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Juan Antonio Inarejos Muñoz

**Los (Últimos) Caciques de Filipinas:
Las Elites Coloniales antes del 98**

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be studied. Dy has shown us that he has the ethnographic skills and the necessary background in religious studies to do the work that remains to be done if only he had the time to do so. Perhaps it is only when we have really considered all sides of the Chinese syncretic coin, not just Buddhism and Catholicism but also Daoism and others, that we may begin to think about what “Chineseness” might mean, but until then I suggest that it may be wise to heed Brubaker and Cooper (ibid., 36) when they ask us to “go beyond identity—not in the name of an imagined universalism, but in the name of the conceptual clarity required for social analysis and political understanding alike.”

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JUAN ANTONIO INAREJOS MUÑOZ

Los (Últimos) Caciques de Filipinas: Las Elites Coloniales antes del 98

Granada: Comares, 2015. 157 pages.

Juan Antonio Inarejos Muñoz presents a snapshot of late–nineteenth-century municipal politics in the Philippines and thus sheds light on the conditions of the last decades of Spanish rule. Inarejos largely uses archival documents on the elections of *gobernadorcillos* (mayors) in a wide variety of Philippine towns to catch a glimpse of how colonialism operated at the municipal level and failed to address the problems of corruption. Although he reaches conclusions that are similar to those of other historians who have studied the same electoral process, he delves into aspects of *gobernadorcillo* elections that have received scant attention thus far. While he does recognize the Spanish friars’ dominant political role in local elections, he goes beyond this trite observation and explores how other actors—such as *principales* (chiefs) and provincial governors—and other elements—such as economics and race—played their part in the dynamics of *gobernadorcillo* elections. What emerges at the end of the book is a nuanced portrayal of nineteenth-century local politics whereby different actors used similar mechanisms at their disposal to achieve their own personal ends.

In chapter 1 Inarejos goes over well-trodden ground when he describes how Spanish friars used gobernadorcillo elections to solidify their economic and political position. Although the religious orders already had economic power through their landed estates and political power as representatives of the Spanish Crown, they still intervened in municipal elections to gain greater local political control by resorting to both fraudulent and legitimate means. In Imus, Cavite, the Recollects succeeded in getting a clerk of their estate into the position of gobernadorcillo by holding the election in their convent and disparaging the conduct of the other candidates to colonial authorities (13–21).

In chapter 2, however, Inarejos is quick to point out that the friars' power was not all-encompassing. Reports on the conduct of gobernadorcillo candidates did not come only from the parish priest but also from the Civil Guard, the treasury, and the provincial governor. Conflicting recommendations from these parties demonstrated the lack of a monolithic position on the part of the colonial government. Even the principales themselves were not passive in the face of election defeat. Losing parties filed complaints on election irregularities, which formed the stock-in-trade of the archival sources. Principales could and did use legal channels to challenge colonial authorities even though the final decision on election procedures and results did not always go in their favor as the colonial administration generally preferred to save face. Controlling local offices protected their economic interests, demonstrated their power, and led them one step closer to their vision of greater self-government.

While being gobernadorcillo brought political power, not everyone wanted the position because of the financial responsibilities it entailed. The gobernadorcillo had to shoulder any shortfall in the tribute collection. Inarejos claims that this renunciation of political office was more common in urban towns like Manila and Cebu City but not in rural areas. Among the many excuses candidates made to avoid taking office Inarejos deftly deals with the specific issue of race in chapter 3. In Binondo the winner of the 1883 election claimed to be a Spanish mestizo to make him ineligible to be gobernadorcillo of the Chinese mestizo "barrio" (58–66). At the port of Cavite, adversely affected by the abolition of the tobacco monopoly, a group of principales petitioned the government to remove the racial criteria that prevented Spanish mestizos from occupying municipal office because the latter were the only ones who had the financial means to assume such office

(66–69). However, despite being racially restricted to *indios* and Chinese mestizos, the position of *gobernadorcillo* was sometimes occupied by Spanish mestizos. In towns where the position was coveted, the *principales* attempted to get Spanish mestizo *gobernadorcillos* disqualified due to their racial ineligibility (69–72).

Inarejos pushes forward a more nuanced and dynamic notion of race in Philippine history because he takes into account case studies that portray the flexibility of race and its uses. Non-Spaniards resorted to legal means such as naturalization and purchase to acquire Spanish nationality (59, 145–46), while second-generation Spanish mestizos lost their Spanish privileges—due to the distinction between Spanish mestizos and children of Spanish mestizos—and thus became legally qualified to serve as *gobernadorcillo* and even *cabeza de barangay* (barangay captain) (70, 145). While racial distinctions were clear in the colonial context, they were also quite flexible and fluid. This malleability can also be seen in the *gobernadorcillo*'s economic and military roles.

