# SOME REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE COFRADIA DE SAN JOSE AS A PHILIPPINE RELIGIOUS UPRISING

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IN HIS ARTICLE ENTITLED "POLITICAL CONFLICT POTENTIAL, POLITICIZATION, and the Peasantry in the Underdeveloped Countries," [1] Donald Hindley has offered some thoughts concerning the politicization process, several of which may be applied to instances of peasant unrest in the history of the Philippines.[2] He begins with the premise that the common political characteristics shared by all peasant groups is an exclusion from political power; and, that "political conflict potential" is likewise present in all peasant societies, growing both within the group, and between the group and other sectors of the larger society. "The level or degree of conflict potential is a product of the interplay between tension producers and tension reducers to be found in the geographical, socio-cultural, and political characteristics of peasant society." [3] The history of the Spanish colonization in the Philippines is dotted with the physical manifestations—revolts, massacres, insurrections, and assassinations—which represent the actualization of this "conflict potential". Hindley's model may thus represent a basic formula applicable to the study of this aspect of Philippine history. However, it is the intention of this paper to discuss a rather more specific realm of "conflict actualization" in the Philippines, and that is the phenomenon of so-called "religious uprisings," and the contributing factors thereof, i.e., "tension producers" and "tension reducers". Furthermore, since the potential scope of such a discussion would carry far beyond the limits of the present discourse, I will contain my comments to pre-1850 Philippine history, briefly sketching some "joys and sorrows" in the Spanish-colonial marriage of church and state, super-impose the example of the Cofradia de San Jose

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[1] Donald Hindley, "Political Conflict Potential, Politicization, and the Peasantry in the Underdeveloped Countries," *Asian Studies,* Vol. III, No. 3 (December, 1965), pp. 470-489.

[2] The writer recognizes that there are serious limitations inherent to incorporating Hindley's terminology outside, or separate from, the actual context of his arguments. Nonetheless, because the actual terms are rather succinct, and because I have attempted to consistently use the same terms at various points in the narrative, the reader should be afforded a reasonable understanding of the terms without having to read Hindley's article in preparation. Furthermore, the arguments I have attempted to present should not be invalidated on the basis of a weakness in Hindley's terms, but rather in this writer's juxtapositioning of them inappropriately within the scope of this paper. The reader who finds the terms awkward or confusing should refer to Hindley's article for additional explanation.

[3] Hindley, *op. cit.,* p 472.

upon a glimpse into Philippine "religious uprisings," and finally attempt to suggest some valid generalizations and implications of the Cofradia de San Jose in the context of Hindley's useful terminologies.

The Spanish colonial enterprise in the Philippines was, not surprisingly, a venture having several goals. On behalf of the church, the effort was to Christianize the "heathen" Indios, and there seems some doubt that the terms "Christianize" and "civilize" were differentiated in the eyes of the colonizers. Economic exploitation served as the more mundane aspect of colonization, for not only did Spanish sovereignty in the Philippines mean a source of new products and raw materials for the Spanish economy, but the strategic position of this Pacific colony was of critical importance in the development of the lucrative galleon trade. Furthermore, with the growing competition for Asian resources and markets, the opportunity provided by control of the islands for military advantage was certainly a contributing factor in justifying the project—however unsuccessful this particular aspect might have been. Finally, an important self-interest of the Regular clergy, in the name of the Roman Church, was the potential for converts awaiting on the China mainland, and the Philippines served as the theoretical stepping-off place—though again, this objective was never to truly "flower".

It has been pointed out that "a striking feature of Spanish Imperialism was the inseparable union of the church and state. Although both retained a vigorous amount of autonomy, the two institutions were inextricably interdependent. Spanish imperialism was not only theocratic; it was also profoundly bureaucratic." [4] Indeed, it is naive if not illegitimate to comprehend the effect of Spanish culture on the Philippine society without first recognizing the theocratic elements which pervaded Spanish imperialism. The Spanish colonial machine could ill-afford to be powered by a significant military outlay; but the church was ready and willing to extend its services beyond "the saving of souls" and could well draw upon its experiences both in Spain and in the Spanish colonies of America. The friars were motivated by a deeper commitment than short-tenured government officials and military personnel, and were, consequently, those who stayed longest in the colony, learned the language of the Indios, and often took up residence in the remote areas far removed from the bureaucratic headquarters of Manila or Cebu.

> Since the Spanish religious were, in the great majority of "doctrinas", the only colonial officials who were willing to take up permanent residence with the natives, it was thought necessary for the good government of the colony to keep them there. And, as a matter of fact, the mere presence of these zealous missionaries and thoroughly loyal subjects in regions far from the capital dis-

[4] John Leddy Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses,* 1565-1700 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959), p. 6.

pensed with the expense and effort, which might otherwise have been necessary, of maintaining large armed forces for the purpose of policing the colony.[5]

There were four institutions—among a many and varied assortment—that are pertinent to a discussion of the question of church and state cooperation in the Philippines and, the later question of the actualization of the "conflict potential" as evidenced in the example of the Cofradia de San Jose.

