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# Philippine Politics in Town, District, and Province: Bossism in Cavite and Cebu

JOHN T. SIDEL

ACCOUNTS OF THE VARIOUS LOCAL, congressional, and national elections held in the Philippines since 1986 have highlighted three enduring features of Philippine democracy in the post-Marcos era. First of all, large numbers of politicians who held office for many years in the Marcos and pre-Marcos periods have won reelection, as have numerous other members of long-entrenched political families (Soriano 1987; Gutierrez 1992). Secondly, most of these politicians and clans have been known to enjoy not only political longevity but also economic preeminence within their respective municipal, congressional, or provincial bailiwicks, through landownership, commercial networks, logging or mining concessions, transportation companies, or control over illegal economies (Gutierrez 1994). Finally, evidence that fraud, vote-buying, and violence have decisively shaped the conduct and outcome of these elections (Tancangco 1992) has led some commentators to conclude that the celebrated transition from “authoritarianism” to “democracy” in Manila has been less than complete in its local manifestations (Kerkvliet and Mojares 1991, 5). With the revival of electoral politics in 1987, analysts thus began to offer evocative descriptions of, and various explanations for, the distinctive nature of Philippine democracy, with references to political clans, dynasties, caciques, warlords, and bosses appearing with great frequency in journalistic and scholarly accounts, and terms like cacique democracy, mafia democracy, feudalism, warlordism, and bossism gaining considerable currency.

Conventional wisdom attributes this pattern to the central role of “patron-client relations” in social relations and electoral politics in the Philippines. Highly personalized, multifunctional, and affect-laden, patron-client ties are defined as dyadic bonds of reciprocity and mutual obligation linking individuals of unequal wealth and power through relationships based on exchange. Beginning in the early 1960s, scholars have argued that such patron-client dyads provide the essential social adhesive in Philippine society, crosscutting and undermining potential cleavages based on class,

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corporate, or ethnic solidarities through webs of particularistic alliances based on bonds of personal reciprocity. Electoral politics thus works through patron-client networks, stretching from tenants to landlords and *barrio*-level ward leaders to mayors, congressmen, provincial governors, senators, and presidents (Grossholtz 1964; Hollnsteiner 1963; Landé 1964). Consistently bifactional competition between rival patron-client networks supposedly produces “unrestrictedness, closeness, and intensity of competition for elective office at all levels of government” and guarantees that politicians are “highly responsive” to their constituents, who exercise “substantial influence . . . upon decision-making,” albeit in very particularistic ways (Landé 1964, 115).

Although the original scholarship on which this patron-client portrait has rested dates back more than twenty years, much recent scholarship has tended to accept its premises unquestioningly (see, for example, Wurfel 1988). “Until now,” Benedict Kerkvliet has noted, the patron-client framework “remains the most influential among academics and is widely adopted by journalists, diplomats and other observers of the Philippines” (Kerkvliet 1995, 401). Thus today’s perennial politicians are essentially seen as owing their longevity in office to success in satisfying the demands of their client-constituents (see, for example, Gutierrez 1994, 9).

More dynamic accounts of the putative transformation or breakdown of patron-client relations might also help to explain some features of the current political configuration. Since the 1970s, for example, some scholars have argued that economic growth, industrialization, and urbanization have worked to “modernize” Philippine politics, allowing upwardly mobile “professional politicians”—“new men”—to replace the scions of traditional landowning families through the construction of “political machines” (Machado 1974). This account might help to explain both the success of politicians not rooted in landed elite families and the considerable extent and importance of more impersonal, non-clientelist features of electoral politics, such as violence, fraud, and vote-buying. Meanwhile, other scholars have claimed that the penetration of capitalism, commercialization of agriculture, and resultant trends of rising landlessness and inequalities in income distribution have narrowed the scope and effectiveness of clientelist exchanges, undermined patron-client bonds, and paved the way for intensifying factionalism, social unrest, and class conflict (Nowak and Snyder 1974). Against this backdrop, the role of coercive and monetary pressures in electoral politics can be seen as a form of compensation for the ebbing power of patron-client bonds between candidates and voters.

Yet overall, from the vantage point of the post-Marcos 1990s, the patron-client framework’s descriptive and explanatory powers appear extremely limited. In terms of description, Philippine politicians clearly do cultivate followings along clientelist lines, but they also rely very heavily on a variety of impersonal and coercive mechanisms and resources to entrench themselves in power, as seen in the widespread pattern of electoral fraud, vote-buying, and violence noted above (Lacaba 1995). In some localities, competition for elective office has been quite close and lively, suggesting conditions that keep patrons attentive to clients, but elsewhere conditions of virtually unchallenged long-term incumbency and monopoly by a single politician or political family may dictate terms of exchange far less favorable to what could meaningfully be construed as “reciprocity.”

