PRINCIPALES, ILUSTRADOS, INTELLECTUALS AND THE ORIGINAL CONCEPT OF A FILIPINO NATIONAL COMMUNITY*

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Introduction:

The concept of a Filipino national community was initially verbalized in the 1880's by the *ilustrados,* the educated elite which emerged from the *principalia* class in native society after the educational reforms of 1863. This concept was a function of native response to colonial and ecclesiastical domination as well as the result of an interaction between the different social classes in the colonial society. The Philippine Revolution of 1896 and 1898 aimed, among other things, to concretize the concept. This was unlike the earlier twenty-five or more major uprisings in the colony which were mainly based on personal, regional or sectarian motives.

This paper aims to present a conceptual framework to understand better how the concept of a Filipino national community was the inevitable consequence of certain historical events. It attempts to elicit further the significance of such events by relating them to each other. It will also indicate certain continuities in Philippine history, a hitherto neglected aspect, while belying an oft-repeated statement that the history of the Philippines during Spanish rule was mainly a history of the colonials.

I. Spanish Conquest and Consolidation

When the Spaniards came to the Philippines in 1565, they had the following major aims: the conversion of the natives to Christianity and the extension of the political domains and material interests of the Spanish monarch. What they found in Luzon, the Visayas and parts of Mindanao was a constellation of widely scattered settlements called *"barangays".* These consisted of families which numbered from a dozen to more than a hundred. Each *barangay* was normally under the leadership of a chief or *datu.* In the Philippine South, however, a few dozen barangays, due to Islamic influences, had already welded themselves under the leadership of a central authority known as *rajah* or *sultan.*

By means of superior technology and force and, in some cases, by friendly gestures and gifts to the chieftains, the majority of the *barangays* fell under Spanish sovereignty. But it was extremely difficult for a few hundred Spanish soldiers and friars to govern and indoctrinate about 750,000 natives who were living in dispersed communities. It consequently became imperative to resettle them into larger population centers called *"pueblos"* (towns). Thus were the

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beginnings of urbanization introduced in the Philippines to serve colonial interests. In effect, the *pueblos* became the effective centers for the religious indoctrination of the natives and to check on and ensure their loyalty.

The process of resettlement was not without great difficulties and suffering on the part of the natives. Many fled to the mountains or interior parts of the islands. Up to the eighteenth century, there were cases of Spanish friars trying to persuade such *remontados* to come down and settle in the *pueblos*. In any case, by the first quarter of the seventeenth century, *Filipinas,* the Spanish colony, had already scores of well-organized *pueblos* which at the same time constituted parish centers.

II. The *Principales*

The Spaniards did not do away with the old nobility. On the contrary, they strengthened the powers of the *datus* over their former followers. Whereas in pre-Hispanic times the *datus* held to their power mainly by consent and through constant consultation with the elders or heads of families, under the Spanish regime they became officials in the colonial bureaucracy. The *datus* of the *barangays* became the *cabezas de barangay* when the *barangay* was transformed into a subdivision unit of the *pueblo.* Up to 1785, the position of *cabeza* was hereditary. When some form of elections for a three-year term were later on instituted in certain municipalities, the position remained, in any case, among the families of the old nobles. By then, the eldest sons of the *cabezas* had acquired such vested claims that they often succeeded their fathers.

In the *pueblo,* the *cabezas* collectively formed the *principalia* or "principal men (of the town)". By the seventeenth century, they elected from among themselves the head of the *pueblo* who was called the *gobernadorcillo* or "little governor". Later on, another name was applied to him. This was *capitan municipal* or simply *capitan.* During the nineteenth century, the number of electors for the *gobernadorcillo* was limited to thirteen. Six of these had to be actual *cabezas,* six had to be ex-*gobernadorcillos* or ex-*cabezas,* and the last had to be the outgoing *gobernadorcillo.*[1] In brief, the position rotated among the members of a well-defined class. To be a *cabeza de barangay* or *gobernadorcillo* was the highest political position which a native or *indio* could aspire to.

In a restricted and administrative sense, the term *principalia* referred to all *cabezas* and *gobernadorcillos,* whether incumbent or not. In a more general and social sense, it denoted such officials as well as their families who also supplied the lower municipal offi-

[1]One of the earliest treatments on how the old chiefs or *datus* became *principales* as well as on their functions and powers is found in Antonio de Morga, "Events in the Philippines Islands", Blair and Robertson, *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898* (Cleveland, Ohio: 1903-1909), Volume XVI, pp. 155-157. For a convenient summary of the functions, powers and elections of *cabezas* during the middle part of the nineteenth century, see *ibid.,* Volume XVII, pp. 324-333.

cials. The *principalia* represented the upper crust of the native society.

As the *pueblos* grew, the number of *principales* and their retinue also increased. Sir John Bowring, who was in the Philippines in 1858-1859, wrote that the *principalia* who came to pay their respects to him in a town he visited numbered more than seventy persons.[2] At around this time there were at least 627 *pueblos* in the Philippines with a total population of about 3,345,790.[3]

It is difficult to guess whether it was originally intended by Spanish officialdom to let the *principalia* play a transitional role or not. In any case, for the most part of the Spanish rule it was not possible to do away with them. In fact, the *principalia* played an important role as the intermediary between Spanish officials and the bulk of the native inhabitants. It collaborated and cooperated with the Spanish government in implementing its ordinances while, at the same time, bringing to the ears of the government the difficulties of the people.[4] It was the *principalia* which prevented an undesirable or radical social dislocation in the lives of the natives, while maintaining a continuity with the pre-Hispanic political leadership. Actually, the *datus* and later on their descendants were the very tools utilized to persuade their followers to resettle in larger communities. The traditional prestige of their leaders as well as habits of obedience, led many natives to follow them to the *pueblos* where the former were often tempted with residential lots near the *plaza* or center of the *pueblo.*

The official duties of the *cabezas* were numerous. They collected the tribute for the government and the *encomenderos.*[5] They harnessed the manpower needed for the Spanish armed forces and for the forced labor (*polo).*[6] They had judicial functions, albeit limited. They were charged to cooperate with the parish priests in all matters pertaining to public worship and religious instruction and festivities. The *gobernadorcillo* was also empowered to temporarily occupy the position of the *alcalde mayor* (governor of the province) when vacant, although this position was strictly reserved for Spaniards.

