

**A PROTO-POLITICAL PEASANT MOVEMENT IN THE  
SPANISH PHILIPPINES:  
THE *COFRADIA DE SAN JOSE*  
AND THE TAYABAS REBELLION OF 1841 \***

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A LOOK AT THE STANDARD TEXTBOOKS OF PHILIPPINE HISTORY CAN GIVE an unwary reader the idea that it all really began with the Cavite Mutiny of 1872. The history of the Islands before that time is barely sketched in—the lifeless annals of bureaucracy in an insignificant backwater of the Spanish Empire. It is a history in which Filipinos rarely make an appearance, and which is therefore apparently not thought to be a subject of much potential interest to Filipino students today. This is unfortunate, if history is important for filling in the details of a national self-conception and self-respect, because it leaves the Filipino people with very little of it. There are presumably people still alive today who were growing up at the time of the Cavite Mutiny.

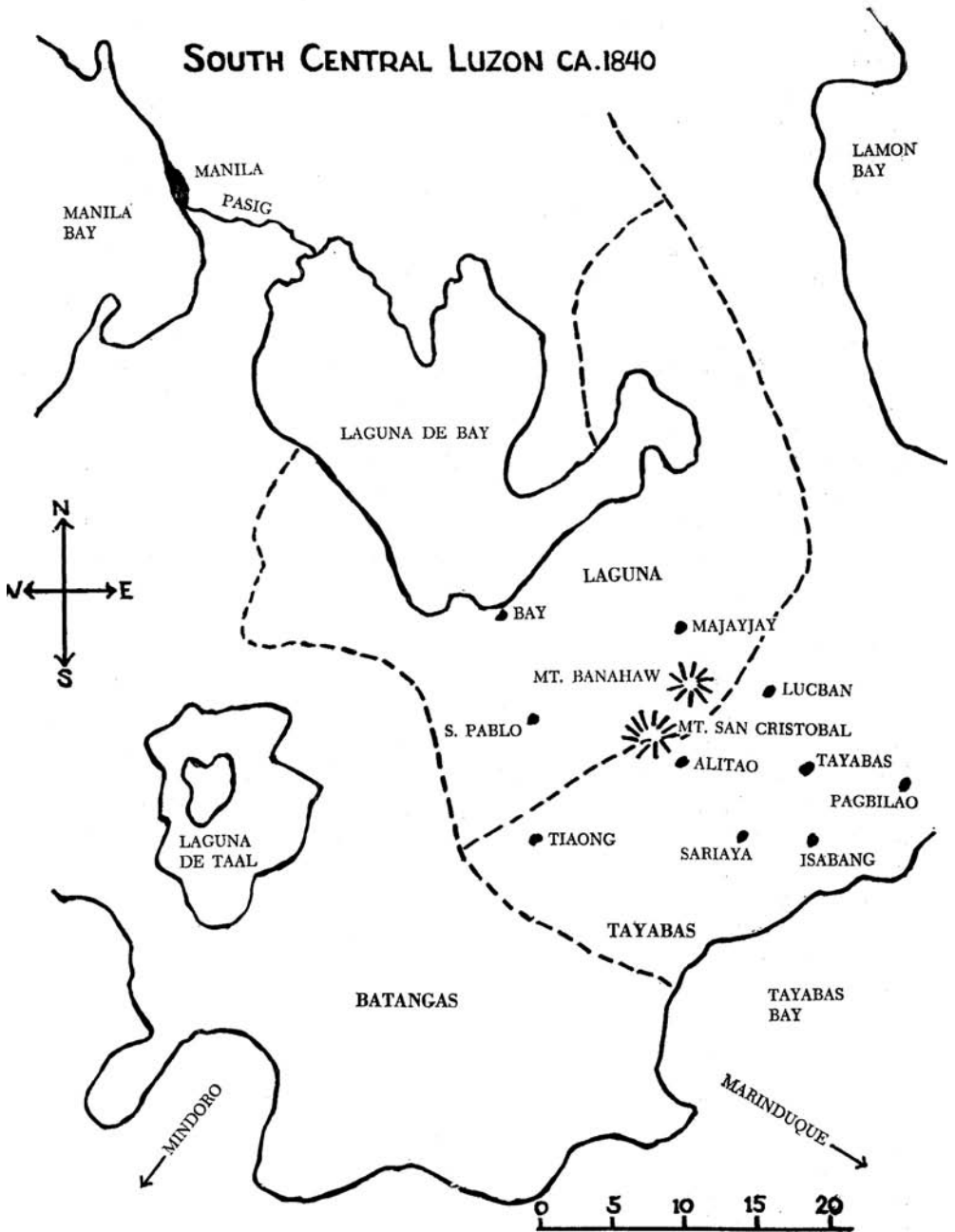
There was, of course, a great deal of Filipino history before 1872, and even before the arrival of Spanish colonialism with Legaspi in 1571.<sup>1</sup> The problem for social historians is how to write the Filipinos, and in particular the Filipino peasants (the great majority of Filipinos at any time in history), into it. This is a difficult task, because of the scarcity of archival resources and the primitive stage of such auxiliary studies as the history of land use, historical archeology and historical demography. But there are some elementary jobs of conventional historical research which can be done with materials available in libraries, and which ought to be done as soon as possible to lay the ground for more ambitious projects.

The easy way to “write the peasants into history” is to write about their revolts, those brief moments in which the inarticulate and unnoticed “objects” of history become its outspoken and undeniable subjects. There are documents concerning such events. Rebellions, or at least the problems of suppressing them, were matters the colonial

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\* This is the second draft of an article intended for publication. I will be very grateful if readers can find the time to return to me in writing their detailed criticisms and suggestions regarding any aspect of it.

<sup>1</sup> A useful introduction to the colonial secondary literature on Philippine revolts is [Pedro Murillo Velarde, et al.] “Insurrections by Filipinos in the Seventeenth Century,” in Blair & Robertson, *The Philippine Islands*, Vol. 38, pp. 87-240. See also the index to the same series under “Insurrections” in Vol. 54.



authorities usually took the trouble to write reports about. Unlike most of the doings of peasants, moreover, revolts were unique events with causes and implications for the future which can be speculated about today by a historian with a conventional kit of concepts. A case in point is the violent outbreak which took place in the southern part of the Province of Tayabas (Quezon) in 1841, under the leadership of a charismatic Tagalog religious leader named Apolinario de la Cruz.

Apolinario is mentioned briefly in the standard histories, as a distant precursor of the 1896 Revolution; but whereas the Spanish colonial historians expanded considerably upon his career as a dangerous aberration and threat to the public order, more recent writers have been content to characterize it as little more than a curiosity. The story of the Tayabas rebellion merits closer examination and more sympathetic analysis than it has received. It is a story which is full of indications that even in the "dark ages" of the Colony, the Filipino people had a dynamic cultural and institutional life of their own, in which the processes of social change operated to a considerable degree independently of the projects and purposes of the Spanish authorities.

The Philippine Islands have a rich tradition of "primitive rebellion"<sup>2</sup> dating from the sporadic anti-colonial revolts of the 17th and 18th centuries, which includes a variety of millenarian manifestations and widespread banditry, and culminates in the well-known 20th-century movements of the Aglipayan Church, Sakdalism and the Hukbalahap guerrillas. Most of this activity seems to have been concentrated in the tenant-farmed "rice bowl" of central Luzon, in the overpopulated coastal plain of Ilocos, and in the frontier areas of northern Luzon and Mindanao. The movement with which this study is concerned took place, however, in a region which had neither an oppressed landless peasantry nor a pagan or Muslim population resisting the inroads of Christianity and modernization — a region which has at no other time in history been distinguished as a focus of popular resistance.<sup>3</sup>

Southern Tayabas and Laguna provinces are located in the mountainous region of south central Luzon, to the south and east of the Laguna

<sup>2</sup> "Primitive rebels" is the term applied by Eric Hobsbawm in a book with the same title (Manchester, 1959) to a variety of proto-revolutionary popular resistance movements in pre-modern Europe, ranging from banditry through millenarianism to Luddite machine-wrecking. It is in no sense derogatory, and on the contrary implied movements which are rational and progressive in essence, however "unrealistic" they may appear in their goals or the means chosen to achieve them.

