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Elements of Philippine Politics: Two Views

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Review Articles

*Elements of Philippine Politics: Two Views**

INTRODUCTION

THE publication in 1960 of Almond and Coleman's, *The Politics of the Developing Areas* is generally regarded to have been a landmark in comparative politics. Coleman, in his concluding article in that noteworthy book, interestingly enough chose the Philippines among the various functional profiles of type political systems for the "category of political democracy."¹ A later book by Almond entitled *Comparative Politics* enlarged upon some of the broad theoretical considerations advanced in the early book,² and provided an analytical supplement to a whole series of country studies, under the joint editorship of Almond, Coleman and Lucien Pye. The series included a study of the Philippines by Jean Grossholtz in 1964, which is to be reviewed here. Grossholtz's book was probably the first to apply recently advanced behavioural theories, in particular the brand deve-

* LEADERS, FACTIONS AND PARTIES. *The Structure of Philippine Politics*, by Carl H. Landé. Yale University: Monograph Series No. 6, Southeast Asia Studies, 1965. 154 pp.

POLITICS IN THE PHILIPPINES: A Country Study, by Jean Grossholtz. Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1964. 293 pp.

¹ G. Almond, *The Politics of the Developing Areas*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960.

² G. Almond, *Comparative Politics*. Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1966.

loped by Almond known as the *structural-functionalist* approach, to Philippine politics.

About the same time, Yale University, under the influence of R. A. Dahl, (whose book, *Who Governs*, was also a landmark in behavioral studies of politics and local government³) developed a Southeast Asia Studies programme. Under this programme which is directed by K. J. Pelger and H. J. Benda (the latter, a well known behavioral scientist), Carl Landé brought out his *Structure of Philippine Politics*.

LEADERS, FACTIONS AND PARTIES. THE STRUCTURE OF PHILIPPINE
POLITICS, BY CARL H. LANDE

Basically, the whole approach of this book is one of a political scientist with a broad grasp of social sciences (and who admits his debt *inter alia* to Mary Hollnsteiner).⁴ Landé claims rather grandly, to present a "model of political organization in the Philippines" (page 8). In subsequent "Notes for a theory of dyadic politics", Landé develops the notion that Philippine politics are more accurately interpreted, less in terms of group interaction than of dyads or vertical relationships of mutual aid between leader and followers (page 146). However, he adds the qualification (rather confusing for a theory) that the Philippine political system contains substantial elements of both (dyad and group) types of structure. The notion is not of itself new, for the existence of the *compadre* system in Philippine society and politics has been a commonplace for many years. Landé's notion possibly helps to clarify the idea and to investigate the nature of reciprocal obligations as applied specifically to politics.

Landé's initial observation on the structure of Philippine politics is that the interests of modern Filipino voters are primarily local interests. Centralization of political power being impeded by an 18th century England-style landed gen-

³ R. A. Dahl, *Who Governs* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1961).

⁴ Mary Hollnsteiner's *The Dynamics of Power in a Philippine Municipality* (Published by the Manila Community Development Research Council, University of the Philippines, 1963).

try, parties are federal rather than unitary in base and organization, their power being largely vested in elements such as local parties, local factions, personal followings and personal alliance systems.

Landé analyses the village level of politics and the functions and structure of local factions. Then he considers, in the central part of his study, the national party system, which he sees as characterized by a close inter-relationship between national and local politics, local leaders having a wide share of political power. He correctly notes the strength of the system of two identical parties (and the failure of third parties in it) and the parties and leaders themselves within that system. Noting the pre-modern and pre-industrial character of Philippine parties, Landé argues, quite convincingly, and accurately in this writer's view, that Philippine politics are more akin to those of 18th century England, or the southern part of the United States, than those of present-day Western democracies (pages 101-103).

Thus the struggle for power is the major preoccupation rather than the present Western "aggregation of interests" which lies some distance in the future for the Philippines, in Landé's view (page 107).

In his conclusion, Landé examines Philippine politics by various rules of thumb, competitive responsibility to electors and participation. Competition exists, he argues, but provides a very narrow choice to the voter; there is no responsible party government, except as ultimately emanates from the fact of free elections; presidential programmes are highly personal and not necessarily in response to public opinion; political influence and access is widely, if not equally, distributed, and so the "Filipino voter can claim a real measure of participation in the business of Government," (page 116) but a disproportionate share of the benefits dispensed by Government falls to the middle and upper classes (page 118). In sum, though competition is wasteful, Landé seems to think that it is worth it to preserve liberty and economic opportunity under a lively, yet remarkably united and stable democracy,

and that in the foreseeable future, parties will be national monoliths, unentangled by interest and pressure groups and dependent rather on the dyad system of patronage and clientship.