But the *cabezas* had many privileges also. They, their wives, and eldest sons were exempted from the tribute. They were also exempted from the *polo* and could even grant exemptions to others. They could

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[2]John Bowring, *A Visit to the Philippine Islands* (Manila, Filipiniana Book Guild, Inc., 1963), p. 54.

[3]Census taken in 1833. Quoted from Paul P. de la Gironiere, *Twenty Years in the Philippines* (Manila: Filipiniana Book Build, 1962), pp. 203-204.

[4]Onofre D. Corpuz, *The Philippines (*New Jersey; Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 28.

[5]Every male native from 20 to 60 yars of age and every female from 25 to 60 years of age, or earlier if she married, had to pay tribute. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the tribute amounted to 8 *reales fuertes.* Chinese *mestizos* had to pay twice this amount. Spaniards, Spanish *mestizos,* and Europeans were exempted. In 1884, the tribute was replaced by a *cedula personal* which also served for identification purposes.

[6]In the first centuries of Spanish rule, every male native and Chinese *mestizo* from the age of 18 to 60 were liable to perform 40 days of work every year in communal projects like the building of churches, ships, bridges, roads, etc. In 1884, this was reduced to 15 days.

impose modest taxes to enable them to maintain the dignity of their office. Moreover, there were external symbols signifying their prestige. For example, they were entitled "Don". During Mass, they sat on the front rows. Their uniforms, top hats, tassels, canes, etc., enhanced their differences from the bulk of the native population.

The traditional prestige of the *principalia* which was due to their descent, official functions, and privileges provided them many opportunities for graft and corruption. For instance, they committed graft in the collection of tributes especially those in kind. In return for gifts or other personal favors, they often granted tax as well as *polo* exemptions. Some would even get part, if not all, of the wages of *polo* laborers. In the compulsory sale (*vandala)* of farm products to the colonial government, some *principales* would grant loans to farmers at interest—thus forcing the farmers to further depend on them.[7]

Some writers have commented that the *cabezas* and *gobernadorcillos* "did not count for much in the eyes of the Spanish colonial community" and that they often stood in fear of the Spanish friar serving as parish priest. Moreover, they were often taken advantage of by the Spanish *alcalde mayor* and other Spaniards. Nevertheless, these did not reduce the prestige of the *principalia* before their fellow natives.[8] There is a great deal of truth in these observations especially in the first two centuries of Spanish rule. But as the official functions of the *principalia* and their economic base increased in the next century, some of them would begin to evince actions which many Spaniards considered presumptuous or arrogant. Often, *principales* would hold meetings in the absence of the parish priest or even refuse to stand up in the presence of Spaniards.[9] They were out to maintain the dignity they believed was an integral part of their office. They did not hesitate to complain to the King or to the highest Spanish officials that they deserved more respect than what was actually accorded to them by Spanish parish priests and officials. In particular, the *principales* complained that they were not allowed to sit down in the presence of a Spanish friar and were often made to serve the friars at meals. Consequently, Spanish monarchs had to issue orders for *principales* to be accorded the respect due to them.[10] At bottom, a great deal of the attitude of the *principales* demonstrated that they still considered themselves the nobility of the country with vested rights due their ancestry and office. It was an attitude not entirely unaccom-

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[7]Comp. Robert R. Reed, *Hispanic Urbanization in the Philippines: A Study of the Impact of Church and State* (Manila: The University of Manila. 1967), p. 153. For a long list of the abuses and exactions of *cabezas,* see "Character and Influence of the Friars" from Volume II of Sinibaldo de Mas's *Informe sobre el estado de las Islas Filipinas en 1842* in Blair and Robertson, *op. cit.,* Volume XXVIII, pp. 248-252.

[8]Cf. O.D. Corpuz, *op. cit.,* p. 27.

[9]Sinibaldo de Mas, *Report on the Condition of the Philippines in 1842,* Secret Report (Manila: Historical Conservation Society, 1963), Volume III, pp. 157-158.

[10]Feodor Jagor, *Travels in the Philippines* (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1965), pp. 92-93.

panied with resentment towards an alien rule judged by them as intrusive as well as onerous at times.

III. *Principales,* Friars and Native Priests

One of the earliest avenues opened to members of the *principalia* families to further increase their power and prestige was through the priesthood. Nearly all of the first Christian missionaries who came to the Philippines were members of the regular or friar orders. Due to the chronic lack of Spanish secular priests, most of the parishes had to be administered by friars. The claim of the Manila Archbishop, and later on those of bishops, to visit the parishes under their jurisdiction was bitterly opposed by the friar parish priests who claimed they were subject not to the Archbishop but to their own superiors. Whenever the Archbishop insisted on his episcopal rights on visitation, many of the friars would threaten to abandon their parishes—a situation that would have created havoc in the religious indoctrination of the natives. Since Spanish secular priests proved hard to get by, the obvious solution to the above problem was to ordain native secular priests. The friars were not initially against the principle of having native priests, but they fiercely opposed letting native secular priests serve as parish priests. What was then the "visitation controversy", gave rise to the "secularization controversy".

The development of a native secular clergy faced many obstacles. Among these were: the division of the eccleciastical territory of the Philippines among definite religious orders; and the opposition of colonial officials to enforce even the half-hearted attempts of the home government to secularize the parishes since they often suspected native priests as not having much love for the mother country.[11] Some Archbishops, in their eagerness to immediately fill empty parishes, hastily ordained native secular priests. The fact was that it was often difficult for the native clergy, many of whom were poorly trained, to immediately take over the majority of the parishes.