The "Patronato Real" was the agreement "by which the Roman Pontiff (by the bull 'Universalis ecclesiae'), granted to Ferdinand and his successors on the throne of Spain the exclusive right: (1) to erect or to permit the erection of all churches in the Spanish colonies; and (2) to present suitable candidates for colonial bishoprics, abbacies, canonries, and other ecclesiastical benefices."[6] Thus, with a mandate from both Pontiff and king, the Spanish friar was not long in becoming the embodiment of Spanish sovereignty in the Philippines, as he had previously done in the American colonies. On all levels of civil administration the clergy occupied positions of power and were seldom out-maneuvered by the government officials who recognized "how indispensable the regular clergy had become not only to the religious life but even to the administration of the colony."[7] And while the Spanish missionary received his stipend from the encomendero (in later times the provincial administrator), the Spanish authorities were seldom successful in using this theoretical position of power against the parish priest that frequently represented the most viable, if not only, provincial representative of Spanish authority.

In return for services rendered by a Spaniard who contributed to the " 'pacification' and settlement of a 'heathen' country"[8] the king of Spain granted an area of jurisdiction called an "Encomienda". This public office holder or "encomendero", had a two-fold job description. First, he was empowered to execute the functions of tax-collection and military protection of those within his jurisdiction. Second, he was supposedly responsible for the religious education of the natives under his authority, in preparation for the anticipated conversion process which was undertaken by the parish priest—if and when such a visitation could be arranged. While the function of tax-collecting was generally more successful than the disbursement of religious-education diplomas, this system nevertheless placed the clergy in direct relationship with the secular officials of the government.

Recognizing the physical obstacles of a widely-scattered Filipino population, and the traditional agrarian pattern of subsistence farming with consequent lack of trading centers, the Spaniards instituted a further measure

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[5] Horacio de la Costa, S.J., "Development of the Native Clergy," *Studies in Philippine Church History,* ed. Gerald H. Anderson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1968), p. 73.

[6] *Ibid.,* p. 69.

[7] *Ibid.,* p. 55.

[8] Teodoro A. Agoncillo, and Milagros C. Guerrero, *History of the Filipino People* (Quezon City: Malaya Books, 1970), p. 85.

of consolidation which had been found useful in earlier Latin American colonial experience. This method consisted of "congregating" or "reducing" the natives into towns or villages, often enticing Indios who might be reluctant to break their traditional ties with the secluded life by the use of fiestas and ceremonies that were invitingly rich in exotic content. "The ceremonials, processions, liturgical music, theatrical presentations, dances and, above all, the fiestas which the friars introduced, related very well to the traditional Filipino fondness for pageantry, drama, music, color, and ritual feasting."[9] Most Indios continued to resist this colonization method for several reasons. The native was geared to a subsistence economy as preferable to the Spanish demands for "surplus". Tradition demanded that most farmers stay close to the land in order to hunt and fish in supplement to the production of crops. Furthermore, there was a strong sentimental attachment that accompanied the land and homes of the peasant. In spite of this resistance, the friars persisted and eventually there grew up many small communities which served as centers for worship and commerce which led to the increased economic and spiritual exploitative power placed in the hands of the all-too-willing parish priest.

Where this method of "reduction" was not found successful, another institution, the cofraternity or sodality, was introduced. A medieval Spanish phenomenon which had undergone some development and modification in the Indian parishes of Spanish-colonial America, these voluntary associations of laymen and laywomen were intended to provide opportunities for acts of piety and performance of charity. While the original conception of the cofraternity had provided for a wide range of mutual-aid benefits for its membership, in the Philippines the associations were expected to offer "a certain amount of religious idealism and devotional life. . . in the absence of priests and sacramental celebrations."[10] The Jesuits seemed particularly successful in using

> their sodalities as instruments to consolidate Christianization. The members performed two acts of charity. The first was to visit the sick and the dying to urge them to receive the sacraments and to persuade the infidels to request baptism. The purpose of these visits was to discourage the ill from appealing to clandestine pagan priests for consolation. The other act of charity was for members to attend funerals. The presence of sodality members, it was hoped, might discourage ritual drinking, a custom which the clergy was anxious to suppress.[11]

A weakness of this system emerged in the more isolated places where the tendency for the "unshepherded folk" was to increasingly introduce traditional folk religious beliefs into the outward vestings of the Catholic ritual practiced in conjunction with the cofraternity.[12]

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[9] Peter G. Gowing, *Island Under the Cross* (Manila: National Council of Churches in the Philippines, 1967), p. 54.

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

[11] Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

[12] Gowing, *loc. cit.*

It must be emphasized that while these institutions were intended to circumvent or modify the traditional social institutions to the end that the "conflict potential" would be controlled if not totally erased through the "civilization" process, the ultimate effect of the methodology was quite different. Teodoro Agoncillo has commented that

> the weakening of native political authority and the subsequent assimilation of many native ruling chieftains into the colonial bureaucracy left the natives with little or no real leadership . . . The incorporation into Christianity of certain debilitating aspects of pre-colonial superstitions and the manipulation of the new religion by a strong friar class to assure the entrenchment of Spanish power in the Philippines discouraged or inhibited resistance to Spanish rule and fostered docility and resignation to the social order established by the conquerors.[13]

While instances of open opposition to the oppressed condition of the peasants (the "actualization" of the "political conflict potential" in Hindley's model), were frequent and widely experienced, each outbreak was normally suppressed with blind vengeance.

