peninsula and the Dutch in Indonesia or the system of Direct Rule imposed by the British on Burma and by the French on C ochin-China.¹ Harry Benda contrasts the two approaches, as "ideal types," as follows:

Direct rule implies the abrogation or destruction of the existing political system — the elimination of the traditional political elite — and its substitution by a western administrative apparatus staffed by non-ascriptive personnel, Western as well as indigenous. Indirect rule, by contrast, indicates the continuation of the pre-colonial system, and the maintenance of traditional political elite groups as at least *de jure* rulers; in such systems, the Western element operates "indirectly," i.e., it technically restricts itself to an outside advisory function, without introducing a separate, modern administrative apparatus.²

1. See especially, Rupert Emerson, *Malaysia: A Study in Direct and Indirect Rule* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1964; first published by the MacMillan Company, 1937); John S. Furnivall, *Netherlands India: A Study of Plural Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1939); John S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948).

2. "Political Elites in Colonial Southeast Asia: An Historical Analysis" in *Continuity and Change in Southeast Asia: Collected Journal Articles of Harry J. Benda*, Yale University

Colonial rulers usually preferred to allow indigenous leaders to rule on their behalf, if only because it was not practical to import into the colony as many Europeans as its governance required. The French imposed Direct Rule on Cochinchina only because they had no choice; the Vietnamese mandarins refused collaboration with the colonizers and simply abandoned their offices.³

Under either system, the colonial authorities obviously had the last word. But despite the often tenuous distinction in practice between Direct and Indirect Rule, the choice of model did make a difference in the way the colony developed.⁴ At the village level, however, the policy of Direct Rule reached its limits. The shortage of European officials forced the colonial rulers to administer the villages through the established indigenous leadership.

In theory, Indirect Rule offered several distinct advantages to the colonial power. By dispensing with the need for European personnel, the colony reduced the administrative overhead. By preserving the indigenous leadership structure, the colonizers also reduced resistance from those best positioned to oppose them. The preservation of the traditional system also cushioned indigenous society from the disruptive shock of conquest and thus helped avert a period of protracted instability.

To realize these benefits, however, the colonial officials had to understand the nature and functioning of traditional structures and institutions. The evidence suggests that the British in the Malay Peninsula and the Dutch in Aceh and West Sumatra misconstrued the dynamics of the indigenous systems they were seeking to manipulate.⁵ The misreading stemmed in part from the natural tendency to allow concern for effective administration to override respect for the traditional order. Colonial officials

Southeast Asia Studies Monograph Series No. 18 (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1972), p. 195.

3. John T. McAlister, Jr., *Vietnam: the Origins of Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), p. 41.

4. See Benda, "Political Elites."

5. See Elizabeth E. Graves, "The Ever-Victorious Buffalo: How the Minangkabau of Indonesia Solved their 'Colonial Question' " (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1971); J.M. Gullick, *Indigenous Political Systems of Western Malaya* (London: University of London, 1958); and James T. Siegel, *The Rope of God* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969). The British tried to preserve the Burmese village system intact but, in the end, also altered it radically. See Albert D. Moscotti, *British Policy and the Nationalist Movement in Burma, 1917-1937*, Asian Studies at Hawaii, No. 11 (Honolulu, The University Press of Hawaii, 1974), pp. 3-4.

tended to invest traditional leadership figures with greater authority than they in fact possessed and, consequently, to place on them a heavier administrative burden than they were disposed or prepared to carry.⁶

Even when the colonial power had accurately divined the accepted leader of the community, what they required him to do promptly caused him to lose his popularity and his mandate to represent the community. With colonial backing, however, some of these leaders realized that they no longer needed to court popular support and could concentrate instead on self-aggrandizement. In practice, therefore, the impact of colonial intervention, even when introduced under a system of Indirect Rule, seemed disruptive of traditional power relationships within the village.

Among the colonial powers, Spain seemed to have achieved greater success in understanding and exploiting the traditional social order it encountered at the time of the conquest. Not that the Spaniards were necessarily more perspicacious or more cunning than the British or the Dutch who confronted in Burma and Java quite sophisticated cultures and powerful kingdoms governed though distinctly articulated administrative structures. The Spaniards happened to have come upon a simpler society, organized in quasi-kinship units of 30-100 families and lacking the linkages of a supra-village political structure.