The secularization controversy degenerated to such a low level that both friars and native priests started to accuse each other of greed, incompetence, immorality, etc. Some sympathizers of the friars' cause went as far as to remark that such was the eagerness of the Archbishop to have secular native priests ordained that even Manila rig drivers and cargomen were recruited to study for priesthood. However, this remark, possibly made in malicious humor, is not really true. According to the testimony of the Jesuit priest, Juan Delgado, written around 1751, all the natives studying for priesthood in the four colleges in Manila were sons of *principales* and not of those non-nobles who descended from the pre-Hispanic freemen or serfs. The *principales,* he asserted, had kept their noble status—something which the Spanish King could not take away from them even if he wanted to. Moreover, he continued, the *principales* and

[11]Horacio de la Costa. "The Development of the Native Clergy in the Philippines." ***Studies in Philippine Church History*** Ed. Gerald H. Anderson (Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1969), p. 104.

native priests were very much esteemed and respected by the native population.[12]

The candidates for the native clergy would normally originate from the families of the *principales.* This can be explained by the fact that the *principalia,* being the most aggressive and relatively most literate segment of the native population, would covet the position since it carried with it civil, economic, and religious power. Actually, the Spanish parish priest was a watchdog on the *principalia.* The latter was required to consult him on practically all official matters.

It was probably the powers vested on the parish priest that made it quite difficult for the friars to easily abandon their parishes to the extent that they had to vilify the character and competence of native priests to keep their posts. The powers and functions of parish priests were numerous and went beyond the purely religious ones. The testimony of Juan Villegas, a friar who had served as parish priest for about twenty years, before the Philippine Commission in 1900, revealed some of the actual powers and duties of the parish priest. According to Villegas, the parish priest had supervisory powers on education, taxation, and sanitation. He had responsibilities on the census and other statistics. He issued certificates of character and civil status. He had something to do in the drawing of lots for those who were to serve in the Army. He had to be present at the election for municipal offices and served as adviser to the municipal council. He was president of the prison board as well as member of the provincial board. He was a member of the board for the partitioning of Crown lands and often served as auditor at the provincial level, etc.[13] Although some of the above powers were relevant only in the nineteenth century, many others were found as far back as the early days of the conquest. In any case, the bulk of historical evidence points to the friar parish priest as the real ruler of the *pueblo.*

The extensive powers of the parish priest would have reduced the political powers of the *principalia* to a cipher unless either those of the parish priest were reduced or the parish priest came from its ranks. In effect, if the parish priest came from the families of the *principalia,* the *principales* would have almost fully controlled the *pueblo*, and their power over the bulk of the native population better secured. This would explain, to some extent, why colonial officials in general were not very much in favor of the secularization of parishes regardless of their possible lack of sympathy for friars.

Native priests bitterly complained that in spite of their increasing numbers the ratio of parishes held by them was very much smaller than they deserved. The distribution of the parishes were as follows:

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[12]Fr. Juan Delgado, S.J., *Historia General Sacroprofana, politica y natural de las Islas del Poniente llamadas Filipinas* (Manila: 1892), pp. 293-294.

[13]*U.S. Senate Document No. 190, 56th Congress, 2nd session, 1900-1901,* (Washington Printing Office: 1901) pp. 64-66.

Year	Regular	Secular
1750	427	142
1842	287 (487 ?)	198
1852	528	191
1870	611	181
1897-98	672	157

In 1870, out of 792 parishes (excluding 10 mission parishes of the Jesuits), 181 or 23% were under secular native priests. Whereas, the parishes under the friars averaged 6,000 each, those under the seculars averaged 4,500. In the 196 parishes controlled by the Augustinians, the average went as high as 10,000. In 1880, when the number of native priests rose up to 748, the number or proportion of parishes held by them did not increase but actually decreased. In 1898, there were 746 regular parishes, 105 mission parishes, and 116 missions, or 967 in all. Of this, 150 parishes, representing about one-seventh of the Christian population, were ministered by the secular clergy (nearly 100% natives).[14] The fact that the number of parishes under the native clergy had been reduced in proportion to those held by the friars can be explained by the fierce opposition of the friars and their support from colonial officials against the secularization of the parishes. That there were about 600 native priests in 1898 as against 825 in 1890 may signify that there were other alternative avenues, like the professions, attracting the ambitious sons of the *principales*.

In 1870, Gregorio Meliton Martinez, the Archbishop of Manila and a well-known sympathizer of the aspirations of the native clergy, wrote a lengthy letter to the Spanish Regent where he exposed what he believed constituted injustices to the native clergy and a concommittant increase of resentment against the friars. He warned that continued official support of the friars would transform the resentment of the native priests into an "anti-Spanish sentiment"—a sentiment that would eventually be shared by their parents, relatives, and finally by the "whole Filipino people, with whom they are in closer contact than are the regulars, with the result that the danger would assume a grave character." The Archbishop then noted that the conflict was rapidly assuming a racial tone.[15] True enough, in 1873, when three native priests were executed by the Spanish government for alleged complicity in a mutiny of native troops, their families and friends judged the execution as the result of a collusion of colonial officials and friars to do away with them because they were well known as champions of the native clergy and the secularization of the parishes. People began to call them "martyrs". Significant about the outcome of

[14]All the above figures on parishes and priests have been based on: James A. Le Roy, *The Americans in the Philippines: A History of the Conquest and First Years of Occupation, with an Introductory Account of the Spanish Rule*, (Boston and New York: 1914), Volume I, pp. 60-61; Jesus Ma. Cavanna y Manso, *Rizal and the Philippines of his Days* (Manila: 1957), pp. 127-130; and *U.S. Senate Document No. 112, 56th Congress, 2nd session*, p. 23.

[15]For the complete text of this letter, see Nicolas Zafra, *Readings in Philippine History* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1956), pp. 485-598.

the above mutiny was that many *principales* and priests were exiled from the Philippines on the charges that they were also involved. Being a native priest, regardless of the sincerity of his vocation, could make a person suspect of disloyalty to the government. The antagonism between the friars and the secular native clergy eventually transformed itself into a racial issue and then finally, a national one.[16] It cannot be overemphasized that the blocking of the aspirations and expectations of the native secular clergy also served to frustrate those of the *principalia* families from which they originated.

IV. *Principales*, Commerce, and Land

During pre-Hispanic times, agricultural lands were held in common. The *datus* supervised the planting, harvesting, and distribution of the products of the land. Forest products were accessible to anyone. In the first century of the Spanish conquest, there was no systematic plan to exploit the natural resources of the colony. Spaniards were even prohibited from owning landed estates in the provinces. The so-called *encomenderos* did not own land but only had the right to collect the tribute from certain well-defined territories. Most of the Spanish civilians lived in Manila where they speculated in the Galleon trade. However, even from the earliest times, friar corporations had began to take possession of large tracts of land especially in the provinces.