<sup>3</sup> There is some question about the existence of important bandit activity in Tayabas. David Sturtevant includes neither Tayabas nor Laguna in his list of the main *tulisán* areas of the 19th century. "Philippine Social Structure and Its Relation to Agrarian Unrest" (unpub. Ph.D. Stanford, 1958), pp. 111-12. Another writer suggests, however, that there were enough bandits on the slopes of Mounts San Cristóbal and Banahao between Laguna and Tayabas to justify the construction of a military post for protection against them (at Uambahan, near Majayjay) in 1833. Juan Palazón, *Majayjay (How a Town Came into Being)* (Manila, 1964), p. 179.

de Bay (see map at end of paper). In the period with which we are concerned, their Tagalog-speaking inhabitants were for the most part hard-working peasant proprietors, growing dry rice on tiny hill farms and reasonably prosperous. There was a rich tradition of cooperative activity and communal recreation through *turmuhan* spontaneous work groups, the tightly-knit extended family and *compadrazgo* networks. The region was relatively underpopulated, and free of the exploitative systems of absentee landlordism and debt-bondage to *caciques* which were beginning to establish themselves on the central plain. Unlike the farmers of the Cagayan Valley tobacco country, they were free of any obligation to produce specific crops for delivery to an abusive government monopoly. There were no extensive "friar lands." The peasants raised cattle and grew some wheat and maize, cacao, coffee, sugar cane, coconuts and fruits and vegetables in addition to rice; they engaged in small-scale cottage industry and exported limited quantities of grain and other produce to the larger towns of the vicinity. Transportation was exceedingly difficult, however, since the few roads were impassable in the long rainy season. The markets for most products were at a great distance, and road tolls were prohibitively high. The result was that there was not much profitable commerce outside the region.<sup>4</sup>

The principal complaints of these peasants in the early 19th century seem to have been forced labor and taxes, and a series of annoying rather than truly oppressive government economic regulations. There were small obligatory deliveries of produce for the maintenance of civil and ecclesiastical officials, which were paid for at fixed rates which took no account of fluctuations in market value — or which might not be paid for at all. A conflict between Spanish and traditional land law meant that people were discouraged from clearing the land for cultivation, and that cleared land might be abandoned and reclaimed by the forest because of the uncertainty of Western-style title to it. It is possible that on a small scale Tayabas was experiencing the breakdown of communal land rights and incursion of private property which has contributed so mightily to the exacerbation of rural social tensions in Latin America during the past century (e.g. Mexico beginning in the 1860's). An old prohibition of the killing of cows and carabaos

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<sup>4</sup> Fray Bartolomé Galán, "Informe sobre la provincia de Tayabas" (1823). (Ms. in Newberry Library, Chicago). For the contrast between this situation and that prevailing in Central Luzon, see the good summary of the socio-economic system of the latter area during the 19th century in Sturtevant, "Philippine Social Structure. . ." pp. 85-104. Notes on the communal traditions of the Tagalogs in Sturtevant, pp. 38-39. The population of the province must have been about 82,000. A compilation of fragmentary census data gives 54,000 for Tayabas in 1877, when it contained about 1% of the total population of the Islands. In 1840, the total population was 3,219,000. José Montero y Vidal, *Historia general de Filipinas desde el descubrimiento de dichas islas hasta nuestros días*, Vol. 3 (Madrid, 1895), p. 156.

(dating from the time when cattle were being introduced into the Islands) discouraged people from breeding any but beef cattle — with the result that the carabaos indispensable for cultivation were so expensive that the poorer peasants could not afford them.<sup>5</sup>

An additional irritant in the early 1840's was the government's determined effort to oblige all Filipinos to adopt regular surnames for administrative purposes. The Tagalogs had been made to abandon their Tagalog surnames when converted to Christianity in the 17th and 17th centuries, and had since taken to using Christian saints' names, or words from the liturgical vocabulary, indiscriminately fore and aft. The same names might be used by members of different families, and different names within the same family, which was confusing to the authorities.<sup>6</sup>

The peasants of Tayabas and Laguna, like all other adult rural Filipinos in those days (except the perhaps five per cent who were *cabezas de barangay* or *gobernadorcillos* and their families, retired soldiers, more than sixty years of age, or descended from individuals granted exemptions for outstanding service to the colonial regime), were subject to an elaborate set of taxes, levied annually upon each nuclear family and payable in cash or in kind: ten *reales* in tribute or poll-tax; one *real* in tithe (*diezmo predial*) for the maintenance of the Church hierarchy (virtually a branch of the government in the Spanish colonies); three *reales* in church dues (*sanctorum*) for the maintenance of the local priest and church building; one real for the village treasury (*caja de comunidad*); and 40 days of labor service (*polo*), remissable for 3 pesos (24 reales).<sup>7</sup> In addition, labor service might be exacted by the village priest whenever he chose — and the priest might have the peasant who protested against any such arbitrary imposition flogged publicly.<sup>8</sup> The total tax burden of nearly five pesos must have re-

<sup>5</sup> Galán, who claims that peasants without carabao might be driven to stealing to support their families. Juan de Plasencia noted in the 16th century that Tagalog farmers who cleared land were entitled to the harvests taken from it, whether or not they were members of the barangay to which the land belonged. This traditional law was gradually giving away even then to Spanish notions of private property in land. "Customs of the Tagalogs" in Blair & Robertson, Vol. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Palazón, p. 122. A list of members of the Cofradía de San José, the religious organization with which this paper is concerned, shows that all of the members used the by then traditional system of naming themselves: Isidro de Santa Rosa, Apolinario de la Cruz, etc. Unfortunately, it is not clear from Palazón's account whether the government pressure for Western-style surnames was applied *before* 1840 so that this usage might be interpreted as a symbol of defiance of the "modernizing" authorities. It is one of Hobsbawm's major points that the eruption of liberal, modernizing "Jacobin" reforms which threaten traditional institutions has frequently been the major cause of millenarian movements among peasants. *Primitive Rebels*, p. 67.

<sup>7</sup> Manuel Buzeta y Felipe Bravo, *Diccionario geográfico, estadístico, histórico, de las Islas Filipinas*, Vol. 2 (Manila, 1851), pp. 129-30, 133.

<sup>8</sup> Palazón, pp. 21-22. Priests were omnipresent in the province. There were 15 of them in 17 townships, or about one for every 2,000 people. See table in Buzeta, Vol. 2, appendix, and Note 3 above. Cf. approximately one priest for

presented a substantial portion of the annual income of the average upland rice farmer<sup>9</sup> — and a heavy drain on his fund of working days not required for farming.