It was then a relatively simple matter for the Spaniards to take the indigenous elite, the leaders of these barangay communities, and constitute them into a *principales* class of government officials manning the lowest echelons of a Spanish-controlled colonial bureaucracy. To the extent that the Spaniards coopted the established indigenous leadership, one might speak of a policy of Indirect Rule. But they also formalized and enforced their own criteria for acquiring elite status where no hard and fast rules had

6. Note Emerson's critique of Dutch Indirect Rule on Java: "To attempt to build on native institutions when these institutions are only partially understood or, even worse, when they are misunderstood, is to threaten the stability of the whole structure. It is hopeless to expect an effective local self-government to emerge from imposed political institutions which have no real relation to the life and thought of the people concerned. A typical shortcoming in this respect, and one which is most difficult to avoid, is the attribution to native chiefs of greater powers than they possess under the adat [customary law] either in the scope or absoluteness of those powers or in the territorial range which they are assumed to embrace." (*Malaysia*, p. 430).

existed before. In so doing, they reduced the former *datus*, now called *cabezas de barangay* and *gobernadorcillos*, into petty civil servants owing their positions and titles to the colonial government and, in effect, exercised Direct Rule.

Given the relatively unformed state of pre-Spanish society, the prominence it receives in some interpretations of Philippine history is somewhat mystifying. David Steinberg, for instance, diagnoses a hereditary predisposition among Filipinos for corruption and traces the roots of this social malady to pre-Spanish social structures.

It can be argued effectively that at least some of the post-war dishonesty, bribery, nepotism and corruption which has plagued Philippine life is due to the oligarchy's scramble back into power. Obviously, such social cancers exist elsewhere and had an hereditary disposition in Philippine social structure dating back to the pre-Spanish era.⁷ It seems somewhat extreme to blame pre-Spanish social structure for the subsequent political and moral weaknesses shown by the independent republic. But the assumption upon which this image of social change in Philippine history rests prevailed unchallenged until recent years. What is assumed is a continuous line connecting the pre-Spanish *datus*, the *principales* class created by the Spaniards, the elites of the American period and the post-World War II "oligarchs."⁸ As historians shifted their attention from national to regional studies, however, the notion of a social class perduring through some three hundred years became more difficult to accept.

The continuity of the elite class even within the Spanish period has become questionable. Using the *gobernadorcillo* rolls of Pampanga, John Larkin documented the emergence in the second half of the eighteenth century of a new provincial elite, wealthy landowners and merchants of mainly Chinese mestizo stock.⁹ Marshall McLennan suggests that in Central Luzon as in Pam-

7. "The Philippine 'Collaborators': Survival of an Oligarchy" *Southeast Asia in World War II*, Josef Silverstein, ed. (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1966), p. 76.

8. See, for instance, Joseph E. Spencer, *Land and People in the Philippines* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1954), p. 125; Alvin Scaff, *The Philippine Answer to Communism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), pp. 86-87.

9. "The Evolution of Pampangan Society" (Ph. D. diss., New York University, 1966), pp. 52-80. See also Edgar B. Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850-1898* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), pp. 127 ff.

panga the emergent elite displaced the old principales class presumed to have descended from the pre-Spanish *datus*.

The oft-mentioned continuity between the pre-Hispanic *datus* and the present day *principalia* appears to be more tenuous than commonly assumed. I suspect that when research on this question shall have been carried out, it will be found that many of the old *datu* families were absorbed not by the mestizo class but by the indigenous peasantry.¹⁰

Nicholas Cushner posits an even earlier date for the decline of the Tagalog *datus*. By the late sixteenth century, according to Cushner, their power had begun to diminish as control over land and labor resources passed to other Tagalogs of non-*datu* descent, to Chinese mestizos and to Spaniards.¹¹ Norman Owen notes that many of the great Bikol families did not even arrive in the region until the mid-nineteenth century abaca boom.¹²

It would be premature, of course, to claim that the pre-conquest *datus* nowhere retained their dominance after the establishment of the colonial regime. Horacio de la Costa has warned us not to be surprised if different regions should manifest different patterns of historical development.¹³ In each instance, however, the case must first be established at the regional or provincial level.