About the middle of the eighteenth century, farsighted Spanish officials commenced to recommend the expansion of trade with Asia and Europe, the exploitation of Philippine resources, the reformation of the Galleon trade, the settlement of Spaniards in the provinces for agricultural and trade purposes, and government expropriation of the landed estates of the friar corporations.[17]

In 1781, the Governor-General created an Economic Society to promote the cultivation of export products and the establishment of industries. The next year, the tobacco monopoly was instituted. This brought about some financial independence to the government and soon it became independent of the annual Mexican subsidy.

The ensuing abolition of the Galleon trade in 1815 as well as the severance of trade with Mexico due to the latter's independence in 1820, forced Manila authorities to liberalize some of its previous

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[16]Cf. Horacio de la Costa, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

[17]One of these officials was Francisco Leandro de Viana the royal fiscal at Manila. He wrote a lengthy memorial to the Spanish Court where he explained how the colony could support itself by the development of its natural resources, the creation of industries, the building of shipyards, the intensification of trade with other countries especially the neighboring ones, the increase of the tribute, etc. For the complete text see "Viana's Memorial of 1765", Blair and Robertson *op cit.*, Volume XLVIII, pp. 197-338. Another official was Simon de Anda y Salazar who also wrote a memorial to the Spanish King in 1768. In it he accommodated some of the ideas of Viana Simon de Anda who also recommended a systematic operation of mines, revision of commercial rules, and reforms in the Galleon trade. However, most of the memorial is concerned with the abuses of the friars. For the complete text see "Anda's Memorial, 1768", *ibid.* Volume L, pp. 137-190.

restrictive commercial policies. Spanish ports were opened to Philippine products and factories were officially authorized to be created. This was also a time coincident with the spread of the *laissez faire* policy in Western Europe. All these led to the opening of Manila officially as a free port in 1834 to European traders. Soon a few provincial ports were also opened to world trade. Residents were also allowed to trade in any European port and this served to boost commerce. In spite of government restrictions, however, trade progressively fell into private hands.

The acceleration of exports can be seen in the following figures: In 1831, hemp exports amounted to only about 346 tons. In 1837, it rose to 2,585 tons and in 1858, it rose up to 27,500 tons—two-thirds going to the United States. Also, in 1782, about 30,000 piculs of sugar were exported. This increased to 146,661 in 1840. It became 566,371 in 1854 and, in 1857, the amount rose to 714,059.[18] With an increase of exports (including tobacco, copra, coffee, and rice), many Spaniards and affluent natives began to invest in many of the foreign commercial firms.

Previously, as long as the agriculture of the colony generally remained on the subsistence level, serious agrarian troubles did not appear in the agricultural estates. However, it was during the beginnings of the export economy and much more later on during its acceleration that agrarian disputes began to become really serious. Among other reasons, like the increase of population and farm hands, this could imply that the ordinary tiller of the soil had come to feel that he also ought to be a beneficiary of the increased production of the land. This situation was mostly true in friar lands.

Although the Spaniards recognized the existence of communal land in the colony, they introduced alongside it the notion of private property as a source of wealth. As early as the seventeenth century, the *principales* and their relatives had already started to "assume the formal ownership of that portion of barangay land which their dependents ordinarily cultivated (as communal land)".[19] This tendency increased as the years went on. Agrarian troubles, especially on friar lands, had assumed such alarming proportions that the Spanish government started to seriously encourage the application for land titles—something the friars opposed. In 1880, the government tried to further push land registration; but this well-intentioned law only served to enable the *principales* to strengthen their economic base for they were in the best position to know more about the requirements of the law and take advantage of it. This action of the *principales* to get titles

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[18]Conrado Benitez, *Philippine Progress Prior to 1898* (Manila: Philippine Education Co., Inc., 1916), p. 70.

[19]John Leddy Phelan, *The Hispanization of the Philippines* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1959), p. 117. For cases of *principales* selling or donating former communal lands to Augustinian friars during the seventeenth century, see Nicholas P. Cushner, S.J., "Meysapan: The Formation and Social Effects of a Landed Estate." *Philippine Historical Review,* (Volume VI), 1973, pp. 153-156. Later on, in 1745, the tenants of Meysapan rose against the Augustinian owners claiming that the estate was their ancestral land and that they wanted it back. *Ibid.,* p. 164.

to many former *barangay* lands extended up to the eve of the Revolution of 1896. All these explain what happened to the descendants of the old *maharlika* or freemen and "serfs" of pre-Hispanic times. The majority of them progressively became tenants or sub-tenants in the lands where their ancestors once worked on.

The relative absence of agrarian troubles in *principalia*-owned lands can be partly explained by the fact that, unlike the friars who lived far from their lands which were left to the charge of impersonal administrators, the *principales* lived on or near their lands and had familial or at least familiar relations with their tenants. Actually, some *principales* had also ended up as tenants in friar lands, but they often contested the claimed ownership of the friars by asserting that the land once belonged to their ancestors as far back as the ancient days. In any case, the fact that *principales* had strengthened their economic base by the acquisition of land explains why they came to be often called "caciques".

The commercial prosperity of the colony brought about by increased production and the export economy did not directly benefit the common tiller of the soil. What ensued was that the *principales* became one of the major beneficiaries. They were now building better and more permanent houses; the most affluent of them also having well-furnished homes in Manila. Manila had now began to acquire progressively the characteristics of an urban and commercial center—improved roads and more bridges, better mail services, more commercial firms, increased government offices, additional courts, an expanding civil service, new printing presses, and so on. A rising middle class composed of Spaniards, *mestizos* (both Spanish and Chinese), and enterprising natives began to be noticeable. Many *principales* from the provinces started to visit Manila for business and other purposes. Their children went there, too, to get a better education. Soon, some of them would sail to Europe to further their studies.