The collection of taxes was performed by the provincial governments through their appointed *cabezas de barangay*, and was the occasion for serious abuses. A critic of the colonial administration wrote in 1842 that the taxes had traditionally been paid in kind (that is to say, in manpower) because of the fact that cash was seldom available to most families. By limiting the kinds of produce receivable, moreover, the government could channel agricultural productivity into the directions it thought suitable. But the commodities received had for the most part to be sold by the government to produce revenue, and this opened the door to graft. Provincial governors commonly deflated the official cash values assigned to produce collected from the taxpayers, so as to obtain merchandise worth two or three times the established rate of tribute. Then they sold the accumulated stores, and paid the smallest amounts they could get away with into the Treasury at Manila. In effect, it was a system of tax-farming to members of the official Spanish colonial service. A royal order of 1835 guaranteed the peasants that tribute commodities would be received at full market value, but in 1840 there was apparently still no sign of its being put into effect.<sup>10</sup>

As the costs of government (and of storing produce) increased in the 19th century, pressure began to be applied from Manila for the

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every 1,000 Catholics in the U.S. or every 10,000 in Mexico today. All of the towns indicated on the map at the end of the paper were “pueblos” with resident priests and *gobernadorcillos* at approximately the time of the rebellion. Francisco Coello de Portugal y Quesada, annotated map of the “Islas Filipinas” in *Atlas de España y sus Posesiones de Ultramar* (Madrid, 1852).

<sup>9</sup> It is difficult to establish the real value of the *peso* for Tayabas peasants in 1840. Galán gives figures for the peso value of annual rice production which permit the very hazardous calculation that five *cavanes* (ca. 600 lbs.) of unhusked *palay* were worth about 3 pesos. Modern upland rice cultivation will produce about 20 *cavanes* to the hectare, which may be taken as a maximum figure for the probable annual production of a single family’s swidden operation in the period in question. (José Endriga, personal communication, February, 1969). On that basis, five peso in taxes would represent just under half the value of an average annual rice crop — very heavy taxation indeed, and a figure which suggests that most peasants must have worked off their *polo* obligations rather than paying the three pesos. On the other hand, a travel account for ca. 1850 suggests that common laborers in Manila were being paid a quarter of a “dollar” a day — if the “dollar” is a peso, two *reales* — and that this was enough to keep one man in food for two to three days. This permits the equally hazardous calculation that in the urban setting, 5 pesos might have been roughly equivalent to two weeks’ food budget for a family of five. Robert MacMicking, *Recollections of Manila and the Philippines during 1848, 1849 and 1850* (London, 1852), p. 150.

<sup>10</sup> Sinibaldo de Mas y Sans, *Informe sobre el estado de las Islas Filipinas en 1842* (2 vols.; Madrid, 1842), Vol. 2 (chapter on taxes), p. 14. Europeans and European *mestizos* paid no tribute; Chinese and Chinese *mestizos* paid at least twice as much as Filipinos, and more if they were wealthy. Also, Buzeta Vol. 1, pp. 129-30.

payment of taxes in cash. At first glance, this was an opportunity for relief of the peasants from local extortion. It may, indeed, have been desirable from the point of view of a province which had a ready market for cash sales of its products, but it must have occasioned considerable hardship in subsistence farming areas such as Tayabas. The general tendency toward monetization of the rural economy of which the policy was a part can only have accentuated the frustrations of those who had little to sell. By 1841, Tayabas was the only province in the Philippines which continued to pay all of its tribute in kind.<sup>11</sup>

The tribute in those years was paid in caulking material derived from coconut palms which the peasants of Tayabas had been obliged to plant some years earlier, and which had been the subject of disgruntlement since the palm grew wild almost everywhere else in the Islands and the plantations occupied land which might better have been planted to rice. The caulking was used by the government shipyards at Cavite. But beginning in the late 1830's, the shipyards were overstocked with it and complained that it could not be stored over long periods because of the climate.<sup>12</sup> There is no record of the impact of this development on Tayabas—but it may be surmised that it led to some disaffection. Hundreds of acres were given over to coconut trees whose products could not be sold, and (in part because of this misallocation) the cash for paying tribute was scarcer than elsewhere.

Apolinario de la Cruz was a young Tagalog from Lucban in Southern Tayabas, a town with exceptionally poor farmland whose people were famous in the region for their enterprise as traders and which included more "rich men" than any other town in the province.<sup>13</sup> Born in 1815 of peasant parents, he received a religious primary education and went to Manila to seek admission to the priesthood some time around 1830. As a Filipino, he could not qualify for the novitiate of any monastic order, but was accepted as a lay brother at the Hospital of San Juan de Diós—a 250-year-old charitable institution run by Spanish friars for the benefit of indigent Spaniards.<sup>14</sup> In such an environment, he must have experienced discrimination frequently. A contemporary described him as a "quiet, sober, unobtrusive young man, exhibiting nothing of the hero or the adventurer."<sup>15</sup> The humble *donado* picked up scraps of Biblical and

<sup>11</sup> Mas y Sans, Vol. 2 (chapter on taxes), p. 16; Buzeta Vol. I, pp. 131-2. The monetization of tribute payments was nearly complete by 1850.

<sup>12</sup> Buzeta Vol. I, pp. 132-33.

<sup>13</sup> Galán. There is a suggestion in this document that some of the "rich men" may have been Chinese *mestizos*. If this can be established, it may be a factor in explaining the ethnic exclusiveness of the *Cofradía*.

<sup>14</sup> Buzeta, Vol. I, pp. 165.

<sup>15</sup> Sir John Bowring, *The Philippine Islands* (London, 1859), p. 70, quoting Sinibaldo de Mas y Sans, who claimed to have known Apolinario when he was hospitalized for a time at San Juan de Diós.

theological knowledge by listening to the sermons at church, and in time seemed to have become an accomplished lay preacher.<sup>16</sup>

It was while he served in his menial capacity at the hospital that Apolinario helped organize a group of 19 Catholic laymen, friends from Tayabas who settled in the poor suburbs of the capital, into the *Hermandad de la Archi-Cofradía del Glorioso Señor San José y de la Virgen del Rosario* (Brotherhood of the Great Sodality of the Glorious Lord Saint Joseph and of the Virgin of the Rosario). The members attended Mass together, and were expected to obey certain rules of moral conduct in their everyday lives, among which was the saying of seven Our Fathers and seven Hail Marys each day.<sup>17</sup> Associations of this kind, concerned exclusively with devotional and charitable activities, were a normal feature of popular religious life in the Spanish colonies.

What distinguished the *Cofradía de San José* from most others in the Philippines was the extraordinary degree of authority which Apolinario managed to achieve within it, the absence of any supervision of its affairs by a Spanish priest, the exclusion of Spaniards and *mestizos* from membership, and the fact that in later years the membership was not limited to a single locality. Soon after its founding, the organization applied to the Archbishop of Manila for recognition as a legitimate lay brotherhood, but was informed that no license was necessary so long as it remained small and made no use of the Holy Sacraments (that is, did not usurp the functions of the ordained priesthood) in its gatherings.<sup>18</sup> Lacking any political objective or orientation, the brotherhood was able to continue unnoticed by the authorities for several years after its founding. During that time, however, it developed an atmosphere of secrecy, an administrative centralization and a degree of loyalty in the membership which were bound to arouse suspicion when its affairs became public.

Beginning in 1839 or 1840, the *Cofradía* moved into a stage of rapid expansion. The reasons for this have not yet been made clear. Trusted representatives of the Founder were sent out to the villages of Tayabas and neighboring Laguna and Batangas provinces to recruit members. Each was charged with signing up twelve people, who would pay one *real* a month in membership dues. The man who achieved this became a leader (*cabecilla*) of the new local unit, and a member of the governing

<sup>16</sup> Gregorio Zaide, *Philippine Political and Cultural History*, Vol. I (Manila, 1957), p. 364. Zaide gives Apolinario's birth date as July 31, 1815 in the barrio of Pandak, Luchan. This suggests that someone has uncovered the prophet's baptismal record, but no reference is cited for the information.