The documentation for this area of research will doubtless prove richer for some provinces than for others. For some towns of Pampanga, Larkin found records of *gobernadorcillo* appointments running through some 150 years. Fairly intensive research on the province of Cagayan, especially during the hundred years (1780-1881) it was under the Tobacco Monopoly, failed to yield the same kind of documentation.¹⁴ The Philippine National Ar-

10. "Land and Tenancy in the Central Luzon Plain," *Philippine Studies* (17 (1969): 661-62. See also his "Peasant and Hacendero in Nueva Ecija: The Socio-Economic Origins of a Philippine Commercial Rice-Growing Region" (Ph. D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1973), pp. 95, 349-50.

11. *Landed Estates in the Colonial Philippines*, Yale University, Southeast Asia Studies Monograph Series No. 20 (New Haven: Yale University Southeast Asia Studies, 1976), pp. 17-18.

12. "The *Principalia* in Philippine History: Kabikolan, 1790-1898," *Philippine Studies* 22 (1974): 321. See also his "Kabikolan in the Nineteenth Century: Socio-economic Change in the Provincial Philippines" (Ph. D. diss., University of Michigan, 1976.)

13. "History and Philippine Culture," in *The Background of Nationalism and Other Essays* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1965), p. 25.

14. See the writer's "The Tobacco Monopoly in the Philippines, 1782-1882" (Ph. D. diss., Yale University, 1973).

chives did provide four bundles of documents under the category *Elecciones de Gobernadorcillos*. While neither complete nor continuous in their coverage of gobernadorcillo elections, the materials in these bundles provide some insight into the process through which the colonial subjects attained the highest political office open to them.

The gobernadorcillo served as the chief administrator of a town or *pueblo*, consisting of several villages or barrios, each under a *cabeza de barangay*. Together with the cabezas, he was responsible for the collection of tribute dues and the maintenance of peace and order within the boundaries of his *pueblo*.

In the provinces of Tondo, Laguna de Bay, Bulacan, and Pampanga, all the taxpayers of the *pueblo* participated in the annual election of the gobernadorcillo, at least until 1696. This popular franchise, however, appeared to have occasioned bitter factionalism among the natives and frequent lawsuits arising from contested election results. Thus, when he promulgated his "Ordinances of Good Government" Governor General Fausto Cruzat y Góngora included an article restricting the right of suffrage to those who had served as cabezas.¹⁵

The Ordinances carefully spelled out the election procedure. Elections had to be held between 1 January and 28 February, in the presence of the provincial governor or *alcalde-mayor* and the parish priest of the *pueblo*. The electorate was to consist of the retiring gobernadorcillo and twelve cabezas de barangay. Where the *pueblo* had less than twelve barangays, "notables" of the *pueblo* — presumably ex-barangay heads — were to be chosen to complete the required number. The electors were to forward to Manila, through the *alcalde*, a list of three names from which the Governor General would select the man who would assume the post. This list or *terna* would include the two candidates who obtained the highest number of votes and the incumbent gobernadorcillo, who was automatically a candidate for reappointment. The candidate who received the highest number of votes usually got the appointment, unless the parish priest or the *alcalde* could raise valid objections. Even after the Governor General's confirmation, however, the new gobernadorcillo could not legally exercise any authority until he had paid the fees attached to

15. Emma H. Blair and James A. Robertson, *The Philippine Islands, 1493-1898*, 55 vols. (Cleveland: Arthur Clark Co., 1903-1907), 50:208-209 [subsequently cited as BR].

the office. At the end of his term, the *gobernadorcillo* had to undergo a *residencia* — a judicial review of his conduct while in office — to which the provincial governors and the Governor General were likewise subject.¹⁶

Governor General Francisco José de Obando y Solís decreed in 1751 that *cabezas de barangay* on active duty could not be nominated as *gobernadorcillo*.¹⁷ But this restriction lasted only till 1768. In that year, Governor General Pedro Manuel de Arandía y Santisteban issued ordinances which allowed a *cabeza* to serve concurrently as *gobernadorcillo*.¹⁸ Arandía also introduced a law permitting poor men elected as *gobernadorcillo* to pay the fees of the office from the communal funds — “the only condition being that the poverty must be very great, and such men very useful to the community.”¹⁹ Probably to insure that no irregularities blemished the elections, Arandía stipulated that they must be held in the government house; if held elsewhere, the elections were to be considered null and void, the presiding *alcalde* was to suffer a fine and the notary keeping the records, the loss of his job.²⁰