In terms of explanation, moreover, today’s abundance of politicians and “political clans” who have remained in office for several decades underscores the implausibility of accounts heralding the arrival of “new men” and the fading of “traditional politicians” on the electoral horizon, and scotches predictions that the continuation

of secular socioeconomic and demographic trends first observed in the 1960s would lead to the unravelling of élite democracy. Finally, new scholarly research on the American colonial era and the postwar, premartial law period (1946-72) has effectively debunked the nostalgia-driven myth that the unseemly features of contemporary Philippine democracy today represent a kind of 'fall from grace' or decline from a lost yesteryear of benign paternalism. The electoral fraud, skulduggery, vote-buying, and violence disparaged today were very much in evidence in premartial law—and even prewar—years, and legislators and local officials (and their families) have entrenched themselves in various municipalities, districts, and provinces throughout the twentieth century (McCoy 1993; Paredes 1988). In short, the notion that patron-client relationships *ever* provided the essential 'social cement' in Philippine life has been shown to ignore the persistence of coercive pressures and local monopolies in electoral politics and social relations.

Impressed by these apparent continuities and frustrated by the limitations of the patron-client model, scholars have in recent years counterposed an alternative portrait of the Philippines largely couched in terms of class and state. In the view of these observers, the outcomes of post-Marcos elections have highlighted the persistence or reassertion of direct class rule by a landed élite or oligarchy, which, unique in Southeast Asia, first emerged in the nineteenth century as a nascent bourgeoisie with an economic base independent of the state (Crouch 1985; Hawes 1987; Rivera 1991). Economically entrenched, this dominant class has easily "captured" the state, as seen in the evident predominance of the oligarchy's representatives among the congressional and local officials elected over the years (Simbulan 1965; Gutierrez 1992). Such scholarship neatly sidesteps the question of the mechanisms—clientelism, coercion, the dull compulsion of economic relations—by which this oligarchy has achieved and maintained its position vis-à-vis both subordinate classes and the state, as the brute fact of enduring class rule leaves the issue of the mode of domination apparently overdetermined. In this view, violence, like patronage, is simply yet another of many available instruments of class rule. The Philippines thus appears to offer a classic case of what Joel Migdal describes as a postcolonial "weak state" confronting a "strong society" dominated by "traditional élites" and "local strongmen" (Migdal 1988).

This depiction of the Philippines in terms of a "weak state" dominated by an oligarchy based in large landholdings, while more historically grounded than the patron-client model, is nonetheless in some ways descriptively overdrawn and analytically misleading. Revisionist historical scholarship, for example, has highlighted the limitations of the Spanish-era élite's wealth, landholdings, and geographical distribution, and recast the timing of its emergence as a "national oligarchy" to the twentieth century (Aguilar 1992; Ansay-Miranda 1966; Lynch 1988; Rivera 1991). In addition, newly published studies examining the contributions of forest, mineral, and marine resource exploitation (and *public* land) to the process of capital accumulation in the Philippines have cast considerable doubt on the centrality of private landownership in the generation of wealth in the richly endowed archipelago (Lopez 1992; Vitug 1993). Careful research on the role of the Philippine state in the acquisition and maintenance of property and the processing and export of agricultural produce has likewise called into question the extent to which landownership has ever provided a truly *independent* economic base for the exercise of political power (Billig 1993; Mejia 1982; Tiglaio 1981), while documentation of massive environmental degradation in the coral reefs, forests, and mineral-rich mountain ridges of the archipelago has highlighted the role of the state as an instrument—rather than simply

an object—of patrimonial plunder (Broad 1993; Coronel 1996; Gamalinda 1991; Kummer 1992). Close analysis of election results and corporation directorates in the 1980s, moreover, has suggested that many of the entrenched politicians and magnates in the country derive their power and wealth not from private landownership but from state resources and foreign (mostly immigrant Chinese) commercial capital (Gutierrez 1994; Rivera 1991; Yoshihara 1985). Finally, well-documented case studies of entrenched politicians and established “landed élites” have revealed that the accumulation of large landholdings has often followed from, rather than preceded, the assumption of elected office (Edgerton 1984, 171–200; Putzel 1992, 93–95; Yoshihara 1985, 137) and that control over both the coercive apparatuses of the state and lucrative illegal economies has been a crucial resource for the accumulation of capital and political power (McCoy 1993).

In terms of explanatory power, the ‘strong oligarchy, weak state’ thesis also fails to account for variation and change in the course of Philippine history. Concentrations of landownership have not in fact correlated closely with the political longevity of elected officials, and some of the most enduring and notorious politicians and “political clans” in the archipelago have emerged and prospered in rural bailiwicks notable for an absence of large landholdings as well as in highly urbanized areas (Lewis 1971). In addition, Ferdinand Marcos, who as three-term congressman (1949–59), senator (1959–65), and the Philippines’ longest-reigning president (1966–86) accumulated more power and wealth than any other politician in the nation’s history, owed none of his unsurpassed political and economic success to landownership.