In reading Landé, one is impressed that he has chosen quite rightly, to stress certain aspects of Philippine politics. The book is well supplied with tables, illustrating the behaviour and attitudes of voters. It sadly lacks an index, however. Landé neglected to stress other aspects such as economic or social patterns which are also important to the understanding of the political scene and which are covered to some extent in Grossholtz's book. Although he notes the important "gap between the two branches of Government in which the American system of checks and balances becomes a serious obstacle to effective and responsible Government," (page 113) Landé does not examine in his "structure" how his facsimile of the United States constitution has so far failed to provide for the need for economic and social progress in a democratic developing country, but has rather (under President Macapagal, for instance) led to a stagnating deadlock between the Legislative and Executive branches (resulting in the passage of only two important bills during the whole of Macapagal's term of office, for example).

The political structure of the Philippine administration and its informal ties with politicians might have been worth more detailed mention also. His explanation that the "network of personal ties of loyalty between members of different classes obstructs the growth of class solidarity on the part of the poor against the rich" (page 97) applies to some provinces but not, as he is forced to admit, to the Central Luzon area where Huks are still active. It applies still less to the growing urban areas in and around Manila. While the structure and political effects of kinship relationships are of interest to the author, (pages 9-11), he does not seem as interested as Jean Grossholtz in the underlying values which condition the political behaviour of the main actors, or of the

alleged gap between official values and informal practice, say, on the issue of graft and corruption.

Similarly, the role of the self-styled fourth estate, the Philippine press, is barely mentioned. The author does not accept the existence of "regional or ethnic interests," (page 123) yet, President Ferdinand Marcos, an Ilocano, had almost double the vote of his predecessor in the Ilocos region and owned a further significant part of his electoral margin to the support of the Philippine sect *Iglesia ni Kristo*. "Issues", as a whole are rather neglected in the book, though a regular reading of the Philippine press would suggest to this reviewer that they are an important political dynamic. In the same way, the process of decision making might have been worth further analysis to bring out, and illustrate more convincingly the working of the dyad model.

JEAN GROSSHOLTZ'S POLITICS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Jean Grossholtz's book is divided into three main parts. The first part, about 100 pages, is entitled "Foundations of the Political System", and comprises four introductory chapters on the political history, economic base and social life in the Philippines. The second part, about 75 pages, is on the "Framework of Political Life", and deals with the constitutional allocation of power, the organization of political parties and the "political culture" (a concept developed by Almond). In the third part, the author concludes by considering, again in some 100 pages, the "Political Functions" (also conceptualized by Almond) of political socialization, political communication, political recruitment, and the articulation and aggregation of interests.

The discussions, common traditional political manuals, of formal political structure, administration and constitution take up only one (quite competent but not strikingly original) chapter of 30 pages, while introductory political history (which again adds little to what is known) comprises another chapter (32 pages). There is also a chapter of similar length on the economic base. These "conventional" parts of the book do

not reflect anything of the ideas of Gabriel Almond who is chief editor of the series under which the book is issued. But by and large, the overall framework of the book reflects quite faithfully, the stress of modern behavioralist writers on political systems and informal aspects of politics, and more particularly, the concepts advanced by Almond of political culture and political function.

This review is a critique of her analysis of politics, including its economic and social aspects thereof.

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM

The introductory "foundations of the political system" require a general comment. The few brief mentions (less than two or so pages, all told) of the impact of catholicism, and the almost summary references to Spanish colonial influence in politics and government, reveal substantial lacunae. In a book which in its socio-cultural orientation is discussing ethical norms and values, this is a pity. For one of the things which strikes a newcomer to the country, is the dichotomy between the Christian and thus presumably "moral man", and the "Immoral Society" in which he behaves.⁵

Miss Grossholtz's main interest and the depth of her talents clearly lie in the fields of sociology and cultural anthropology. She uses these approaches effectively to demonstrate, fairly convincingly, that democracy as it operates in the Philippines, is a social bargaining process. However, her further theses that "the spirit of bargaining basic to democracy, can be a crucial component of modernization," and that bargaining is "...kept free of corruption by the formal structures of government...and the legal code"⁶, is less effectively demonstrated and not held by all observers (including this reviewer), who see many of the *quid pro quos* in Philippine politics as straight fixing among the élite to the exclusion of a consideration of broader national interests and thus often

⁵ R. Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1932).