V. *Principales* and *Ilustrados*

Coincident with the rising commercial prosperity came educational reforms. On December 20, 1863, a Royal decree provided for a system of compulsory primary education with free instruction for the poor and for the establishment of a normal school to graduate teachers for primary schools. Some of the reasons for the decree were: to propagate the Castilian language, to more effectively teach the Christian religion, and to raise the standard of civilization of the natives. Before 1863, the kind of primary education provided for the natives did not go beyond the parochial catechetical level.[20] Although there were colleges already opened to the natives who were studying for priesthood, there were, for all practical purposes, no chances for other natives to pursue higher education which was reserved

[20]Cf. Domingo Abella, "State of Higher Education in the Philippines to 1863—A Historical Appraisal", *Philippine Historical Review* (Volume I, No. 1), 1965, pp. 23 and 26.

mainly for Spaniards, and Spanish *mestizos* to some extent. Up to the 1860's, the most educated segment of the native population were the native secular priests.

The Royal decree of 1863 stipulated that every town was to have at least one school for primary education (Article 3). Attendance was to be compulsory although instruction to the poor was to be free (Article 4). Primary education was to include reading, writing, Christian doctrine, Castilian language and grammar, arithmetic, history of Spain, geography, practical agriculture, rules of courtesy, and vocal music. Primary schools fell under the supervision of parish priests while the normal school was to be managed by the Jesuits.[21]

Significant to note in the decree was that graduates of the normal school were to have certain privileges while exercising their profession. For example, they were exempted from forced labor, and if they had rendered services for 15 years, they were to be completely freed from it. Those who had taught for at least five years were privileged to be called *"principal"* (Article 12).[22] This means that they could vote for municipal officers or serve as such. Moreover, teachers with at least ten years experience were to be given opportunities to easily enter the civil service (Article 14).

The *gobernadorcillos* were charged to help in the implementation of the educational decree. For example, it became their duty to publicize the opening of classes, to issue certificates to those who could or could not pay, to see to students' attendance, and even to help in the giving of examinations. However, laws were also issued to prevent them from abusing their function in issuing certificates of poverty to students exempting them from paying the tuition fees.[23]

Whereas some Spaniards did not fear the strengthening of the *principalia* families through education, since they assumed that this class was allied to them, other Spaniards were optimistic that the emergence of an educated segment in native society would eventually displace the *principalia.* Obviously, the families of the *principales* were in the best position to take advantage of the decree; and opportunities to enter the normal school would generally be confined to them. In 1864, the normal school in Manila started to function. Apparently there were natives with enough educational background to enter it. The fact was that there were many native families who made it a point to teach literacy and other forms of education in their homes.[24] In time, more normal schools in the colony would be opened. Manila alone graduated an average of 60 *maestros* up to the end of the Spanish regime. Being a teacher was in some way an alternative to that of being

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[21]A copy of this educational decree is found in "Primary Education", Blair and Robertson, *op. cit.,* Volume XLVI, pp. 76-118.

[22]*Ibid.,* p. 83.

[23]This function is found in *ibid.,* p. 98. The parish priest could refuse to approve such certificates. See *ibid.,* p. 135.

[24]Cf. Vicente Barrantes, *Apuntes interesantes sobre las Islas Filipinas por un español* (Madrid: 1869), pp. 46-47.

a priest regarding education as well as holding a position of dignity and prestige.

In 1864, primary schools also started operating in many towns, especially those around Manila. In 1870, there were around 1,779 primary schools in the colony with an attendance of about 385,907 students of both sexes although less than three percent of the students had an adequate mastery of the Castilian language.[25] In this same year, there were 2,300 secondary students all over the colony. In Manila, there were 1,883 such students of which 1,421 were natives and *mestizos* and 462 were Spaniards (both *insular* and *peninsular).* Santo Tomas, the pontifical university in Manila, had 40 secondary students (all Spaniards) and 580 students enrolled in higher education.[26] It is probable that these students were mostly Spaniards, Spanish *mestizos,* and native priests.

In 1875, another Royal decree established a faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy in Santo Tomas, although selected courses in both fields were offered a few years earlier. In the next year, courses in notary public were offered. Consequently, natives who had been able to consistently take opportunities of the decree of 1863 and then studied in the colleges were able to enter the university. Out of this first batch, were men like Jose Rizal and Marcelo H. del Pilar, who initiated the movement for reforms in the colony.[27] A succeeding group consisted of Apolinario Mabini and Emilio Jacinto who were to play leading roles in the ensuing revolution.

Enemies of the friars asserted that the opening of professions to natives at the university level was designed by the friars to prevent the sons of well-to-do families from going abroad where they might be infected by liberal or anti-clerical ideas. In any case, the growing population of Manila and the increasing urbanization of the city made imperative the offering of certain professional courses.

The educational reforms as well as the opening of the professions to natives caused the emergence of the *ilustrados.* The fact that the *principales* had the best chances to get an education led ordinary natives to equate the term *ilustrado* with *principal.* However, in its more restricted and correct sense, the term *ilustrado* referred to a person who had a profession, spoke and wrote Castilian well, and had been educated in any of the colleges. Colloquially, the term as a collective did not denote any Spaniard, however cultured or educated he might have been.

The *ilustrados,* as can be seen, were the educated elite that emerged from the *principalia* class. As such they began to enjoy a special prestige among the native population. Thus, among the natives,

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[25]"Public Instruction", Blair and Robertson, *ibid.,* Volume XLV, pp. 299-300.

[26]Domingo Abella, *op. cit.,* Appendix A, p. 29.

[27]For example, Jose Rizal enrolled in Santo Tomas in 1877 for a medical career while Marcelo H. del Pilar finished his law in the same university in 1880. Graciano Lopez Jaena, another reformer, tried to work for a medical career in the same university at the time Rizal was there but was not accepted due to his lack of a Bachelor's degree.

prestige along educational lines had ceased being confined generally to the priests. The *ilustrados,* considering that many Spaniards in the colony were illiterate or uneducated, were able to demonstrate what achievements natives were capable of. They would soon verbalize the aspirations of the *principalia* for a greater share in determining the destiny of the colony.