<sup>17</sup> Apolinario de la Cruz, "Declaración de..." *La Política de España en Filipinas* Año 2, No. 32 (1892), pp. 113-14. Matta puts the founding of the *Cofradía* in 1832, when Apolinario was 17 years of age. Most sources assume that he was the founder, but normal practice would have been for a priest to perform that function.

<sup>18</sup> Cruz, p. 114.



council of the brotherhood. Council members had one vote for every twelve people recruited; in the mature organization, the most influential *cabecillas* had four votes each. Dues were used to pay the expenses of a monthly local gathering, with the supplies being forwarded by courier to headquarters in Manila—a circumstance which later led cynical observers to the conclusion that the Cofradía was nothing but an elaborate means of collecting money from the guillible peasants.<sup>19</sup>

Meetings were held on the 19th of every month, when the members would come together to hear a high Mass in honor of San Jose sponsored by the organization. Afterwards, they would retire to a private house to say the Rosary, hear a reading of inspirational letters and directives from Brother Apolinario (Manong Pule, as he was called familiarly in Tagalog),<sup>20</sup> and enjoy a community supper. The meetings were peaceful, but conducted entirely in Tagalog and open only to members. They were kept as inconspicuous as possible, to avoid alarming the authorities.<sup>21</sup>

A major set of questions which needs to be answered with regard to this movement has to do with its ritual and ideological content. None of the presently available documents refers to this crucial matter at all, except to qualify the *cofrades* as “superstitious,” and all that can be said about the subject at this stage is in the nature of hypothesis. The cult was certainly not strictly “nativistic” or anti-Christian; it was syncretic. Some very indirect and fragmentary evidence of the folk religion which was probably practiced by the members is available from recent ethnography of the immediate region. Despite four centuries of unremitting Catholic religious indoctrination and the predominance of foreign priests in local community life, some very heterodox practices survived intact—and have only begun to disappear with the spread of secular public education after World War II. Among them are ritual formulae for the propitiation of evil spirits, such as the use of *anting-anting* amulets (among which some of the most efficacious are fragments broken off of church images and furnishings) or the recitation of Latin liturgical phrases possessed of supernatural powers; and the use of pagan alongside Christian images in home worship.<sup>22</sup> The followers of Apolinario de la Cruz were illiterate or semi-literate peasants and tradesmen who professed, it seems reasonable to suppose, a syncretism which Christian rituals and beliefs served to *supplement* rather than to replace completely

<sup>19</sup> Cruz, p. 114. The view that the Cofradía was a “con game” is put forth by Montero y Vidal, Vol. 3, p. 37; Felipe Govantes *Compendio de historia de Filipinas* (Manila, 1877), p. 378; and Juan Manuel de la Matta, “Apolinario de la Cruz. Relación en que se da cuenta de haber estallado la conspiración en Tayabas” (November 16, 1841) (Ms. in Newberry Library, Chicago).

<sup>20</sup> Palazón, p. 162.

<sup>21</sup> Fray Manuel Sancho, “Relación expresiva de los principales acontecimientos de la titulada Confradía de San José...” (Ms. copy in Newberry Library, Chicago), pp. 14-17.

<sup>22</sup> Fermin Dichoso, “Some Superstitious Beliefs and Practices in Laguna, Philippines,” *Anthropos* 62 (1967): 61-67.

their traditional ones. This perspective will allow us to conceive of the development of the *Cofradía de San José*, with exotic practices in a conventional framework, as a gradual and moderate shift in the *emphases* of religious behavior and belief, rather than as the violent and heretical break with Catholicism which is suggested by the Spanish clerical sources.

The center of the *Cofradía's* activities seems to have been Lucban, Apolinario's home town, where by April of 1840 as many as 500 people from several nearby *pueblos* were gathering for the monthly celebration. The members were mostly married couples and single women (recruitment seems to have depended largely on appeals to female piety, and a few women even served as *cabecillas*). Meetings were held at the home of Francisco de los Santos (Cabeza Isco Paminta), an ex-*cabeza de barangay* who had been in trouble with the law a few years earlier when he and his wife were found conducting secret devotional sessions in honor of the Virgin of Antipolo in their home. The leader and secretary-treasurer of the group was an articulate younger man from Majajjay in Laguna Province named Octavio Ignacio de San Jorge, who claimed complete authority over the assemblage as Apolinario's official representative.<sup>23</sup>

Among the Founder's acquaintances in Manila were a well-to-do Creole<sup>24</sup> businessman, Domingo de Rojas, and his confessor, a Filipino secular priest named Ciriaco de los Santos. The nature of his relationship with these advisers remains a mystery. It is possible that Manong Pule was in touch through them with the circles of Filipino intellectuals who were just beginning to talk about the possibility of a separation from Spain. Padre Ciriaco in particular is a mysterious figure, who was associated from the start with the *Cofradía*, apparently served as its treasurer as well as spiritual counsellor, and must have shared the exasperation of the Filipino clergy in general with the discriminatory policies of the Spanish-dominated Church hierarchy—but no connection between the *Cofradía* and the "Independence Party" has ever been firmly established. It seems likely that if the dissidents in the capital were aware of the existence of Apolinario and his new sect, they would have been

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<sup>23</sup> Sancho, p. 70. The participation of women in the direction of religious life was apparently traditional in Tagalog society. Plasencia, p. 191, describes pre-Christian rituals performed by priestesses. The same writer contributes to clearing up the mystery about how a group of several hundred people might have congregated at the home of a single family in a small town. Traditional Tagalog religion involved no permanent temple constructions; rather, religious festivals were held in large temporary structures built onto a chief's house—with the help of which the house itself was made into a temple. Plasencia, p. 186.

<sup>24</sup> This term is derived from Latin American usage, where it means "European born in the colonies." Philippine-born Spaniards were known as "Filipinos" in colonial parlance during some periods (although Sinibaldo de Mas y Sans uses "Filipino" for the natives of the Islands and "Filipino español" for the Creoles), while the Tagalogs and Visayans, etc. were referred to as "indios." "Filipino" is used in this paper in its 20th-century sense.

pleased to encourage it as a potential thorn in the side of the colonial Church and government structures. They were not, however, responsible for its existence.<sup>25</sup>

In 1840, Padre Santos advised Apolinario to seek official recognition once again for the growing Cofradía, as a means of avoiding unnecessary conflicts with the local authorities in Laguna and Tayabas. With the priest's help, a respectful application was submitted to the Bishop. When this was, at length, denied, the Cofradía employed a team of lawyers retained by Rojas to state its case to the Audiencia (supreme council of government) at Manila. Explaining the legitimate and peaceful nature of the organization, they requested authorization to continue expanding it. The Audiencia considered the case and passed it to the Governor of the Islands for consultation, but took no action regarding it.

This attempt to legalize its operations seems to have been the origin, paradoxically enough, of the Cofradía's difficulties with the law. When Governor Oraá was given the particulars of the case, his suspicion was aroused by the clause which excluded Spaniards and *mestizos* from the Brotherhood. On his recommendation, the leader was dismissed summarily from his post at the Hospital de San Juan de Diós. When summoned to appear for questioning, Apolinario went into hiding in Manila to avoid arrest, and thus became an outlaw.<sup>26</sup> In these circumstances, the government moved fast; Padre Ciriaco was arrested and jailed, along with other members resident in the capital. These people "failed to provide the authorities with a clear idea of the nature and objectives of the Cofradia, but did make clear the necessity of suppressing it." An order went out to the provinces for the apprehension of all *cabecillas*.