> In certain instances the brutality with which these uprisings were quelled benumbed the natives into passiveness and sullen apathy. Thus in every century of the 'ancient regime' until the Philippine Revolution of 1896, Spanish colonial policy produced a chronic state of alternating lethargy and rebelliousness among the people.[14]

Since the friar usually represented the dual identity of sacred and secular authority, his mere presence symbolized for the peasant the root cause of the latter's oppressed social condition, and thus the parish priest was often the target of the peasants frustrated wrath. An obvious contributing factor—and an overt manifestation of the friar's racial and cultural prejudice, coupled with his fear of losing a dominant position in the colonial milieu—was the evident lack of a native clergy that might have been capable of better interpreting the Catholic faith in terms relevant to the Filipino culture. While it was the recorded policy of the officials in Spain that a native clergy be developed, the regulars in the colony were considerably more resistant.[15] In addition to the occupation by a large percentage of friars in direct administration of government agencies and positions, the church cooperated with the state by: (1) providing advice and collaboration in matters regarding civil administration of justice and political missons, and (2) instituting social service institutions such as hospitals, colleges, and orphanages.[16] Yet, the colonial administrtion's policy was consistently one of perpetuating the regular's position in the parish rather than allowing either the "seculars" or

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[13] Agoncillo, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

[14] *Ibid.*

[15] For the purposes of this paper, a discussion of the development of "native clergy" would be inappropriate; see H. de la Costa, *op. cit.*, pp. 65-104, or, Phelan, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

[16] H. de la Costa, "Episcopal Jurisdiction in the Philippines During the Spanish Regime," *op. cit.*, p. 46.

native clergy access to those responsibilities which would have meant the loss of the government's natural ally. This policy was aptly stated by Governor Sarrio in a memorandum to the King of Spain in 1787, when he wrote:

> a second consideration which has decided me not to remove the religious from the 'doctrinas' is that, even if the 'indios' and the Chinese 'mestizos' possessed all the necessary qualifications (for administering them), it would never conduce to the advantage of the state and the royal service of Your Majesty to hand over to them all the parishes. The experience of more than two centuries has shown that all the wars, rebellions, and uprisings that have broken out, the religious priests were the ones who contributed most to the pacification of the malcontents.[17]

It would be an exercise in over-simplification to suggest that any of the myriad of violent uprisings during the Spanish colonization process were "purely" conditioned by "religious" considerations. The infinite complexity of forces which operated in forming the context out of which each uprising occurred included socio-economic, political, personal, and ecclesiastical grievances. While the clergy were often the overt target of insurrections, the covert forces at work were more often the actual cause for outbursts of violence; and because the church had accepted with little hesitation the mandate of "Hispanizing" as well as "Christianizing" the Filipino, it was natural that the church would provide an obvious vulnerability in the colonial framework. Again, because the clergy were often called upon by the civil authorities not only to function in commercial, administrative and judicial matters, but also in pacifying the underlying tensions and frustrations of the peasant masses, the parish priest personified the evil against which the peasant wished to strike a blow. It is not surprising, then, that the peasants eventually began to agitate for meaningful religious institutions that would replace the incomprehensible dichotomy between the beauty and solemnity of a Catholic liturgy, and the ugliness and violence which characterized many of those who represented Catholicism. Agoncillo has put it this way:

> Disenchantment with Christianity was disseminated by the missionaries, the real precepts and meaning of which the converts never fully understood, and hatred for many priests, who used the church not for spiritual and charitable purposes but to entrench Spanish power in the colony, impelled some Filipinos to found another religion under native supervision. Movements initiated toward this goal—in reality rebellions with religious understones—usually resulted in the murder of priests and the sacking of churches.[18]

While it was true that many peasants readily found fulfillment of sorts—though perhaps a more realistic term would be "enchantment"—in the Catholic forms of ritual and celebration, it was another question whether the peasant would be willing to tolerate the inconsistencies he observed between the welcomed pomp, ceremony and mysticism of the faith, with the equally

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[17] Emma H. Blair and James A. Robertson, *The Philippine Islands:* 1493-1898 (Cleveland: A. H. Clark Co., 1903-1907), III, p. 33.

[18] Agoncillo, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

intolerable oppression which the institutionalized faith perpetuated. Going back to the Hindley model, it would seem that the degree of "conflict potential" was decreased by the mysteries and symbolism of the faith; but, that the ultimate claims of the institutional church for the body as well as soul of the peasant was, in the long run, a "tension producer" which only increased the "conflict potential". Cults or sects which harkened back to the pre-Spanish deities and mysticism in their essence, and the cofraternities became alternatives as "tension reducing" institutions for the peasants in place of the inadequate Catholic and hispanic structures. The consequences of such adaptations and adjustments, however, often proved to be the material for "religious uprisings".