VI. *Ilustrados* and Intellectuals

Educational and municipal reforms, the opening of Manila to world commerce, political changes in the mother country, the coming of Spaniards with liberal ideas, and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 dramatically lessened the intellectual and religious isolation of the Philippines. Political changes in Spain could not but affect events in the colony. The September Revolution of 1868 which enabled Spanish republicans to echo ideals of the French Revolution made it possible for Carlos Maria de la Torre (1869-71) to serve as Governor-General of the Philippines. Deeply imbued with republican ideals, he generated aspirations and expectations among native priests, the rising middle class in Manila, and Spaniards of like mind. The Spanish Republic of 1873-74, although short-lived, nevertheless made inevitable the accommodation of further liberal ideas in Spain's political and social structure. Thus the return of the Bourbons the next year did not endanger republican gains. Actually, the Spanish constitution of 1876 accommodated many liberal principles. Furthermore, not a few ministers, noted for republican sympathies, served in various ministries.

All the above events affected the self-image and role of the *principales* and their families. They welcomed municipal and educational reforms and increased facility to enter the civil service, for they stood to gain from them. The majority, in particular, wanted to have the colony assimilated by Spain so they could be considered Spanish citizens with the same rights and privileges as any Spaniard. But they desired at the same time a status superior to that of the Chinese. There was nothing revolutionary or ideological in their aspirations. However, they were, in effect, out to control as much as feasible the colonial bureaucracy or state machinery by virtue of their noble descent, the claim that they were the true *naturales,* and their presumed loyal services to Spain. Needless to say, such claims were not permitted to go uncontested and actually provoked a strong reaction on the part of local Spanish colonials and friars.

Spanish colonial officials feared that the strengthening of the *principalia* would eventually lead the colony to follow the way of the Spanish colonies in the Americas towards independence. Spanish friars feared the loss of their ancient privileges and predominance as well as the eventual disappearance of the religious motive in native society which they had worked so hard to nurture. Spaniards born in the Philippines (Filipinos, *creoles*) realized that their chances to hold political or civil positions would be lessened; they had already resented

the arrival of other Spaniards from the mother country as presenting the same danger. The fact was that the highest and choicest offices of the bureaucracy was often given to *peninsulares.*[28]

Opposition to an influx of *peninsulares* as well as rivalries between them and the *insulares* can be better appreciated in terms of the following figures. In 1864, there were 4,054 Spaniards. Of these, 500 were priests, 270 were businessmen and proprietors, and 3,280 were government officials, Army and Navy officials, etc.[29] In 1870, there were 3,823 *peninsulares* (1,000 priests, 1,000 members of the Armed forces, and 1,800 civil officials and others). The number of *creoles* and Spanish *mestizos* was 9,710.[30] In 1876, the number of Spaniards *(peninsulares* and *creoles)* doubled. Indeed, the *creoles* and their progeny would have liked to occupy most of the offices held by the *peninsulares* in the same manner that the families of the *principales* desired it for themselves. Obviously, too, the *peninsulares* and *insulares* would combine to prevent the natives from holding such coveted positions. The population of the Philippines in 1871, according to the *Guia Official,* had reached 5,682,012.

In the face of hostility to their aspirations, the *principalia,* especially those in the *pueblos* near Manila, often resorted to various tactics to asserting their rights while harassing the friars. For examples: a *gobernadorcillo* would be elected over the candidate of the friar parish priest; the *principalia* would refuse to allow its tax list of *cedulas personales* to be compared or checked with the parochial list; in religious festivities of the Chinese in Binondo, the *principales,* as civil officials, claimed precedence over the friars. In addition, the *principalia* demanded the right to supervise cemeteries. *Principales* would often issue *manifestos* favoring the retention of Spanish officials believed by them to be anti-clericals while boldly demanding the expulsion of friars. In a subtle gesture to contest friar parish priest

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[28]When the Spaniards came to the Philippines, they called the natives *"indios".* Later on this term was confined to the Christianized natives since the Muslims came to be called *"moros"* and the pagans *"infieles".* The term "Filipino" was reserved for Spaniards born in the Philippines who were also called *"creoles".* Spaniards who were born in Spain and came to the Philippines were simply called *"españoles"* or *"peninsulares".* Often to distinguish the Spaniard born in the Philippines from the *peninsular* the former was called *"insular".* However, around the middle of the nineteenth century, some Spanish writers had used the term "Filipino" to denote *"indios".* To avoid confusion, however, they made a distinction between *"españoles europeos"* and *"españoles filipinos",* the latter referring to the *creoles* or Spaniards born in the Philippines. In general, *indios* who went to study in Spain were called there "Filipinos" since it appeared that the term *"indio"* had acquired a derogatory connotation. However, during the Revolution in 1896, and even earlier, many educated *indios* had already started to call themselves "Filipinos", to the chagrin of some *españoles filipinos.*

The term *"mestizo",* without any qualification, referred to Chinese *mestizos* or Chinese half-breeds. When qualified as *mestizo de español,* it denoted Spanish half-breeds. When Jose Rizal was called *"mestizo"* in his trial in 1896, it referred to his Chinese ancestry and did not mean that he had a Spanish father. Rizal was also called an *indio.* By the beginning of this century, the term *mestizo* came to be technically confined to children who were half-white and half-Filipino. Colloquially, however, there were cases when the term was extended to refer also to any white person or one with strong European features.

[29]Edward Gaylore Bourne, "Historical Introduction", Blair and Robertson *op. cit.,* Volume I, p. 60.

[30]"Le Roy's Bibliograpnical Notes, *ibid.,* Volume LII, footnote, pp. 115-116.

supervision of schools, *principales* often volunteered their willingness to contribute to the establishment of schools—presumably to be under their direct control. In many ways, these demands and actions of the *principales* were based on certain interpretations of the laws. This led Spanish officials to suspect that they were being well-advised by recently graduated native lawyers.[31] In any case, for once *principales* had began to contest friar prerogatives in a more sophisticated and determined manner.

Friar retaliation and colonial repressive measures were severe. Any questioning of the *status quo* was often labelled as *filibusterismo* or subversion. Many scions of the best native families and Spanish *mestizos* left to study in Spain not only to escape harassment but also because they were not satisfied with the nature of instruction and the curricula in the colony. This steady stream became more noticeable in the early 1880's. Many of these students and others who joined them had a fair mixture of Chinese blood while a few had Spanish blood.[32] In Spain, they joined the colony of some exiles, professionals, and students who had gone there earlier. There, they were able to breathe in the relatively freer political atmosphere while having more access to political literature.