⁶ Grossholtz's book under review (title page), pp. 7 and 10.

as a stagnating, not modernizing element. (The "bargaining" over the 1963 land reform bill which led to the exclusion of the sugar lands owned by the powerful sugar bloc, from the operation of the bill, is a case in point.)

The process of bargaining is analyzed in the chapter on "Philippine political parties" with a conclusion agreeing with Landé, that for the Filipino voter, politics is "highly personal and involves a reciprocal relationship".⁷ However, Miss Grossholtz appears to imply that bargaining is unique to the Philippines, and is less common in other politics. Recent studies suggest that a form of bargaining is very common in American politics.⁸ With this reservation, she has otherwise made a good analysis of the workings of the Philippine party system.

Political recruitment as a political process and function is analysed with considerable acuity by Miss Grossholtz. The dominant structures of patronage and protégé systems are well described and the changes in recruitment, hinted at but not well documented with any statistics. (The type envisaged by this reviewer could involve, say, a statistical analysis of the social background of all Congressmen and Senators since the war along the lines followed by Guttsman in his *British Political Elite*.⁹) Statistical data might help to corroborate or refute some of Miss Grossholtz's statements, the basis for which are not always made very clear. However, most of her observations, albeit they appear intuitive rather than empirical, appear to be fairly accurate.

"Interest articulation" turns out to be a chapter on major political groups in Philippine politics and the respective roles of the Church and the bureaucracy, associational, business, industrial, labour and agricultural groups are, albeit rather briefly, all considered here. Few books in fact have ever systematically considered Philippine interest groups before, and

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

⁸ White's *The Making of the President 1960*, Key's *Politics, Parties, Pressure Groups* or Dahl's *Who Governs* are examples.

⁹ W. Guttsman, London, McGibbon and Kee, 1963.

so the chapter is very useful. The conclusion, however, is rather disappointing. Miss Grossholtz stresses the bargaining processes these groups use. It would have been useful to assess the respective weights and modernizing impacts of these groups, and the relative absence in Philippine society of many interest groups found in Western countries as well as the predominant influence of just a few of these groups. (The sugar and tobacco blocs are so much stronger than labour, as compared to the United States or the United Kingdom, for example.)

The final chapter on "interest aggregation" is largely a discussion of party roles and platforms in the general elections. (Landé in his book notes that interest aggregation is for the future, and this reviewer agrees on this contention.) The conclusion on the "electoral system that *distributes public resources in building a nation*" (reviewer's underlining) is perhaps a little idealistic for a country where the "pork barrel" still benefits the victorious Congressmen most, and where corruption is a large channel, not of distribution but of concentration of resources. But the general theme, that the election is the mechanism whereby the common literate Filipino expresses his political choice, is beyond contest and one of the chief reasons why political scientists look to the Philippines to analyse how and why democracy "works" in a developing country.

PHILIPPINE "POLITICAL CULTURE"

The particular chapter on "Political Culture" is one of the best in the book. If properly expanded, it could be as useful to understanding Philippine motivations and values as Ruth Benedict's for Japan in her book, *The Sword and the Chrysanthemum*.¹⁰

The chapter contains elaborations of the bargaining concept, the role of family obligations (far from peculiar, incidentally to the Philippines), and the Filipino concept of *hiya* (she might have mentioned Chinese "face"), *utang na*

¹⁰ Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1945.

loob (obligation), *pakiusap* (use of middlemen) and *delicadeza* (American: batting a blind eye). As the lack of any ideology in Philippine politics is, however, a fact which strikes many observers, this absence might have been better reflected. But the remarks on the broad scope of politics, the absence of any effectively neutral relationship, the predominance of power considerations in personal affairs, and the constant seeking to avoid conflict, are all prevalent themes which are well described.

The last hundred pages of Miss Grossholtz's book deal with the "Five Political Functions" of socialization, communication, recruitment and the articulation and aggregation of interests. The latter theme was discussed in this review (on page 612). Socialization is defined as the values and behaviour promoted by social institutions (page 183) and the chapter on it follows the quality and originality of the discussion of political culture. The family and educational system are discussed as sources of values and a neat analysis is made of conflicts between values taught at home and at school, and those prevalent in political behaviour. (It is surprising that she neglects here to discuss the dichotomy between Catholic ideas of virtues, and not so virtuous political behaviour in a country which is supposedly 85% Catholic.)

The chapter purporting rather portentously to be on "political communication" in fact, is largely a factual description and analysis of mass media and their political impact. This reviewer agrees with her on the conclusion here that "the communication process is a major element in the success of Philippine political development".¹¹ Certainly, there is no other country in Asia with such a free and politically alert press.