Among the most thoroughly documented instances of this type of insurrection occurring in the pre-modern Philippines are included the Igorot uprising in 1601,[19] the revolts of Bohol and Leyte in 1621 and 1622 respectively,[20] the Cagayan Valley rebellion of 1625 and 1627,[21] the Oton (Panay) insurrection of 1663,[22] and the protracted resistance movement of Dagohoy from 1744 until 1828.[23] While each of these examples, and many more, have unique characteristics growing out of the particular grievances addressed and the particular response initiated by the colonial authorities, several common characteristics are noteworthy.

The Filipino response to the oppressive conditions were frequently instigated by the personal charisma of a person or family having particular grievances with the local authorities. In addition to high tariffs and taxation, these personal grievances might take the form of reaction to a priest's incompetence or corruption, or the deep-rooted resentment by a native chief over his loss of power to the parish priest or local civil administrator. Generally, the instigator would only have to publicize the wrongs done to him in order to gather interest from the neighboring families and towns; then, often using the vehicle of nativistic ceremonies, it seemed a fairly easy step to encourage his followers in overcoming their fears of the Spaniards and in joining the insurrection. Holding of secret meetings and establishing hidden forest fortifications for worship and military purposes were refinements that developed in reaction to the colonizer's resistance to such "heresies".

The Spaniards generally feared the possibility of localized upheavals spreading into larger conflicts and were thus consistent in attempting to suppress any revolt or insurrection with utmost dispatch. In order to divide the Filipino leadership and create the greatest degree of disillusionment

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19 *Ibid.*
20 Blair and Robertson, *op. cit.*, XXXVIII, pp. 87-91.
21 Agoncillo, *loc. cit.*
22 Blair and Robertson, *op. cit.*, pp. 215-223.
23 Agoncillo, *op. cit.*, p. 119; and, Blair and Robertson, *op. cit.*, XXXXVIII, p. 147-148.

among potential as well as actual participants in the rebellion, the Spanish military would enlist native mercenaries, and play upon inter-barangay rivalries by soliciting and rewarding collaborators and informers. Moreover, the friars were encouraged to pressure the insurgents by offering amnesties, pardons, and absolutions; and in the event that these offerings were not sufficient, the harsher but usually more effective devices of threatening rebuke, interdiction, or excommunication were practiced. Finally, when the superior military strength of the Spanish forces coupled with the more imaginative styles of repression practiced by the parish priest had succeeded in routing whatever strength the insurgents could muster, the colonial authorities would generally kill the rebel leaders and whenever possible make the executions available for public display and consumption. As an additional mechanism for providing longer-range disillusionment and inter-unit tensions, the "followers" would usually be released by pardon or amnesty, and dispersed to form new communities where old ones had been destroyed, divided among existing but separate communities, or simply exiled to far-flung reaches of the archipelago.

With this admittedly sketchy treatment of a thoroughly complex social phenomenon, the specific example of the Cofradia de San Jose invites a closer examination.

The founder of the Cofradia, Apolinario de la Cruz, was born a native Tagalog in the year 1815, of a devout Catholic family residing in Lucban, Tayabas (Quezon Province). Under the influence of family encouragement, Apolinario traveled to Manila with the intention of training for the priesthood. Though there seems to be some question as to the exact circumstances that accompanied his frustrated aspirations to that vocation, it is agreed that he was discriminated against as a "native" and thus relegated to working as a "donne" of the Hospital de San Jose de Dios, and to reading theology without benefit of direction or encouragement. (Horacio de la Costa has stated that Apolinario's time was also spent as a "lay associate—'donado'—of the Brothers of St. John of God".)[24]

Returning to Lucban in 1840, by the middle of the year Apolinario had gathered a following among those either discontented with the Spanish rule or desiring a return to traditional religious practices, and he established the Cofradia de San Jose. The meetings were apparently first held in Lucban and later in the caves on Mount Banahaw, Laguna, with most adherents being drawn from the provinces of Tayabas, Laguna, and Batangas.

Only pure-blooded Indios were allowed membership, although both males and females had equal accessibility. Apolinario was proclaimed and baptized "King of the Tagalogs", and letters from him were read in the

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[24] Horacio de la Costa, S.J., *Readings in Philippine History: Selected Historical Texts Presented With a Commentary* (Manila: Bookmark, 1965), p. 214.

meetings. The association adapted the Catholic liturgy for its worship.[25] Additionally, atavism found its inclusion among the society's tenets; namely, that all members of the Cofradia were immune from danger if they wore "anting-antings" or "talismans", and should they face persecution, they would be aided by direct intervention from heaven.[26]