<sup>25</sup> Palazón, 160-61; Matta, "Relación..." Mas y Sans, who lived in Manila in the period just prior to the revolt, doubts that any rebellion of "indios" can have enjoyed substantial support from the Creoles of the capital. His basis for this judgment is the view that if the Creoles ever thought of independence, it was with themselves as heirs to the peninsular authority and the Filipinos and *mestizos* continuing in their status as tributaries. They therefore viewed any manifestation of popular political activity with alarm. Cf. the attitude of the wealthy Filipinos to the Guardia de Honor movement in Pangasinan in the early months of the U.S. occupation, when the peasants were fighting the new colonial oppressor and the caciques were at pains to make a rapid adjustment to the new circumstances. David Sturtevant, "Guardia de Honor: Revitalization within the Revolution" *Asian Studies* (Manila) 4, 2 (1966), pp. 342-52. A frequent assumption regarding the political activities of dissidents in the Spanish colonies was that they were closely tied to freemasonry, but a recent study has pointed out that subversive movement was non-existent in the Catholic Philippines until after 1850. John N. Schumacher, S.J. "Philippine Masonry to 1890" *Asian Studies* 4, 2 (1966): 323-42. Nevertheless, there was certainly widespread disaffection with the regime in Manila during the period. Matta and Mas y Sans, both informed political observers, are primarily concerned with a decline of the prestige of the government due to its poverty and corruption and to the incompetence of the peninsular (and especially, in their view, the Filipino) secular clergy. Both complain of the growing "insolence" and disloyalty of all classes in the capital, and feel that any sort of rebellion represents a serious threat to a tottering regime.

<sup>26</sup> Govantes, 378-9; Matta. "Relación..."

These events occurred during the summer of 1841.<sup>27</sup> In the meantime, the Bishop had set his own mechanism into action against the group.

The principal Catholic hierarch of Tayabas province was the parish priest of the provincial capital. In September of 1840, he received instructions to look into Apolinario and his pretended *Cofradía*, which he passed on to the curate of Lucban, Friar Manuel Sancho. The curate replied that he was astonished to discover that any such potentially subversive activities were taking place in his jurisdiction, and dismayed to find that he had been performing a monthly Mass financed by the same *Cofradía*. Thereafter, he refused dutifully to say the Mass (at a sacrifice of 11 pesos a month in income).<sup>28</sup> On the eve of October 19, the priest set out with the *gobernadorcillo* of Lucbán and several leading citizens, and made a raid on Isco Paminta's house. They arrested 243 people and confiscated the cash box, along with some incriminating letters from Manong Pule; and two large oil paintings of the Leader done in the style of popular images of the saints (with Apolinario in postures of piety surrounded by conventional religious symbols), which had been used in the religious ceremonies of the *Cofradía*. These paintings, and the file of the *Cofradía*'s correspondence in Tagalog which were captured with them, may still exist in the archive which houses the papers of the Franciscan friars of Tayabas. If they are ever found, they ought to provide material for one of the very few "inside histories" of a *cofradía* or any other kind of popular proto-political movement which have ever been written.

Next day, both the priest and the *gobernadorcillo* reported these developments to the Governor, Joaquín Ortega, a 26-year-old military officer of apparently liberal leanings. Ortega replied that the functionaries of Lucban had exceeded their authority, that any activities of a religious brotherhood were matters of concern to the ecclesiastical authorities only, and that they should release the unfortunate *cofrades* without delay.

Father Sancho was presumably anxious to clear himself of responsibility for the fact that the suspicious organization had gotten so firm a footing in his parish and with his tacit connivance. His letters show him at exceedingly great pains to awaken the authorities to the danger which the *Cofradía* represented, and are undoubtedly full of exaggeration—but they are invaluable sources of information nevertheless. The priest complained that the membership of the group was growing rapidly as a result of the Governor's leniency (certainly less of a factor in fact than the hostile attitude of the Church!). The leaders, certain of eventual recognition by the authorities, were threatening anyone who got in their way. Those who withdrew from membership were treated with public

<sup>27</sup> Montero y Vidal, 37-8; Sancho, p. 2-3.

<sup>28</sup> Sancho, p. 14.

disdain by the *cofrades*, and sometimes made to fear bodily harm. He pointed out that “all of our revolution have had their origins in these secret night meetings” and insisted (although he neglected to cite any specific statement in evidence) that the captured letters from Apolinario revealed clearly their subversive intentions. In the fall of 1840, the Bishop had issued an order of excommunication against the *cofrades*, which Father Sancho had posted in Tagalog in all the barrios of Lucban — but they continued collecting their monthly dues from several hundreds or even thousands of people. Apolinario had decreed that no local leader would share in his “ultimate victory” if he failed to fulfill his quota of new memberships.<sup>29</sup>

The two most serious infractions from Sancho’s point of view seem to have been the collection of dues (at one *real* a month, *three times* as much as the peasants normally gave to the Church), and the arrogation of priestly prerogatives. The fund-raising seemed to him to be a violation even of civil law, and he pointed out that the Cofradía was collecting even more than the outrageous monthly *real* by levying fines of as much as 12 *reales* (1.5 pesos) for infractions of its many rules. Brother Apolinario was promising grace and indulgences to his followers as if he were an ordained priest, and claiming that non-members would be denied entrance to Heaven.<sup>30</sup> Its was a serious enough charge, moreover, that the Cofradía represented 500 or more like-minded people who were meeting secretly and without priestly supervision.

Governor Ortega finally acceded to the curate’s insistent requests by instructing the *gobernadorcillo* of Lucban to cooperate in stamping out the Cofradía. Early in 1841, in view of the hostility of both the priest and the *gobernadorcillo*, the Brotherhood transferred its monthly meetings to Majayjay, just across the border in Laguna province. Father Sancho informed the priest there (an extremely unpopular figure for his abuses of the privilege of recruiting labor service without pay),<sup>31</sup> and both curates continued to press for decisive intervention by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities. The meetings nevertheless continued to be held in Majayjay for several months, until the order came from Manila that the Cofradía was to be suppressed and its leaders arrested.

Then, on September 19, 1841, the priest and *gobernadorcillo* of Majayjay made a raid on an evening meeting like the one carried out the previous year in Lucban. The *cofrades* seem to have been warned in advance by some of the Filipino constables who were employed for the purpose, and most of them got away — but the raiders did capture several leaders, and a second lot of correspondence which was sufficient to bring Octavio de San Jorge, his parents and several others to trial. One of the

<sup>29</sup> Sancho, pp. 4-18, 69.

<sup>30</sup> Sancho, pp. 8-11, 64-65, 71.

<sup>31</sup> Palazón, p. 133.

letters revealed Apolinario's hiding-place in Manila, and the government moved promptly to have him arrested there.<sup>32</sup>

The situation was coming to a head, and it was unfortunate from the government's point of view that Governor Ortega chose those very days to make a trip to Manila. He neglected to round up the local leaders of the *Cofradía* before he left, and committed the serious political mistake of leaving the government of the province in the hands of a Filipino assistant whose loyalty to Spain could not be counted on in the circumstances. This was the *gobernadorcillo* of Tayabas, whose wife was a member of the *Cofradía*, and who was himself apparently not energetic in his opposition to it. The military contingent in the province, of which the *gobernadorcillo* took charge, consisted in a few dozen Filipino soldiers without battle experience.