THE ECONOMIC SITUATION

The chapter on the economic base of Miss Grossholtz's book, while not central to the book's main political thrust, has some inadequacies and not a few naive reflections. The opening statement, "Rapid economic and social change in the

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, page 216.

direction of an open participant society is being directed by a pragmatic political system imbued with the spirit of democracy,"¹² is naive. In fact the economy appears in the last few years to have grown despite an amazing absence of systematic political direction to it and thus rather haphazardly. As a result, many foreign observers have, so far with little success advocated more energetic planning in the economy. (One example of this is the Philippine car assembly "industry" of 39 plants for an annual output of 30,000 units, where rationalization imposed by the Government of 3 or 4 large plants might have made much more economic sense.)

The statement about agriculture that "attempts to improve productivity through technological improvements are hampered by the tenant's indifference and apathy"¹³ should have added in context, the statement made later on in the chapter¹⁴ that share-cropping takes up to 70 per cent of the crop. In such cases, in this reviewer's opinion, the tenant's incentives are tenuous at the most, and his apathy not unreasonable. The author also makes the inconsistent observation that "indebtedness to the Chinese crippled the rural economy", yet later she states that the Chinese have contributed extensively to the economic development of the Philippines (pages 61 and 69). Miss Grossholtz's contention that a factor in the problem of land reform is "too many people" can be challenged again by reference to the lack of incentive. (There are still great tracts of empty land in Central Mindanao, for instance, as observed by this reviewer, but no one has the ability or is given much incentive to settle there.) Otherwise, the factual discussions of land reform developments and indeed of economic structures, are quite accurate.

But the final thought on economics that "the subordination of economics to politics demonstrates that an energetic commitment to modernization is possible" seems a little idealistic. This reviewer's interpretation is more like that of Gunnar Myrdal who observes that "if ordinary Filipinos are given free

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 47

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 48

¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 54

rein to exhibit their immense zest for democratic processes and freedom, it is because as yet, they have offered no serious challenge to the landed interests who control the levers of political power.”¹⁵

The novel parts of the book, on political culture and political functions make use of Almond's concepts as stated earlier. However, they cannot pass for rigorous “comparative politics” (which is the title of the series in which Miss Grossholtz's book appears). They apply concepts of comparative politics to the Philippines, but there is very little comparison made of the Philippines with any other country, except the United States, which Miss Grossholtz, an American, mentions occasionally.

In vain one searches the index (which incidentally, is inaccurate and not all-embracing) for Spain, Latin America, England, and the other Malay countries of Southeast Asia. These are not mentioned, so we may conclude that this is not a comparative study, but an analysis of the Philippines in isolation. As a result phenomena common in Southeast Asia as a whole are depicted as peculiar to the Philippines.

Miss Grossholtz has done much to increase understanding especially of the informal processes (not all of them very democratic or honest), of democracy as it works in the Philippines. Her book has brought new perspectives in a field long dominated by very traditional books. All told *Politics in the Philippines* might have been better written outside the strait-jacket of Gabriel Almond's concepts, now a little outdated, in favour of a shorter, looser examination, of political aspects of Philippine society and culture, which are really the prevalent themes of the book.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be stated that the interest of both books is that they were the first to reflect some of the contemporary trends in American political science and apply

¹⁵ G. Myrdal, *Asian Drama* (New York: Random House, 1968), I, p. 777.

them to the study of Philippine politics. Political behavior, role, function and structure were virtually non-existent in earlier literature on Philippine politics, which remained ensconced largely in the framework of formalist, legal, constitutional or institutional studies. The study of Philippine politics has, however, been increasingly influenced by anthropologists, working at the University of the Philippines or at the Ateneo de Manila for the most part.¹⁶

Moreover, few writers, if any, had earlier tried to assess how far the Philippines had blended its colonial past with the more freely evolved national traits and political habits acquired since independence. Both the books of Jean Grossholtz and Carl Landé make this attempt: Landé noting that "the rapid structural change...of adjustment between foreign-imposed constitutions and their native ways of organization"¹⁷ and Grossholtz, in a chapter on "Political Culture", stressing that "modernization in the Philippines has meant transferring traditional behavior to the new patterns made necessary by the imposition of westernized institutions."¹⁸ Both have examined the crucial *informal* aspects of Philippine politics, largely ignored hitherto by political scientists.

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¹⁶ Cf. Mary Hollnsteiner's *The Dynamics of Power in a Philippine Municipality*, p. 1.

¹⁷ C. Landé, *op. cit.*, page 147.

¹⁸ J. Grossholtz, *op. cit.*, page 157