As de la Cruz's movement gained momentum, the friars grew jealous of his popularity and the civil officials feared that the brotherhood was seditious. The Spaniards, "believing that the Cofradia was in reality a political organization using religion merely as a blind, inaugurated a policy of persecution" to ward off its growth.[27] Nonetheless, de la Cruz continued to seek official recognition for his society but was turned down by both ecclesiastical and colonial authorities. The attention of a friar parish-priest was drawn to an anticipated meeting, and on October 19, 1840, a group of government troops surprised the gathering, and out of approximately 500 who were in attendance, 243 members were arrested, though Cruz managed to escape and began to secretly build the movement's membership.[28] The governor of Tayabas, believing the matter to be purely ecclesiastical in jurisdiction, initially ordered the release of prisoners. However, the persistence of the Lucban parish-priest family succeeded in having the provincial governor intervene, and thenceforth the meetings were secretly held in Majayjay, Laguna Province.[29] Thus, Apolinario de la Cruz was "unable to be in an order 'within' the church and was refused permission to found one 'outside' the church."[30] The brotherhood was banned; the leader harrassed; de la Cruz was declared a rebel; and the Cofradia was driven into secrecy.

The voice of the historical record is mute with regard to the development of the Cofradia between the mass arrest of October, 1840, and the next encounter nearly a full year later. On September 19, 1841, government troops once again interrupted a secret meeting, though due to a leaked warning of the impending raid, only a few were actually arrested. The provincial governor of Tayabas, Joaquin Ortega, was in Manila at this time, and a "native adherent or sympathizer" had been left in charge of the local government. "Through his acquiescence" members of the Cofradia gathered in "armed bands" at the village of Bay in Laguna, and were joined there by

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25 Milagros Guerrero, "The Colorum Uprising, 1924-1931," *Asian Studies*, Vol. V, No. 1, (April 1967), pp. 65 ff. Eventually the movement came to be known as "colorum", derived from the misprounciation of "saecula saeculorom", an ejaculation with which many Latin prayers end. The actual Latin phrase is "per omnia saecula saeculorom" or "world without end", was evidently a common element in the worship content of the Cofradia. Now, "colorum" is a term used in reference to any unlicensed property, particularly firearms.

26 Blair and Robertson, *op. cit.*, LII, pp. 92-93 (footnote).

27 Guerrero, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

28 Blair and Robertson, *loc. cit.*

29 *Ibid.*

30 Richard L. Deats, *Nationalism and Christianity in the Philippines* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1967), p. 34.

Apolinario as he fled from Manila.[31] (Though there seems to be no specific reference to his reason for fleeing Manila, the possibility exists that his flight might not be unrelated to Ortega's visit to that city.) From Bay, the group traveled to Igsaban, Tayabas. The Cofradia next sent a request to the local parish-priest, through the office of the sympathetic substitute-governor, "to be allowed to hold a 'novena' in the church"[32] and to occupy the city (presumably Igsaban).[33] The negotiations proved fruitless, however, and shortly thereupon the provincial governor returned (October 22), promptly ordering the peasant association to disperse immediately . . . an order which received an equally prompt negative reply.

On the following day, October 23, Ortega launched an attack of "over 300 men" against the gathered Cofradia.[34] De la Cruz's band, aided by a contingent of "Negrito archers",[35] withstood the attack, killing Governor Ortega in the process, and fled to Alitao "to celebrate a novena."[36] Leading a force composed of troops sent by Oraa (position and origin unknown by this writer), and joined by troops from the province of Tayabas, the government authorities pursued the fleeing insurgents, and once again attacked the rebel forces on November 1. After "a severe engagement the natives were defeated," and three days later the elusive de la Cruz was captured and killed.[37] However, the execution was not complete until the slain leader's "body was cut into pieces and hung at the crossroads of the town where

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[31] Blair and Robertson, *loc. cit.*

[32] It is interesting to note that at two points in the record of the Cofradia uprising, the insurgents intended or desired to have a novena offered. It might indicate the influence not only of Cruz's solid grounding in the Catholic tradition both at home and from his independent studies, but also might indicate the broader effect that the process of Catholicizing had accomplished on the members of the Cofradia, since they seemed to sincerely desire this institutionalized experience. On the other hand, as had happened in earlier precedents of "religious uprisings" when the outward vestiges of Catholic liturgy and symbolism had been infused with more traditional, "superstitious" content, the Cofradia may have realized the value of adopting the novena as a ceremonial opportunity to dedicate themselves to the struggle against the Spanish authorities by seeking some sort of divine ordinance and grace for the endeavor. This is substantiated by the fact that both allusions to the novena are coincidental to the arming of the Cofradia's membership or immediately after an armed confrontation. A less spectacular hypothesis would be that Cruz might have thought he could actually gain some legitimate recognition for his Cofradia through the device of celebrating a novena in a Catholic parish with a Catholic priest presiding, where he had earlier failed to gain legitimizing recognition using the bureaucratic channels of both church and state.

[33] Blair and Robertson, *loc. cit.*

[34] Another source suggests that the government force consisted of " '150 soldiers and accompanied by several friars'." Deats, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

[35] Though the record is not explicit at this point, that the record does indicate the Cofradia was able to muster support from this quarter might indicate that the movement had a potentially larger mass base from which to operate, and that the fears of the Spanish authorities may have been very well grounded.