At this propitious moment Apolinario, who had managed to avoid the police in Manila, escaped from the capital and came by boat at night to the town of Bay. There he was met by an armed group of the principal leaders of the *Cofradía*, now also outlaws fleeing for their lives. Their first order of business was to find a place at which to gather the faithful for a *novenario*—nine days of prayer and religious purification with which to brace themselves for the approaching conflict. Rather than risk travelling through Majayjay and Lucban where their enemies were prepared for them, they made a forced march around the western slopes of Mt. San Cristóbal through San Pablo, Tiaong and Sariaya and appeared on October 21, 1841 at the barrio of Isabang near Tayabas.<sup>33</sup> The *Cofradía* was successful in:

communicating this fact with incredible speed, and with the prestige of the Founder drawing a large number of people of all sexes, ages and conditions, converting that solitary place within a few hours into a large and bustling encampment.<sup>34</sup>

The number of people who assembled in the first couple of days was about 3,000—including perhaps 2,000 men armed with lances and a few rifles. Within a week, the number seems to have doubled.<sup>35</sup>

Many of the faithful gathered at Isabang were women, the most "fanatical" of Apolinario's followers, of whom it was said later that they had been given the task of crucifying all the Spaniards who fell into their hands when the rebellion was victorious. Many of the men there had been recruited by their wives, and the story was told of one man, not a member, who had to go to the camp to beg his wife and family to return home with him—and was barely able to escape with his children. These rumors were written down after the fact, and may

<sup>32</sup> Sancho, pp. 12-14.

<sup>33</sup> Matta; Govantes, p. 379; Sancho, pp. 15-19.

<sup>34</sup> Sancho, pp. 55-6.

<sup>35</sup> Matta.

have been entirely unfounded. The unquestioned reality behind them is, however, astonishing enough—that an apparently innocuous association of local Catholic laymen's groups was transformed into a militant rebel army by a process which took place on such short notice as to be almost spontaneous.

Manong Pule's objective seems to have been to occupy the town of Tayabas and hold his *novenario* in the church there. To this end, he opened negotiations with the *gobernadorcillo* and acting governor. The transfer might have been arranged peacefully and quickly, given the size of the rebel force, had it not been for the vigorous opposition of the leading citizens of the town (who were afraid of looting) and of the parish priest, the same man who had forwarded the Bishops's orders to Lucban the year before. This staunch defender of the status quo refused to hear of any negotiations with the rebels, and assured the *gobernadorcillo* that the central government was bound to take military measures promptly to suppress such an unlawful gathering. Somehow, the *gobernadorcillo* managed to persuade Apolinario to refrain from attacking immediately and wait until the proper preparations could be made for the entry of the *cofrades*.<sup>36</sup>

Returning from Manila on October 22nd, Governor Ortega was informed of these happenings and hastened to Tayabas to pull together a small army of constables and some *cabezas de barangay* who happened to be present with a contingent of *polo* laborers. While preparing for the defense of the town, he sent the *cofrades* an offer of amnesty if they would disband immediately. Apolinario, encouraged by his initial success in mobilizing supporters, refused. Ortega was then obliged to attack. On the 23rd, he went forth with some three hundred men to find the more numerous rebels full of enthusiasm for a fight. Firing some shots from small cannon in an effort to frighten them away, he succeeded only in terrifying his own troops — some of whom returned hastily to Tayabas while others went over to the rebels. The Governor was left alone on the field, where the *cofrades* captured and killed him, stripped his body of weapons and insignia, and refused to give him Christian burial. To guarantee that Ortega would not be returned to the town and buried, it was said that they had left his body in the care of a party of pagan Aetas (Negritos) who had come down from the mountain to join the fray.<sup>37</sup>

Victorious in the first skirmish, Apolinario and his followers withdrew to a more strategic location at a place called Alitao — a large open field between two rivers in the forested country up against the base of Mt. San Cristobal. There they fortified themselves behind a double palisade in which they placed the cannon captured from Ortega's party.

<sup>36</sup> Montero y Vidal, pp. 40-41.

<sup>37</sup> Sancho, pp. 19-26; Montero y Vidal, pp. 41-3.

The field was criss-crossed with hastily dug canals to provide water to every location and make it difficult to march across. In the center, they built a large palm-thatched chapel of bamboo, the inside walls of which were hung with colorful hangings and religious paintings, where Manong Pule presided over the “mysterious prayer sessions and ceremonies” of the *novenario*. The Leader was installed in a small house beside the chapel, where he spent his time in “luxurious” retirement, jealously protected by an honor guard of trusted followers and served by a group of “good-looking young girls, married and single, who took turns looking after his every need and pleasure.” He allowed himself to be seen by the faithful, whose huts were spread out on either side of his own, only at certain times of day, at which he would hold court with great ceremony. No one, not even his principal lieutenant, a man called Purgatorio who was charged with preparing the defense of the place, could see him without prior permission.<sup>38</sup>

When news of the death of Governor Ortega reached the Governor of Laguna, he dispatched the few dozen soldiers at his disposal and sent an urgent request to Manila for a proper military expedition to put down the insurrection. The troops from Laguna reached Tayabas with great difficulty on the 26th; it was the middle of the rainy season, and the roads were almost impassable. The rebels saw them arrive from the higher ground of Alitao, but made no move against such a pitiful force. Another small group arrived the same day, and the reinforcements met with the community leaders of the provincial capital to plan for some kind of a defense against the attack they were sure was forthcoming. They rounded up the terrorized inhabitants, established watches and sent a party to reconnoiter the rebel encampment. In the meantime, the military commander of the province, who had been ill for the several crucial days previous, was named interim Governor. A message from Manila informed him that 300 troops were on their way over the mountains, while another large force would come around by sea to land in Pagbilao, and so cut off any possible route of escape to the rebels.

The commander offered a second amnesty to the *cofrades* (all but Apolinario and his principal *cabecillas*), promising the complete destruction of anyone who failed to take advantage of it. He had the decree published in Tagalog, sent to the camp at Alitao and posted in all the towns of the vicinity. Manong Pule read this document aloud in his camp amid general laughter, and then scratched it up and burned it public. He replied that he was ready for the Spaniards, and that his followers were spoiling for a fight. In the meantime, the government forces were reinforced by peasant volunteers from the region who

<sup>38</sup> Sancho, pp. 38-39, 54. Matta notes that the reference to pretty girls in attendance on Apolinario was only a rumor.



were not members of the Cofradia and who seem to have been anxious at the apparent breakdown of law and order.<sup>39</sup>

The soldiers were ready for battle on the 31st, and moved out to Alitao that night "along roads they had to travel single file with mud up to their waists." At dawn they were attacked by the *cofrades*, waving a red flag (instead of the white one which had been displayed at the entrance to their camp), and fighting "with more vigor and enthusiasm than military know-how and prudence." It later emerged that they had been convinced by the leadership of the Cofradía that bullets would not harm them, and that in the heat of the battle Apolinario would cause the earth to open and swallow the enemy forces. Within a short time, the rebels were driven back into their camp, where they defended themselves stubbornly. At a crucial moment, they were joined by a party of Aetas from the mountain, who contributed substantially to the struggle by showering the Spaniards with a steady rain of spears and arrows.<sup>40</sup>

This participation of contingents of Negrito tribesmen in the rebellion is one of the fascinating and unexplained aspects of the story. No evidence has appeared of any proselytizing by Apolinario's followers among the Aetas, and the traditional relationship between the lowland "civilized" rice farmers and the pagan mountain people of the Philippines — occasional aggression, mutual distrust and limited trade — would seem not to be readily conducive to such an alliance.<sup>41</sup> On the other hand, lowland rebels taking refuge in the mountains might be forced to come to terms with the "aborigines", as happened with the Magindanao Moros of the Cotabato Valley when they were forced into intimate contact with the Tiruray tribesmen after the Spanish conquest of the 1860's.<sup>42</sup> A hypothesis to explain the Negrito participation is that the groups on Mt. San Cristóbal learned of the revolt through their trade contacts in Lucban, and simply decided to come down and join the fun of trouncing the Spaniards. Whatever the cause, the result was a curious combination of "primary" with "secondary" resistance to the colonial regime, and a rare instance of the participation of a "primitive" people in the struggles of the peasant people which has displaced them.