In general, the ordinances issued by Governor General José Raón in 1768 simply confirmed the Cruzat ordinances and the modifications Arandía had introduced. They did, however, contain new details. Twelve electors were to be chosen from among the *cabezas*, “observing strict seniority always.” Only those who could read, write, and speak Spanish could aspire to the post. Voting was to be secret. The *alcalde mayor* or his deputy had to conduct the elections. The parish priest did not need to be present but could attend “if he pleases, in order to represent what he considers advisable, and for no other end.” Election results in the provinces of Tondo, Laguna, Cavite, Balayan, Mariveles, Bataan, Pampanga, and Bulacan were to be sent to the Governor General who made the final choice. The *alcaldes-mayores* in those provinces farther from Manila were to have the authority to appoint the *gobernadorcillos* in their respective jurisdictions.²¹

16. José Monteroy Vidal, *El Archipiélago Filipino y las Islas Marianas, Carolinas y Palaos: Su historia, geografía y estadística* (Madrid: Imp. de Manuel Tello, 1886), p. 164.

17. *BR*, 50:223.

18. *BR*, 50:255.

19. *BR*, 50:237.

20. *BR*, 50:254.

21. *BR*, 50:254-55.

Other changes in procedure were introduced in the nineteenth century, or at least were in effect by this time. Greater latitude was allowed regarding the date on which elections could be legally held. John Bowring reported, in the late 1850s, that elections usually took place on 1 April. The tobacco districts, however, adjusted their schedule so that their elections would not interfere with the harvest.²² A decree of 1847 spelled out the qualifications required for the post of gobernadorcillo. Candidates had to be natives or Chinese mestizos who were over twenty-five years old, with previous experience, at least as cabeza, and a favorable record of government service. They had to be literate in Spanish and also had to have a stable source of income. Certain persons were automatically barred from holding the post, such as those who maintained gambling houses, those indebted to the state, those who held leases on town property or the excise taxes of the pueblo.²³

The franchise remained restricted to thirteen men, but the composition of the electoral council had changed; six of the electors had to be cabezas in office and the other six had to be ex-cabezas. These twelve men were chosen by lot from among the principalía on the day of the election. As before, the retiring gobernadorcillo retained the thirteenth vote.²⁴

Examples of even royal decrees more honored in the breach than in the observance have alerted historians against taking ordinances at their face value. Records of electoral proceedings in Cagayan, however, suggest that the Spanish authorities cared enough about the process to give it their serious attention. The report of the 1849 elections drew unfavorable comment from Manila because in submitting the list of the candidates for the gobernadorcillo post, the alcalde had failed to specify clearly enough whom he thought best fitted for the job.²⁵

The comments of alcalde and parish priest on the winning

22. *A Visit to the Philippine Islands* (London: Smith, Elder, & Co., 1859), p. 91.

23. Onofre D. Corpuz, *The Bureaucracy in the Philippines* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1957), p. 126.

24. José Montero y Vidal, *Historia General de Filipinas*, 3 vols. (Madrid: Imp. de Manuel Tello, 1887-1895), 2:320-21; Feodor Jagor, *Travels in the Philippines* (London: Chapman and Hill, 1875), p. 236.

25. "Cagayan. Extracto de las Actas de Eleccⁿ. de Gobernadorcillos y Ministros Subalternos de Justicia de los pueblos Cosecheros de elecc.ⁿ dicha Provincia para el Año entrante de 1850." PNA, Elecciones de Gobernadorcillos, Cagayan IV. [Subsequently cited as PNA, EGC]

candidates indirectly reveal what they thought of the office. Maturity and the respect accorded to age were important criteria; the alcalde withheld his recommendation from the leading candidate for the Tuguegarao post in 1849 because he considered the man too young. Physical vigor was also important. The leading candidate in Piat was voted down by the alcalde because he had been chronically ill.

In the 1855 elections, the candidates who won the most votes in the towns of Pamplona, Abulug, Lallo, Aparri, Buguey and Camalaniugan seemed clearly superior to the other two in the terna and the Governor General accordingly appointed them as *gobernadorcillos*.²⁶ In the towns of Tuguegarao, Amulung, Alcala, Nassiping, Gattaran, Solana, and Cabagan, the choice was not as clear. The incumbent *gobernadorcillos* in the towns of Amulung and Nassiping, according to the alcalde, had carried out their duties honorably and well and, on the strength of their performance, deserved the honor of reappointment. But the alcalde strongly believed that the position should rotate among the leaders of the community and that it should go to the candidate at the head of the terna. The same principle constrained him from recommending Joaquin Guzman, the runner-up in the Cabagan polls, though the man seemed the best qualified for the job. Guzman, according to the alcalde, was the best tobacco farmer in town and would presumably know how to instruct his subjects in the proper cultivation of their fields. But the winning candidate, Dalmacio Gammad, was also worthy of the post, having served the town as *maestro de escuela* and, for eighteen years, as witness in the tribunal:

The office of the *gobernadorcillo* of Cabagan is one of the most lucrative in the *Colección* [the area growing tobacco for the monopoly], and however great my esteem for the runner-up, I cannot in conscience influence the process in such a way that the man who has won the legal majority loses these great benefits.

The Governor, in this case, went along with the alcalde and appointed those who headed the terna in their respective towns.

In Tumauni, the alcalde could not endorse the leading candidate, who was known as an incorrigible gambler. But true to his principles, he recommended for appointment the winners in the

26. Information on 1855 elections in "Actas de Elecciones, Tuguegarao, 30 Abril 1855," PNA, EGC IV.

towns of Yguig, Tabang, Piat, Tuao, Malaueg and Enrile. Even Domingo Guzman, the winner in Tuao, received his support, though a fall from a horse had so scared the man that he could no longer go riding, a serious disability for an official charged with the supervision of the town's tobacco fields. But in Tuao and the rest of this last group of towns, the Governor set aside the counsel of the *alcalde*, bypassed the leading candidate, and reappointed the incumbent *gobernadorcillos*. The deciding factor in every case was the work done by the *gobernadorcillo* towards promoting his town's tobacco harvest.

The report on the 1859 elections also attracted critical comments.²⁷ The defects in the *alcalde*'s account included the failure to name the board of electors, the omission of the number of votes obtained by the winning candidates, and the inadequate information provided for the runner-up and the incumbent. But Manila called for new elections only in two towns: Tabang, where only 11 voted instead of the prescribed 13, and Piat, where the winner of a second election called to break a deadlock was found to have lacked the votes necessary to qualify for the second balloting. Appointments in the 1859 elections went to the candidates obtaining the highest number of votes. New elections, however, had to be conducted for Tuguegarao because the man elected died within five months of his term.

In 1871, the winners of the elections in Tuguegarao, Enrile, Solana, Alcala, Nassiping, Gattaran, Tuao, Malaueg, Piat, Tabang, Camalaniugan, Abulug, Pamplona, Claveria and Yguig received the *alcalde*'s endorsement and, subsequently, confirmation from the Governor General.²⁸ The *alcalde* recommended the runner-up in Aparri because the winner was reputed to suffer from fits of insanity. The runner-up in Amulung won the *alcalde*'s support on the strength of his reputation as an excellent tobacco farmer and the hope that he would help increase the town's tobacco output. In Lallo, the *alcalde* proposed the re-election of the incumbent:

He has shown great intelligence and zeal; he began and has nearly finished a handsome tribunal which the town lacked; and the town of Lallo, because of its geographical location, because of the number of

27. The *Actas* of the 1859 elections are also in PNA, EGC IV.

28. Results of the 1871 elections are in "Eugenio de Vera to Sör Gobernador Civil de Filipinas, Tuguegarao, 5 de Mayo de 1871" PNA, EGC I.

Spaniards resident there, and because it is the site of the tobacco warehouse of this province and Isabela, needs at its head a man endowed with certain qualities of character and intelligence which, unfortunately, those proposed as the first and second candidates lack.

The Governor General accepted the alcalde's judgment on the mental disability of the Aparri winner. Despite the alcalde's recommendation, however, the *gobernadorcillo* appointments for Lallo and Amulung went to the candidates at the head of the terna.

The intervention of the parish priest, in certain cases, proved decisive in determining the final outcome. The 1879 terna lists for the towns of Tuao, Tuguegarao, and Piat included no one acceptable to the parish priests of those towns.²⁹ Fray Juan del Manzano of Tuao found the leading candidate "completely immoral in his public and private life" and the runner-up as "rebellious in the extreme." Moreover, both had previous records of poor service as municipal officials. The incumbent had also been derelict in the discharge of his obligations; he had, in fact, been relieved as *caudillo* or field supervisor of the tobacco monopoly because his carelessness had, in some unspecified way, jeopardized the town's tobacco harvest.