Initially, these *ilustrados* worked in a desultory manner when they exposed what they believed were wrong in the colony and suggested how to attain greater progress in its social and economic institutions. However, it would not be long when they would start organizing and coordinating their activities to generate the so-called Propaganda Movement, which was, in effect, a movement for reforms in the colony.

What the reformers voiced first of all was the assimilation of the colony to Spain or making it a province of Spain. This would have given the natives the same political rights enjoyed in Spain or at least it would have made the Spaniards and natives in the colony equal before the law. Some reformers postulated that equality before the law implied that all offices in the colonial bureaucracy (excepting those of the Governor-General and heads of the various ministries) were opened to anyone. Nevertheless, they suggested that this be made through a system of competitive examinations. They also asked for the change of the military regime into a civil one. This would have made more operative the enjoyment of civil rights. Representation of the Philippines in the Spanish Cortes was also demanded. This would have made it easier to voice the aspirations of the natives while exposing in

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[31]A narration of such harassments is found in John N. Schumacher. *The Propaganda Movement: 1880-1895* (Manila: Solidaridad Publishing House, 1973), pp. 96-114.

[32]The *principales* since the earliest times were strengthened by the blood of the thrifty Chinese. This enabled them to acquire the skills for entrepreneurship and industry in the urban areas. Some Chinese *mestizos* were able to become *principales*, possibly by virtue of the status of their mothers. The *principalia* was also strengthened by the blood of the prestigious Spaniards who started coming in relatively bigger numbers around the middle of the nineteenth century. With the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, more Spaniards came.

the mother country any violation of laws or rights. Another demand was for the secularization of the parishes and the expulsion of the friars, who, unlike the ever loyal natives, were charged as merely working for the interests of their religious corporations as against those of Spain. This charge was to do away with a clerical force which consistently opposed reforms in the colony while at the same time enabling natives to occupy the post of parish priest with all of its powers and privileges.

All these demands revealed that the *ilustrados* believed that they could hold their own against the Spaniards in intellectual matters and in holding important political as well as ecclesiastical positions. They were asserting that as *naturales* they had a right to have a more involved participation in the determination of the direction of their country. They were also claiming for a greater share in the economic and social benefits of the colony.

Spanish colonial officials and friars contended that the demand of the reformers did not truly represent the aspirations of the majority of the native population who were asserted as content with the *status quo.* The reformers were judged as ungrateful for it was the very education they had imbibed in the colonial regime that enabled them to demand a change in it. To belie the above contention, the reformers, through speeches, *manifestos,* articles and books tried to disseminate their ideas. A newspaper, *La Solidaridad,* was published in Spain. Many copies of the newspaper and other printed materials were smuggled to Manila where they were avidly read by discontented *principales,* native petty officials in the civil service, and members of a rising working class consisting of printers, petty clerks, artisans, etc. Many affluent *principales* as well as native priests supported the movement financially and even helped to distribute the printed materials. It should also be mentioned that the *ilustrados* in Spain were in close contact with, and even encouraged in their work by not a few Spanish officials and Masons. Many of the *ilustrados* joined Masonry as a means to get more sympathy from liberal thinkers who happened to be Masons. This organization could have led some *ilustrados* to become not only more anti-friar but anti-clerical as well. This, however, did not make them cease to voice the aspirations of the native secular clergy— for some time at least. Significant about some of the books and articles published by the *ilustrados* was their attempt to resurrect legends and other matters dealing with the Pre-Hispanic epoch. This, in an important manner, reflected pride on indigenous elements while consciously belying the assertion of friars that before the coming of the Spaniards, the natives were doomed to perdition and that there was nothing for them to be really proud of.

Crucial to note is that among the *ilustrados* there were a few who could be termed "intellectuals" in the exact sense of the word. Besides a profession, they had a well-grounded liberal education, and were good writers. They were the first to realize that in the historical stage the

Spaniards found themselves, they would not be able to consider the natives as persons that ought to or could be considered their equals. They concluded that since it was the essence of colonialism to have both exploiters and exploited, what they conceived as constituting the good life could never be realized in the colonial setup. The native intellectuals were the most sensitive to acts of humiliation and racial discrimination or prejudice. Comparing themselves with Spaniards with lesser intellectual accomplishments, they were frustrated when they were not given similar rights and courtesies as those towards the Spaniards in colonial society. They were thus led to conceive of an alternative community where what they believed to constitute the good life could be made operative. It was to be a community where man's potentiality for the development of his intellectual and moral virtues could be actualized, and where there was an absence of humiliation, exploitation, and special classes. The logic of such an alternative system was that it would eventually be independent.

The first intellectual to conceive and verbalize such an alternative system was Jose Rizal. In his two novels, the *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo,* he demonstrated, by means of well chosen characters, narration and analysis of certain social situations, that the Philippines under the structure of colonial and ecclesiastical dominance, could not really progress educationally, socially, economically, and morally. To him it was imperative to have the people slowly but surely develop a form of social consciousness with national overtones such that they would eventually form themselves into a national community where *national sentiment* (a concept akin to Rousseau's general will) would pervade. Although greatly influenced by many ideas of the French Revolution as well as the liberalism then found in Spain, he had to resurrect indigenous traditions, emphasize certain elements like a common racial ancestry and a history pre-dating the Spanish conquest. He believed that should the natives become more aware of their past history and racial ties, emancipate themselves further from individual and sectarian interests, cultivate a high degree of social consciousness, develop their native languages, and feel confident in their inner energies and appreciate more the products of their labor, while all the time distinguishing themselves from the Spaniards, they would eventually form themselves into a national community. It was a community which the Spaniards had to face eventually and grant political independence unless it was willing to face dire consequences. Before writing his novels, Rizal once wrote that what was wrong in the Philippines was that, there, "a man is only an individual; he is not member of a nation." What he implied here was that the individual became more significant and more capable of developing his potentialities in a social system that was national in character. The people, too, were not to be tools of other nations. They had to act in a corporate capacity and their gains were to be sought for along communal and not individual or partisan ends.