<sup>39</sup> Matta.

<sup>40</sup> Sancho, pp. 26-48. Belief in their miraculous invulnerability has been a common characteristic of "primitive rebels" all over the world. For several earlier Philippine examples of it, see Murillo Velarde, *passim*.

<sup>41</sup> Plasencia, p. 195, observes that when any 16th-century Aeta died, the rest of the tribe considered it their duty to kill a lowlander in compensation — and would dispatch the first innocent passer-by they came across. The Negritos with whom he was acquainted were presumably the ancestors of the very groups who joined forces with the Cofradía, since Plasencia's missionary career was spent just across the mountain in Laguna province.

<sup>42</sup> Christopher Lutz, unpublished paper. Madison, 1969.

At length, the rebel palisades were breached and the soldiers entered the camp with fixed bayonets, followed by cavalry swinging sabers. The *cofrades* defended the ground house by house, particularly those charged with protecting Apolinario's person — who died to a man defending the empty house from which the Leader had managed to escape. After four hours of combat, several hundred rebels were dead (there is no record of the government casualties), and many more (including a majority of women and children) were taken prisoner. The remainder were able to escape into the forests up the side of the mountain, assisted by a terrible thunderstorm which broke at the critical moment. The Spaniards did not pursue them, for fear of ambushes in the forest, and spent the night on the field harrassed at intervals by groups of Aetas and *cofrades*. Next morning, they returned to Tayabas with the prisoners, released the women and children and shot most of the men. The rebellion of ten days' duration had been entirely suppressed.<sup>43</sup>

Manong Pule spent the night after the battle alone in the forest. The surviving *cofrades* were apparently disgusted with him because he had failed to provide the promised miracle of the opening of the earth. Purgatorio was said to have broken into his retreat at the height of the battle, threatening to kill him on the spot if he did not intervene. Next morning, Apolinario set out for the house of one of his ex-followers in Sariaya. When he got there, the owner went out ostensibly to get something to eat, and returned with four other erstwhile *cofrades* who captured Apolinario, tied him up, and delivered him to the local police. On November 3rd he was taken to Tayabas, interrogated, and sentenced summarily to be shot the following morning. It was reported that he had "revealed plans and named the persons whose blind instrument he had been," made his last confession to a priest, and then gone to his execution in a dignified manner without signs of repentance.<sup>44</sup> His body was dismembered, in keeping with ancient Spanish colonial practice, and parts of its displayed in the villages of the province for several months afterward as a macabre warning to others.<sup>45</sup>

The effort to explain and "justify" the Tayabas rebellion by relating it causally to subsequent events in the movement toward Philippine independence runs into serious difficulties. The rebellion was taken very seriously by the government in its own day. In the secret reports to Madrid prepared by Sinibaldo de Mas y Sans in 1842 and Juan Manuel de la Matta in 1834, it figures prominently as a symptom of grave political and social unrest. Mas goes as far as to say that had it spread to other provinces, the colonial government might have been toppled

<sup>43</sup> Sancho, pp. 39-48.

<sup>44</sup> Sancho, pp. 48-55.

<sup>45</sup> Sturtevant, "Philippine Social Structure..." p. 117.

in a week.<sup>46</sup> But the threat did not materialize, and the rule of the Spaniards was secure for another half-century.

As a result of Apolinario's revelations to the military tribunal, the Creole businessman Domingo de Rojas was sent to jail and died there. Later, he was absolved by the courts of any responsibility in the affair.<sup>47</sup> The three lawyers who had taken the Brotherhood's case to the Audiencia were also brought to trial.<sup>48</sup> So far, no historian seems to have looked into the records of the judicial inquiries into the operations and relationships of the Cofradía in Manila, or the trials of the leaders arrested before the rebellion. Those documents would almost certainly provide material for an interesting chapter in the protohistory of the Independence Movement, but it is unlikely that they would open a trail leading straight onward to the Cavite martyrs or the Katipunan.

The news of the revolts and of Apolinario's execution caused much grumbling among the soldiers of a regiment from Tayabas garrisoned at Malate near Manila, which included relatives of some of the rebels killed at Alitao. Under the leadership of a Sergeant Samaniego, these troops mutinied in January of 1843, killed some European officers and marched on to the Santiago Fortress in the capital — where they were easily defeated by the loyal troops from other provinces.<sup>49</sup> Samaniego and the other leaders were executed, and their brief rebellion seems to have had no more immediate repercussions than the movements in Tayabas. Having taken place 14 months after the defeat at Alitao, moreover, it cannot be explained entirely as a direct result of Apolinario's revolt.

An effort has been made in the 20th century to establish the Tayabas rebellion as the direct antecedent of a series of curious non-conformist sect movements in different parts of the Islands which have been given the name of *Colorum*. According to this version, the survivors of Alitao took refuge in the forested slopes of Mts. San Cristóbal and Banahao where they established a peaceful New Jerusalem which was tolerated or ignored by the colonial authorities during the remainder of the Spanish period. The members gave picturesque biblical names to the rocks and caves, streams and waterfalls of their mountain haven, and after a few years were able to support themselves on the alms left by pilgrims from all over Luzon. They called each other "brother" and "sister," and their standard salutation was "Ave María Purísima,"

<sup>46</sup> Sinibaldo de Mas y Sans, *Informe sobre el estado de las Islas Filipinas en 1842. III: Política Interior*. (Manila, 1963), *passim*; and Juan Manuel de la Matta, "Matta's Report, 1843," in B&R 52, pp. 91-111, *passim*.

<sup>47</sup> Govantes, p. 381. This author defends Domingo de Rojas with the argument that he was "rich and honorable" and a good Spaniard, the victim of Apolinario's calumnies — which to a modern student is less than satisfactory evidence that he was not an active supporter of the Cofradía.

<sup>48</sup> Matta, "Relación. . ."

<sup>49</sup> Govantes, 379-80; Zaide, p. 365; Matta "Report," pp. 91-93.

to which the reply was “Sin pecado concebida” (conceived without sin). The name *Colorum*, first applied to this sect, was apparently derived from a corruption of the liturgical phrase, “per omnia secula seculorum.” Pilgrims to Mt. San Cristóbal are assumed to have spread the cult to other areas, where it established itself under other names, e.g. the Guardia de Honor of Pangasinan and neighboring areas of northern Luzon, which played a major role in the (counter-revolutionary) mobilization of the peasants at the time of the 1896 Revolution.<sup>50</sup>

Fascinating though this possibility is, the connection is altogether tenuous. The several 20th-century “Colorum” outbreaks have no clear-cut identification with the *Colorums* of Mt. San Cristobal — most of them took place on other islands — and they differ widely in specific ideologies and purposes. David Sturtevant accepted the connection in the dissertation cited previously, but in a recent article on the Guardia de Honor makes no mention of it. The Guardia, as he describes it, had its origin in the work of Dominican friars in Pangasinan some years later than the revolt in Tayabas.<sup>51</sup> Whatever the facts in the case maybe, the American writer who reported the amazing continuity in folk tradition offers no documentation whatsoever for his assertions.<sup>52</sup>

For the present, therefore, it is a more fruitful exercise to discuss the Tayabas rebellion as an event of interest in itself than to try to establish it as a cause of later events. It is perhaps the isolated and mysterious character of the rebellion, together with a holdover from the Spanish historians’ view of Apolinario as a swindler and his followers as fanatics, which is responsible for the movement’s having been slighted in books of Philippine history. In the context of a search for the “origins of national independence,” the Tayabas rebellion must seem embarrassingly futile and “irrational.”