The winner in Tuguegarao was "a man of good intelligence, of passable zeal and of a strong character." He had kept on the right side of the law — no record existed of any criminal charges presented against him. But "it is publicly and widely known in the province. . . that he has taken part in certain business ventures of a usurious nature, transacted in those years when the payment of the tobacco harvest had been suspended." The runner-up would have been acceptable to Fray Pedro Ricarte but for a technicality; of the six votes that gave him second place, one had been cast by a cousin and two others by brothers-in-law. His election was therefore null and void because the regulations stipulated that voters could not elect a candidate related to them within the fourth degree. The incumbent's poor performance as *caudillo*, in the view of the parish priest, disqualified him for reappointment.

Piat's parish priest, Fray Alejandro Díaz de Sarralde, rejected the winner for his total ignorance of Spanish and the

29. Details of the 1879 elections are in "Elecciones Municipales, Cagayan, 1879-1881," PNA, EGC I.

runner-up for being a notorious drunkard and gambler. The incumbent was also unacceptable because, among other things, he had failed during his term to stop the daily cock-fights and to get the parents to send their children to school.

The parish priest of Claveria dismissed the winners simply by asserting that "they lack the qualities suitable for the exercise of the office." The objection to the incumbent was more specific; the man had been charged with acts of coercion.

The Cagayan alcalde, Don Joaquín de Fuentes y Bustillo concurred with the judgment of the priests in these towns. The Governor accepted the judgment of parish priests and alcalde as to the worthiness of the nominees. He could not, however, simply appoint the people they proposed because the law stated that the gobernadorcillo should be chosen from among those listed in the terna. The solution to the impasse was to authorize new elections in the towns concerned. In all cases, the new elections returned the people recommended by the parish priests.

In Amulung, the parish priest obtained the Governor's confirmation for the runner-up, one Luis de Guzman, whom he described as a good farmer. But de Guzman apparently did not enjoy the confidence of the entire community. A memorial containing some 35 signatures reached the Governor asking that he rescind de Guzman's appointment as gobernadorcillo. The memorial charged that de Guzman did not know how to speak, read, or write Spanish, that he was not even a native of the town and that he could not be expected to govern the community well, since he could not even govern his own family. The Governor, however, gave greater weight to the recommendation of the parish priest than to the judgment of de Guzman's peers.

The runner-up in Gattaran obtained the post after the parish priest had dismissed the winner's worthiness for the office:

He does not have the moral influence nor the qualities needed to govern a town. Moreover, with regard to his scandalous and immoral life, it would be of great harm to the town if it were delivered to drunkenness, an old vice here. Furthermore, some people have told me that he has bought some votes and entered into some illegal arrangements with some voters to come out in first place.

Fray Ramon Cordero of Malaueg endorsed the reappointment of the incumbent because the two winners in the election were not competent to hold the office. Neither understood Spanish. The

winner was not in complete control of his mental faculties, while the runner-up had shown himself something of a tyrant in his dealings with the barangay of which he was the head.

The indigenous principales seemed to have taken the electoral process as seriously as the Spanish authorities. The proposition that the local elite shunned the office of *gobernadorcillo*, if true in the provinces of Central Luzon, did not hold for Cagayan in the second half of the nineteenth century.³⁰ The office was desirable and desired, an object, in fact, of keen competition, perhaps because with it came the concurrent appointment as *caudillo* of the tobacco monopoly. The power and prestige that went with the office invited attempts at manipulating the elections to keep the post under the control of one individual or family.

Principales of Enrile addressed a memorial to the Governor General in 1879, complaining that the incumbent *gobernadorcillo*, Don Pio Cepeda, had lobbied, contrary to regulations, for the election of his predecessor in the post, his brother-in-law, Don Pedro Bunagan. A week before the elections, he had gathered all the *cabezas de barangay* in his house to tell them who they had to vote for. The following day, he had called the *cabezas* into the fields, ostensibly to check on the tobacco plantings. Outside the town proper, he had served them a meal and afterwards again gave them their voting instructions. On the eve of the elections, he had sent out the *cuadrilleros* or town constables to bring the *cabezas* to his house, where he again threatened them against voting for anyone other than his candidate. With these precautions Cepeda succeeded in getting Bunagan elected at the head of the *terna*. The other officials were chosen without even the pretense of an election. Cepeda had simply drawn up the list of officials himself. This included his brother, his nephew, and others of his dependents.³¹ The charges presented against Cepeda, however, failed to prosper. The records for the 1879 elections listed Bunagan as the incumbent *gobernadorcillo* and the third candidate in the *terna*. But the appointment of Mariano Guzman in 1879 broke the pattern of Cepeda and Bunagan alternating as *gobernadorcillo*.