But Rizal did not stop with mere writing. He organized the *Liga Filipina* as a tool to hasten the emergence of a national community.[33] The national community was to be called "Filipinas" and to be owned by the natives who were now asserted to be the real Filipinos. Rizal's antagonists clearly saw that the success of his ideas would leave no place for Spaniards in Filipinas. They realized that the national community would finally erode the colonial system. Their attacks on him increased with the result that he and those who came to imbibe his ideas became further alienated from them colonial rulers.

Eventually, the intellectuals among the *ilustrados* had to fight the conservatism of the majority of the *principalia* while resenting those *principales* who were closely identified with the colonial regime. These intellectuals well perceived that there were *principales* merely interested in augmenting their privileges and powers if not eventually aspiring to inherit the colonial mantle. To such intellectuals, the substitution of an oppressive native dominance for a foreign one would not represent any improvement from both the human and moral point of view. In the same manner that they were against "economic and administrative caciquism", they would also be against native ecclesiastical dominance.[34] Thus the reform movement which initially begun as a movement in behalf of *principales* transformed itself into a movement in behalf of the whole people.

VII. Reformers, Revolutionaries, and *Principales*

The ideas of the reformers eventually seeped into the urban working class in Manila and Tondo. When the work of the reformers were then correctly seen to be doomed and the repressive measures of colonial officials and friars became increasingly unbearable, a new leadership from the above class emerged. Thus was the *Katipunan* association born with the aim of attaining a national community by revolution. Its founder, Andres Bonifacio (b. 1863) was a clerk in a foreign commercial firm. He was taught reading and writing at home and built himself up through self-study. Bonifacio and his advisers were deeply influenced by Rizal who was now seen by them as a man who had emancipated himself from a class bias and who had conceived of a national community along moral principles.

Because of its nativistic appeal and promise of a better future for the people, thousands in the provinces joined the *Katipunan.* Among these were members of messianic groups that were peasant-based, a common feature in Philippine history, who were just waiting for such an organization to appear.[35] The vague understanding of Spanish officials of the nature of such messianic groups, many members of which joined or at least sympathized with the *Katipunan,* led them to

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[33]A detailed analysis of Rizal's concept of a national community and how the *Liga* could serve as a tool to realize it, is found in the author's monograph, *Rizal's Concept of a Filipino Nation* (Quezon City; 1959).

[34]Cf. James A. Le Roy, *Philippine Life in Town and Country* (New York and London G.P. Putnam's Sons 1905), pp. 180-181.

[35]The works of David R. Sturtevant and Reynaldo C. Ileto offer deep insights into such messianic movements.

report varying estimates of *Katipunan* membership ranging from 100,000 to 400,000. *Principales* and native priests soon started joining it. Kinship or racial ties, patriotism, sheer desperation, hatred of Spaniards, wish for a better social system, or hope to profit from the revolutionary movement might all have entered into the total picture of membership.

When the actual uprising took place in 1896, many conservative *principales* as well as *ilustrados* recoiled in horror at the very thought of blood and violence. Nevertheless, some of them were arrested and even executed by Spaniards who never thought that a revolution could emanate from another yet humbler segment of the native population. Eventually, the leadership and organization of the revolution fell into the hands of the *principales.* An index to this was the Tejeros Assembly held on March 22, 1897, where revolutionary leaders met to form a new revolutionary government. Emilio Aguinaldo, who had studied in one of the colleges in Manila to become a teacher and who like his father had once served as *capitan municipal* in Cavite province, was selected President. Even the selection of Bonifacio as Director of the Interior was protested by a *principal* who haughtily asserted that "The position of Director of the Interior is very great and should not be occupied by one who is not a lawyer." He then suggested another person who has a law degree. The meeting was marred by factional squabbles and regional differences. The government it established officially replaced the *Katipunan.* Bonifacio, who had left the meeting angrily with his loyal followers, was eventually executed by orders of a military court controlled by the faction opposed to him.

It was through the intermediacy of other *principales* that Spanish government officials and leaders of the Revolution were able to ink the Pact of Biak-na-Bato in December 1897. In the resumption of the Revolution in 1898, the role of the *principales* became intimate and important. It was clearly seen by the revolutionary leaders that the struggle for independence had greater chances of success with the support of the *principales.* To gain legitimacy as well as support for the revolutionary government, it was essential for the municipal officials of different towns to ratify a previous declaration of independence. It is significant to note that the Revolutionary Congress, with an original number of nearly 90 members, which set out to frame a constitution for an independent Filipinas was composed of 40 lawyers, 16 physicians, 5 pharmacists, 2 engineers, one priest, with the rest consisting of businessmen and landowners. Many of the provisions of the constitution which was promulgated had reference to the sanctity of property.

When in 1898 the prospects for the success of the revolution was high, some affluent Manila *ilustrados* wanted to form a bank and take advantage of the revolutionary government. They were blocked by other *ilustrados* of relatively humbler origins like Apolinario Mabini who, like Rizal, was also an intellectual.

Many of the generals of the revolutionary army were either *ilustrados* or at least *principales.* However, as to be expected, the bulk of the revolutionary army was composed of the ordinary *tao*—most of them descendants of the once proud *maharlikas* or freemen who were now converted into tenants, sub-tenants or mere peasants. With the success of American arms against the revolution, many *principales,* lured by promises of offices in the new regime or to protect their properties and vested interests, accepted American sovereignty. Among them were former members of the Revolutionary Congress. All of these were happening while a guerrilla warfare supported by the peasantry and messianic groups increased in intensity. This warfare suggests that agrarian unrest has been a continuing part of a historical pattern in the Philippines even before the Revolution. It was the *principales* who cooperated with the Americans to reestablish law and order in the country. The majority of the members of the first National Assembly came from their ranks and they were the first to agitate for a peaceful movement for independence. All of these, nevertheless, reflected the assertion of native leadership on the part of a special segment of the native population.

The problem still facing the present national community that has come to be in the Philippines is whether it has within it the will, and the structure under a dedicated and emancipated leadership, to accommodate further many of the elements that characterized its original conception—elements referring to the intrinsic worth of an individual as such, the avoidance of all forms of exploitation, and the principle that the social and economic benefits of the nation ought to redound to the good of all and not solely to those of special classes.