What follows is an effort to analyze and explain the Cofradía de San José and its revolt in ways which are suggested by the growing modern literature on “primitive rebels” among peasant and indigenous populations in other colonial areas of the world. It is no part of my purpose to contribute to the general theoretical discussion of such movements; for that reason, I will for the most part avoid using the jargon or referring in detail to the conceptual frameworks advanced by particular writers. The “theoretical” section of the list of sources at the end of the paper lists the writings which have been most helpful to me in understanding the rebellion in Tayabas.

Perhaps the most important thing to be said about the Cofradía de San José is that it was a genuine movement. It was a conscious

<sup>50</sup> Robert G. Woods, “The Strange Story of the Colorum Sect,” *Asia* 32 (1932), pp. 450-53.

<sup>51</sup> David Sturtevant, “Guardia de Honor: Revitalization within the Revolution”, *Asian Studies* (Manila) 4, 2 (1966), pp. 342-52.

<sup>52</sup> Woods, *passim*.

and purposeful effort by a group of Filipinos to recapture from the Spaniard the initiative in shaping the pattern of life and the direction of social change in the country. It achieved a board membership, integrating people from many different communities who had not previously been associated in any joint undertaking. It developed an organizational structure, with efficient communications between its hierarchical levels and between local units. It survived over an extended period of time, and it commanded a great intensity of commitment in its members. It was not a spontaneous or inexplicable outburst of passions; neither was it the result of a conspiracy of urban agitators.

Such a movement could only occur among a people subject to severe deprivation — a people chronically frustrated in the effort to achieve what it thought of as the normal satisfactions of life. A thorough study of the *Cofradía de San José* will have to take account of the nature of that deprivation for the peasants of Laguna and Tayabas in the early 19th century. What can be suggested on the basis of what we know about life for people of low socio-economic status in those areas of the colony is that the deprivation was not a matter of absolute starvation, or of extreme and unpredictable violence at the hands of the authorities. Rather, it must have been a chronic experience of humiliation and of discouragement from the practice of traditional customs, combined with exasperation at having to pay heavy taxes and labor dues to a government which made itself felt principally by imposing economic restrictions. A factor may have been the growth of the economic power of the Chinese *mestizos*; another, the increasing arbitrariness and a morality of the country clergy. The element of frustration in these disabilities was undoubtedly more important than the element of physical suffering. The peasantry sensed the inadequacy of its traditional procedures and frames of reference for dealing effectively with the changing colonial society to which it was subject (for coming to live more comfortably within it), and was prepared to seek a new “way.”

In such circumstances, what was required for a movement to get underway was a leader who could articulate the problems of the mass and propose the beginnings of a dignified solution to them. We need know no more about Apolinario de la Cruz than is known today, to assert that he was such a person, and that he was able to attract and mobilize supporters because he preached a convincing message of redemption to the Tagalog peasantry. The doctrine was a primitive one in the sense that it was not based on a “scientific” understanding of the social system and the root causes of the dissatisfactions of the people, and that it sought an escape from deprivation in separateness and religious purification rather than in political action. But it may be characterized as proto-political rather than as a political, because it derived from a determination to bring about the kind of a change in

the conditions of life which in the long run could only be achieved by political means. There is no reason to suppose that had the movement survived and spread, its leadership would not have responded to the need for a more secular and developmental program of action.

The religious character of the movement was a strength, rather than a weakness. It was its very other-worldliness which gave it organizational and revolutionary potential. The peasants were politically helpless and had no experience of politics. There was no area other than religious activity in which they could express the creative impulse to determine the quality and conditions of their own lives. A religious organization might be tolerated, moreover, in an authoritarian society which had no place for popular secular organizations of any kind. The religious mode facilitated communication between leaders and followers, and allowed the creation of new forms of authority, new statuses, new avenues of mobility, new definitions of legitimacy — a “practice run” in organization to build the basis for a viable movement. It was also a bridge between past and future, on which traditional behavior could be experienced in new contexts, and old ideas invested with new meanings.

The Spanish commentators saw the *Cofradía* as an exotic, aberrant and disruptive phenomenon, which they could explain only as a result of the manipulation of an ignorant and fanatical peasantry by a self-seeking agitator. From the perspective of at least a few thousand peasants in *Tayabas*, it was a convincing and liberating alternative to a painful existence and an opportunity to join the throng of the followers of a true prophet. It was the difference in attitude between those hostile to change and those receptive to it. Had *Apolinario's* teachings been exotic to the peasants, they would not have followed him. Had he not helped people to live more satisfying lives they would not have continued to support him in defiance of a decree of excommunication and the active opposition of their priests and *gobernadorcillos*.

In the autonomous stage of its development, when the *Cofradía* was able to function without interference from the authorities, the indications are that it grew steadily and functioned “rationally.” Its organization and activities were directed to the pursuit of the limited goal of creating within the Church a satisfactory environment for religious expression, free of the prejudices and restrictive presence of foreigners, and in which a Filipino leadership could function without handicaps. It avoided the kinds of confrontation with the vested interests from which it could not hope to emerge unscathed. By the middle of 1840, however, under increasing pressure from the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, the movement seems to have begun to conceive broader goals. What these were with regard to specific institutions in society (the peninsular clergy, the tribute and forced labor systems,

the Chinese business interests, etc.) is not yet known, but, the mood was clearly one of defiance rather than withdrawal. Very possibly, the *cofrades* were moving in the direction of political opposition. As things turned out, there was no time to formulate a program.

The explosion and rapid elimination of the Cofradía was the result not of Apolinario's policies, but of an extreme outside provocation and an apocalyptic response. Within a matter of a few weeks the leaders, who had been confident of obtaining official recognition for their organization and presumably looked forward to institutionalization and steady growth, became hunted outlaws. The situation in southern Tayabas and Laguna (where in some municipalities their followers must have been the majority of the population) seemed propitious for making the kind of a stand from which they could demand recognition. They underestimated the military power of the government, and they were greatly encouraged by the numbers of people who flocked to the camps at Isabang and Alitao. The millenarian vision of a God concerned for the safety and prosperity of the Tagalogs did the rest.

Mas y Sans and Matta agreed that the Tayabas rebellion had represented a serious threat to the government of the colony, and that had the *cofrades* chosen to split up and spread out into the provinces rather than attempting an ill-timed revolt, they might have been successful. But they were mistaken. The fundamental determination to recapture the initiative in social change was present with the followers of Apolinario de la Cruz, as was the capacity to organize and proselytize. But the mode of understanding reality was still only proto-political; it was magical as well as instrumental. When the power of a State which the Brothers only half understood and could not conceive of replacing was deployed against them, their only recourse was supernatural. The magic failed; the prophet lost his power, and there was not yet a program and a broad-based, indoctrinated apostolate which could survive him. The next leader of the people would have to start again from the beginning.

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a document of particular interest because it is dated just 17 years before the outbreak of the revolt.

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- . "Noticias que compendiosamente dio el M.R.P. cura del Pueblo de Lucbán a la capitania de estas islas, relativas a las fanáticas operaciones de Apolinario de la Cruz, natural de él y ex-donado en el convento hospitalario de N.P.S. Juan de Dios en Mania." Ms. in Newberry Library, Chicago (Ayer Collection, Shelf 1411). These two documents are copies of the correspondence between the curate of Lucban and the authorities concerning the Cofradía de San José during 1840 and 1841, including his final detailed report on the rebellion and its origins. Decidedly biased against the Cofradía, but nevertheless the most detailed available source of information about it.

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