30. In Bikol also, the office of *gobernadorcillo* seemed to have been a coveted post. Owen, "Principalia," p. 304.

31. Carlos Argonio, Vicente Carag and others to Governor General, Enrile, 1 May 1879, PNA, EGC I.

The Lasam family in Tuguegarao kept its grip on the office for a longer period. Between 1865 and 1877, Don Vicente Lasam and his brother-in-law, Don Miguel Paglilauan, alternated as gobernadorcillo. Electoral success made the two men wealthy and with their wealth they were easily able to defeat the efforts to elect other people to the post. In 1875, Paglilauan died and was succeeded by Lasam. When the time came to choose his successor, Lasam brought out Don Domingo Narag, ready, in more ways than one, to take Paglilauan's place. Narag was going to marry Lasam's sister, Paglilauan's widow.

With Lasam's support, Narag won the elections. The suspicion that Lasam intended to keep the office between himself and his prospective brother-in-law prompted Don Mariano Pamittan, the runner-up in the election, to present a case for his appointment to the Governor.³²

We do not know what factors the Governor weighed in his decision, but the gobernadorcillo appointment in 1877 did go to Pamittan. Forty-one years old at the time of his appointment, Pamittan had served continuously as cabeza de barangay for twenty years. But he was apparently already in poor health. Even before his term of office was over, he had to resign as caudillo because he was physically unable to cope with the demands of the job. As a counterweight to the Lasams, therefore, Pamittan's effectiveness might be called into question.

Despite their set-back in the Tuguegarao elections of 1877, the Lasam family had clearly emerged by the 1870s as super-principales whose influence extended beyond the confines of a single pueblo. Don Vicente's first cousin, Don Domingo Lasam, was gobernadorcillo of Solana in 1877, and other relatives held the post in Enrile and Yguig. In Solana, Don Domingo and his brother Agustin had alternated as gobernadorcillo in the last ten years — a pattern, some of their colleagues charged, enforced by threats and bribery. After Agustin's death, Domingo groomed his brother-in-law, Don Juan Aguba, as his successor. In 1877, some principales of Solana sent a memorial to the Governor, accusing Domingo of having coerced electors into voting for Aguba. They also noted that in the 1875 elections Domingo had managed to distribute most of the municipal offices to his brothers and

32. Mariano Pamittan to Governor General, Tuguegarao, 25 April 1877, PNA, EGC I.

brothers-in-law. The complaint also charged that the Lasam family had enriched themselves through the control of the town government at the expense of the community and the royal treasury.³³

If the scraps of documentary evidence available cannot support broad general conclusions, they may at least provide a warning against hasty generalizations. It would clearly be imprudent to assume that the electoral process served only a ritualistic purpose and merely formalized a foregone conclusion. The mechanism established by the Spaniards for recruiting indigenous leaders into the local bureaucracy allowed them to intervene at three levels: at the level of the parish priest, the *alcalde*, and the Governor General. The implementation of the ordinances governing elections clearly depended upon the values or prejudices of the authorities at these levels. Some officials felt strongly about the principle that the man who got the most votes should get the post. Others were more willing to disregard the numbers and to override the results of the balloting on the strength of their own personal assessment of the field of candidates.

But precisely because implementation of the rule depended on the attitudes of officials involved — and officials come and go — the electoral process was vulnerable to manipulation and exploitation by entrenched elites. This feature of local politics gives plausibility to the hypothesis that the *datus* legitimized by the Spaniards as local officials managed to perpetuate themselves as an oligarchy dominating political life in their respective towns.

The fact that Cagayan was the main source of tobacco for the government monopoly made Spanish officials especially anxious that competent and honest people became *gobernadorcillos*. The importance of the post, on the other hand, insured that people would want to control it, legally if possible, by underhanded means if necessary. Perhaps the complaints against electoral manipulation speak both of how well the Spaniards succeeded in establishing a political innovation and of how well the Filipinos succeeded in subverting the system to serve their own purposes.

33. Bernardo Malabat, Cayetano Miguel and others to Governor General, Solana, 14 May 1877, PNA, EGC I.