Although also political and racial, the position of *gobernadorcillo* was first and foremost economic, as Inarejos argues in chapter 4. The *gobernadorcillo*'s main task was to collect the tribute and, later on, the *cedula personal* (identity document). Out of all the qualifications of the *gobernadorcillo*, the most important one was his ability to cover any shortfall in the collection of these payments. However, *gobernadorcillos* were not mere tax guarantors in the service of the colonial government because they also took advantage of their position by making illegal exactions and embezzling funds (80–92). In their efforts to improve revenue collection in the nineteenth century the colonial treasury faced off not only with *gobernadorcillos* but also with provincial officials who were accused of negligence in their fiscal duties. In the drafting of *indios* into military service *gobernadorcillos* also abused their power by doctoring conscription lists and surreptitiously exempting their relatives. The *gobernadorcillo* of Morong, with the support of the parish priest, stood up to the provincial governor of Bataan by ignoring the latter's request to send the draftees to the provincial capital and resisting the consequent arrest order (99–102). Inarejos paints a picture of colonial society in which different colonial officials quarreled with one another and being *gobernadorcillo* could be both a blessing and a curse depending on one's cunning.

In a change of pace from the rest of the book, Inarejos looks into the municipal elections in Igorot hamlets in chapter 5. Aside from a few differences, such as the continuing importance of political leaders staking out land and the formation of undeclared hamlets, Igorot elections exhibited the same characteristics as those in other provinces: the local elite's desire to gain additional political power, the selection of *gobernadorcillos* who were diligent tax collectors, the existence of political factions, and the concomitant postelection disputes.

In chapter 6 Inarejos ends the book with a discussion of Antonio Maura's 1893 reform, which was supposed to address the corruption inherent in municipal elections. The title of *gobernadorcillo*, a derogatory term, was changed to municipal captain. Reports from parish priests were no longer required in the evaluation of candidates. To reduce the influence of the provincial governor, elections were to be supervised by the outgoing municipal captain and the parish priest. However, old practices were deeply ingrained that they persisted in spite of the administrative changes. In San Isidro de Tubao, La Union, the provincial governor used coercion and tricks to get his candidate, a Spanish mestizo, elected as municipal captain. He also deposed the *cabezas de barangay* who lodged an electoral protest (124–32). The parish priest of San Isidro de Tubao kept on sending reports on the candidates to the central government, which continued to rely on them. The Maura reform was meant to tighten the bond between the Spanish colonial authorities and the Filipino elite, yet it made the situation worse because it allowed Spaniards, creoles, and Spanish mestizos to participate in municipal elections legally by giving electoral seats to the main economic contributors of a town, consequently displacing some indios and Chinese mestizos from the already limited voting body (69, 145–46).

Inarejos does not come up with easy conclusions based on crude distinctions and generalizations. He breaks down the monolithic portrayal of colonial authorities and native elites through a detailed analysis of case studies. In a certain light the Spanish friars with their estates were no different from the Filipino elite with their wealth from agricultural exports when they both used municipal politics to strengthen their respective economic positions. Parish priests, whether Spanish friars or Filipino secular priests, intervened in local elections to get their candidates elected. Except for the more limited political rights in the latter, both Spain and the Philippines shared the same dynamics of local power where the wealthy used their economic resources

for political purposes, factions tried to disqualify rival candidates through the filing of judicial cases, and the prevalence of corruption distorted the ideals of representative government. Racial restrictions on the position of *gobernadorcillo* could either be positive or negative depending on the particular circumstances. Meticulous attention to detail, an achievement in itself to get right, allows Inarejos to come up with a balanced picture of colonial society at the municipal level. Although he is almost exclusively dependent on archival materials on *gobernadorcillo* elections, he is still able to extract a snapshot of the society at large. The narrow, minute details in electoral protests, for instance, make it possible for Inarejos to explore the wider, pertinent issue of race in a way that complicates long-held racial stereotypes in Philippine colonial history.

However, while detailed descriptions of the case studies are beneficial to the reader, sometimes the exposition has a tendency to get lost in the details. All the chapters tackle the subject of the colonial elite from different angles, but they do not always tie up together to build a clear, central argument. The chapter on Igorot *gobernadorcillos* is an innovative and inclusive way of looking at municipal elections in the Philippines, but it does not contribute anything substantially different from the other chapters. Inarejos's background on nineteenth-century elections in Spain gives him the opportunity to adopt a comparative perspective; however, he only limits himself to pointing out specific similarities and differences, and misses the opportunity to maximize a comparative approach in framing and deepening his analysis. In spite of these lapses, Inarejos offers a fresh, contemporary angle on a potentially old, beat-up topic. He does not drastically change the current state of the field, but his precise explications clarify hitherto neglected aspects of nineteenth-century municipal elections in the Philippines.

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