[36] Blair and Robertson, *loc. cit.*

[37] *Ibid.*

the Cofradia de San Jose had been most popular."[38] This final touch of madness successfully demoralized any hopes for continued resistance by the Cofradia's membership, and the brotherhood disbanded. Apolinario de la Cruz, who had been popularly known as "Hermano Pule", thus became "the first Filipino martyr to the cause of religious liberty."[39]

The reactions expressed by the Spanish administrators to the event of the Tayabas upheaval reflected far more than simple indignation or condemnation over an isolated incident of violence. Their interpretation of the event was informed by no less than three centuries of conditioning in the colonial mentality, a mentality that had perpetuated the myth of Spanish superiority in civilization and religion—in the Spanish bureaucracy and the Catholic theocracy. Moreover, because the secular and sacred realms of existence had been so closely wedded, and because the church so frequently and pervasively offered the models for the institutional instruments of colonization, moralism and not empiricism was likely to provide a basis of critique for those uncomfortable, insecure, or threatening instances which had often stirred the otherwise placid waters of the prolonged colonial venture. Furthermore, external developments taking place in the early to mid-19th century, had already begun to create tensions and pressures for the Philippine colonizer. A quick glance at these developments will better prepare one to contextualize the Philippine colonizer's reflections in the aftermath to the Cofradia's eruption.

Beginning in 1834, the Spanish government opened a limited number of Philippine ports for the purpose of inviting foreign trade to better accommodate the raw-material market which had been nurtured in the islands. Even though the peasant could not reap the direct benefit from the newly-found prosperity this policy brought, the subsequent improvements in communications and transportation provided better contact between the common "tao". An equally important effect, however, was an increased disillusionment and frustration experienced by the peasant in the wake of a growing middle class which harvested the profits that remained beyond the reach of the masses.

A part of the cargo brought on the vehicle of increased trade was the product of liberal and revolutionary idealisms which had been conceived out of the French Revolution. The idea that the consent of the governed is the "acid test" for those who would govern began to lead toward two reflections: (1) the Spanish colonial effort might not have been truly "enlight-

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[38] Deats, *loc. cit.;* Matta's report of 1843 mentions that the incident of slaughtering the Cofradia's leadership resulted in the mutiny of the native soldiers from the Province of Tayabas who were quartered in Malate. This grew out, in part, from the traditional tactic used by the Spaniards of "divide and rule" which informed the method of recruiting troops from one province, but quartering them in an altogether different setting in order that they might not be involved in, or effected by, the events of their home province. This had been the case in previous uprisings; see Blair and Robertson, *op. cit.,* p. 101.

[39] Gregorio F. Zaide, *Philippine Political and Cultural History,* 2 vols., (Manila: Philippine Education Co., 1957), I, pp. 364 366.

ened" in its disregard for representation of the "natives", and (2) where the consent of the governed had not been recognized, but on the contrary, subverted, it then becomes the right of the governed to revolt against the established authority.[40]

The precursors of the "illustrado" class began to join intellectual forces with the increasing number of enlightened secular and "native" priests, giving academic recognition, if not approval, to the inflow of liberal European values and ideals. In addition, as the Spanish colonial machine began to have its belt tightened by the liberalized thinking which influenced the Iberian-based administrators, discussions centering on the possible withdrawal of Spanish control in the Archipelago were taken with increasing concern by the islands' administrators. A consequent tension thus developed between the various factions which either stood to lose or gain the political and economic spoils of colonization; and, the symbol of that tension was the threat of "emancipation".

Thus, a Spanish colonial administrator, Don Juan Manuel Matta, was compelled to comment in a report on the "Sedition of Apolinario", that only a few Spaniards had become influenced by the "ideas of emancipation;" and, that those few who had been so influenced, were operating out of self-interest for job security as a rule, and did not form any politically viable force. He went on to say:

> The ideas of emancipation have not yet contaminated, nor will they in a long time contaminate the Chinese, the Chinese mestizos, Spanish mestizos, or the natives, with the exception of a few of the 'secular clergy', as insignificant because of their ignorance and few resources as by their lack of influence among their countrymen.[41]

Continuing in the same vein of thinking, but with reference to the Philippine-born Spaniards who might have entertained thoughts of emancipation, he suggested that even they recognized that "political upheavals would be as fatal to themselves as to the Peninsulares."[42]

> The safety of all lies in the stability of the government; but it must be noted that events are daily more serious and that the discontent is spreading. Important reforms are necessary, but matters must be viewed only in the light of the public cause. 'Without virtues there can be no prestige; and, without prestige, it will also be impossible for the lesser part to dominate the great whole'. The conservation of the islands depends on 'radical reforms in their legislation, and peremptory measures of precaution and security'.[43]

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[40] Agoncillo, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

[41] *Ibid.*

[42] *Ibid.*

[43] *Ibid.;* Matta then listed a number of proposed reforms, among which two are of particular interest: " 'The suppression of the colleges of Santo Tomas, San Jose, and San Juan de Letran of this capital, and the conciliar seminaries of the bishopries, as perpetual nurseries of corruption, laziness, or subversive ideas, as contrary to the quiet and welfare of the villages as to peninsular interests;' " and, " '. . . that the attempt be made, in a truly impartial and foresighted system, to conciliate the minds of people, and to put an end to that pernicious mistrust that has been introduced

The stage had long been set, the atmosphere more recently created, and the action had transpired with frightening realism. All that seemed to remain was the epilogue, spoken by the antagonist. Following the first panic of the rebellion's aftermath, several creoles and mestizos of prominence in Manila "were arrested on suspicion of being implicated in it. Nothing was proved against them and they were eventually released; but the incident rankled, and served to make everyone a little more conscious of the widening gap between the peninsular Spaniards who held the reins of government and everyone else." [44]

A certain Consul Fabre, writing to the Spanish Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1842, gives a more impassioned commentary:

> Senor Roxas and the other creoles who were implicated in the Tayabas rebellion (a purely unpremeditated incident, in my opinion) have been released after seven months of preventive arrest. This whole affair, in which the Spanish government, in effect, told the creoles, 'You are our enemies', has added hatred to the jealousy that already existed between Spaniards and creoles. With an unbelievable lack of prudence, the Spaniards themselves encourage this hatred and jealousy by arrogantly assuming an attitude of supreme contempt towards the colonial-born. The authorities are at present seriously considering an ordinance which would permit only Spaniards to reside in the walled city, the creoles being sent out to live in the suburbs.[45]

The early reports that "whites" and "natives" might have collaborated in the Tayabas uprising indicated the fear by many Peninsulares that disenchanted creoles were being influenced by the talk about emancipation of the Philippines. Writing in 1842, Sinibaldo de Mas offered his analysis:

> In the recent occurance of Tayabas, when the first news of the insurrection arrived, I was at a gathering of several Spanish leaders, and they all believed, or at least suspected, that the whites of the country had compromised themselves in the matter. I maintained immediately, and obstinately, that they were mistaken in this, since however disloyal and intemperate one may fancy the Filipino-Spaniards, it was impossible for me to believe that it would ever enter their heads to arouse and arm the natives. In fact, the true spirit of the movement was soon known, and it was seen that the Filipino-Spaniards were as alarmed at the result (if not more so) as were the Europeans.[46]

After satisfying themselves to some degree that the bulwarks were still in place within the colonial administration, the obvious question returned to determine the causes which might have inspired such a rebellion as that witnessed in 1841. In his report dated February 25, 1843, Matta once again

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between the peninsular Spaniards and the sons of the country . . . which is so contrary to the common interest. The government must not be partial to any one class of men, for each class contains good men who should be rewarded and advanced, and bad men who should be closely watched and punished. Merit should be the only cause for advancement. . . .' "

[44] de la Costa, *loc. cit.*

[45] *Ibid.*, p. 215.

[46] Blair and Robertson, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

addressed himself to the uprising and suggested that the origin of the cofraternity consisted

> only in the character of the superstition which distinguished these natives, who most readily believe whatever is presented to them under the veil of religion and of the marvelous.[47]

Tracing the development of events further, he asserted that the Cofradia became "fanaticism" as soon as measures were taken against Apolinario de la Cruz and his "confreres"; and that it became a "declared sedition" when the "unfortunate Ortega attacked them in Igsaban with more valor than prudence;

> and that from that time presenting the appearance of a near insurrection in the neighboring provinces, it is to be feared that it would have been converted into a revolution capable of compromising the conservation of these important possessions had not the seditious ones been promptly defeated and severely punished in Alitao.[48]

In a second report issued during the same year (1843), Matta noted the fact that the Cofradia had only allowed pure-blooded natives membership, and thus, "the Spaniards have always professed to believe that the cofraternity was political in nature and that religious motives were merely a blind."[49] And yet, an admission suggesting that it was highly unlikely that political motives were originally intended by the Cofradia:

> The fact that Apolinario attempted to legalize the existence of the organization through both ecclesiastical and government centers, which was refused in both instances, indicates that the insurrection was forced by the Spaniards, through either fear or contempt.[50]

Within the space of less than two short years the Cofradia de San Jose was conceived, grew and developed its personality, attempted to express its identity in the larger society, was condemned, and killed. The available records of its history cannot be taken as conclusive evidence that the original intentions of the Cofradia or its founder, Apolinario de la Cruz, had gone beyond a desperate grasp of an expression of religious ideals, as an alternative to the established faith and institutions. On the other hand, the interpretation left us by those in the civil administration of the time—namely, that Cofradia had been little more than an extremist religious sect *used as a guise* for subversive political activity against the interests of the commonweal—may have a simplistic validity in the sense that the rubric out of which the Cofradia had operated seemed nothing more than religious "fanaticism", and the end results of its activities certainly revealed that the stakes for political power were, in the end, contested. Accepting the

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[47] *Ibid.*, p. 101.
[48] *Ibid.*
[49] *Ibid.*, p. 93.
[50] *Ibid.*

limitations of inadequate evidence and the factor of elapsed time, some reflections are pertinent.

The Cofradia was certainly rooted in the religious tradition of the Catholic church: Its leader had been raised in the faith, studied theology, and even aspired to the priesthood; the Cofradia's institutional legitimacy—the cofraternity or sodality—was not only acknowledged, but fostered by the Catholic church; the use of Catholic liturgical style and order was evident in the Cofradia's worship; and, in its attempts to receive blessing from the Church, it revealed a respect for the religious authority. So also, the Cofradia had characteristics that were in ways similar to its predecessory "religious uprisings" in the Philippines: Its leader was charismatic in his reactions to personal grievances with the established order; its "fanaticism" developed from a grounding in the traditional folk beliefs of the pre-Christianized society; its membership grew rather rapidly in response to shared sympathies; and there seemed to be more desire for a separate-but-equal existence, than a desire to revolutionize the predominant religion and its institutions. In these regards, then, the Cofradia's upheaval could well be classified within the spectrum of "religious uprisings".

On the social and economic levels the Cofradia shared some characteristics common to previous insurrections: Its leadership was motivated, in part, by reaction to discrimination and prejudice by the established orders of church and state; its membership was drawn from the disillusioned, disappointed, and disenfranchised of the exploited peasants in a colonial society; and, it was, in large measure, a reaction in response to the oppressive social institutions of the colonial Philippines—social institutions that were born out of the conjugal ties of the Catholic theocracy and Spanish bureaucracy. And in these characteristics, the Cofradia was in the tradition of the majority of insurrections, "religious" or otherwise, which had pre-dated it.

The response given the Cofradia's existence by the representatives of both church and state was as intolerant and vindictive in degree, as were the institutions of Christianization and hispanization narrow and oppressive in their dictations upon the social order. Moreover, this response betrayed an insecurity and fear of any social force—whether political or social—that threatened the position of advantage shared by the alien few who received the benefits of colonizer over colonized. Harkening back to Hindley's terminology, it is apparent that the "conflict potential" had risen to a high level as the result of the inadequate "tension reducing" functions of both church and state institutions; and, instead, these very institutions seemed to me "tension producing" as evidenced in the much-feared mobilization of a peasant group. Both Christianization and Hispanization apparently were inadequate in thoroughly deterring the forces of peasant rebellion, and regardless of its original intentions, or the factors contributing to its growth

and sophistication, the Cofradia was viewed with "political" significance by those whom it threatened.

The Spanish Catholic Church had identified itself with the oppression of the colonizer by association. While the civil administration and merchants of the colony were preoccupied with other matters, the friar undertook the task of pacification in order that the "kingdom of God" might be established.

> "Napoleon, in the early nineteenth century, had declared that 'the religious missions may be very useful to me in Asia, Africa, and America, and I (Napoleon) shall make them reconnoitre all the lands they visit. The sanctity of their dress will not only protect them but serve to conceal their political and commercial investigations.' The politicians of the nineteenth century saw nothing immoral in guaranteeing to missionaries the same right of unrestricted entry into Asian countries as they demanded for the products of their mills and factories. They were quite incapable of realising that the religion of the missionaries would not be viewed as an article of trade but as the Trojan horse of Western domination."[51]

Whether knowingly or not, the Spanish Regular had become identified by the oppressed peasant as simply a tool of his oppressor; and, therefore, an integral part of the target of the peasant's wrath.

The significance of the fact that an institution of tension-reduction—the cofraternity—was employed in reaction to the established order may be overly emphasized. However, it is indeed worthy of note that such an institution, whether wittingly or not, was in fact the vehicle of expression for the grievances which Apolinario and his followers wished to address. Equally important is the fact that the legitimate grievances as well as the root causes which had given rise to them, were muffled in the din of both physical and rhetorical reaction to the Tayabas uprising. In this regard, the Cofradia's existence may serve as prophetic witness of lessons not yet learned.

The politicization process, according to Hindley, involves the conversion of "conflict potential" into "actual conflict", and can be described in terms of a continuum of development having three stages: (a) "political nescience", or unquestioning political acquiescence, which would be characteristic of a truly colonized or subjugated people; (b) "political consciousness", which involves a level of belief that man—regardless of his social position—can potentially change his environmental condition through the implementation of political power; and (c) "political action", that operates on the two levels of a shared group consciousness and the employment of the established political institutions, in attaining the goals expressed by the group.[52]

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[51] Michael Edwards, *Asia in the European Age* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1961), p. 190.

[52] Hindley, *op. cit.*, pp. 481-488.

Though Hindley does not suggest it, I would submit that violent revolution is the natural outgrowth of the frustration of such political action that fails to fulfill its expressed aims. Whether the aims of the group are legitimate, and whether the results of its revolution are successful, are not definitive to an understanding of the process. However, it must be said, that the Cofradia de San Jose seems to have been unsuccessful in completing this politicization process, much less in attaining its desired freedom to exist and participate in the Philippine society of 1841. *But,* that the factors of a developng social consciousness, an idealism that man's social condition may be improved, and a belief that political action may be actualized and employed, were present and operating at one stage or another in the course of the Cofradia's brief history, should suggest implications for the later growth of Philippine nationalism's history—a history which the Cofradia de San Jose shares.

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