Viewed in cross-national comparative perspective, moreover, a portrait of the Philippine state as weak and emasculated by a landed oligarchy fails to illuminate similarities and differences with its counterparts in Southeast Asia and elsewhere in the postcolonial world. Among postcolonial plantocracies, for example, the Philippines stands strangely alone in the absence of a period of military rule in its history, while in the context of Southeast Asia, its notoriously weak postcolonial state curiously most resembles that of contemporary Thailand (Anderson 1990; Ockey 1992; Ockey 1993), whose nineteenth-century history saw a monarchical state strong enough to avoid direct colonial subjugation. In short, a depiction of the Philippines in terms of a dominant class of landed oligarchs and an emasculated weak state clearly leaves a number of important questions unanswered.

In contrast with studies stressing clientelism and class domination, this essay takes as its point of departure an analysis of state formation in the Philippines, following the lead of scholars who have highlighted the enduring institutional legacies of American colonial rule and the patrimonial nature of state-oligarchy relations in the archipelago (Anderson 1988; Hutchcroft 1991). The myriad manifestations of what is defined and described below as “bossism,” this essay argues, reflect neither the strength (or decline) of patron-client relations nor the resilience and rule of a landed oligarchy, but rather the distinctive institutional structures of the Philippine state, most notably those established during the crucial decades of American colonial rule.

American colonial rule in the Philippines from 1901 until the eve of World War II essentially expanded the Spanish-era structure of private control over the state’s local coercive and extractive agencies ‘upwards’ through the subordination of a national state apparatus to provincial- and national-level elected officials. Elections to municipal office, based on highly restricted suffrage and freed from the intervention of ecclesiastical authorities, were first held in 1901, followed by those for provincial

governors (1902), representatives to the national Philippine Assembly (1907), an American-style bicameral legislature (1916), and finally the Commonwealth presidency (1935). Elected municipal *presidentes* (mayors) retained their Spanish-era discretionary powers over local law-enforcement, public works, and taxation, winning complete independence from parish priests and full authority to appoint municipal police forces (Baja 1933; Campos 1983). While elected governors enjoyed somewhat similar law-enforcement and taxation powers at the provincial level, representatives to the legislature gained control over a hastily constructed and rapidly 'Filipinized' national state apparatus (Corpuz 1957, 166–86). Within their own districts, legislators exercised effective discretion over the disbursement of 'pork barrel' funds for public works and the appointment of constabulary commanders, district engineers, and superintendents of schools; provincial fiscals, treasurers, and assessors; judges of the court of first instance; and local agents of the Bureau of Lands (Wolters 1989). In Manila, meanwhile, these legislators likewise exerted influence over the awarding of contracts, concessions, and monopoly franchises, the appointment of ranking officials in national government agencies, and the allocation of loans by the Philippine National Bank. Finally, with the election of a Commonwealth president in 1935, a (directly elected) national executive took office, assuming powers in domestic affairs far greater than those of his U.S. counterpart, including authority to reject individual items in appropriations bills, discretion over the disbursement of budgeted funds, and supervisory control over local government units (Hayden 1947, 60–86). This distinctly American form of late colonial administration contrasted sharply with the processes of state expansion, bureaucratization, and centralization ongoing in this period elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

The subordination of municipal, provincial, and national agencies of the state apparatus to elected officials combined with the onset of primitive capital accumulation and the expanding role of the colonial state in the economy to facilitate the emergence and entrenchment of colonial-era proto-bosses in a variety of localities and at different levels of state power. American officials complained, for example, that in "a large majority of cases," municipal police forces served as "the political henchmen, and in too many instances the personal *muchachos* of the *presidentes* and local bosses" (Hayden 1947, 291). In Nueva Ecija, provincial boss Manuel Tinio used his influence with the Bureau of Lands and his control over the local government machinery—including police forces, justices of the peace, the Court of First Instance, and the Court of Land Registration—to acquire large landholdings and to construct a province-wide political machine (Crisostomo 1989, 110–38; Gleeck 1981; Kerkvliet 1977, 6). In Negros Occidental, sugar planters seated as congressmen and senators in the legislature similarly expanded their landholdings many times over and, with generous loans from the Philippine National Bank, constructed centrifugal sugar mills to process their cane (Aguilar 1992, 248–68; McCoy 1992). In the late 1930s, moreover, Commonwealth President Manuel Quezon gained what one historian has described as "near total control" of the legislature and judiciary, and, through government corporations and a coterie of business cronies, exercised considerable control over the national economy (McCoy 1988).

Upon the restoration of the Commonwealth with Liberation in 1945 and the inauguration of the Republic with Independence in 1946, the essentially reconstructed institutional legacies of American colonial rule facilitated the entrenchment of bossism in the Philippines in the postwar era. Thus, more than the emergence of a landed elite in the nineteenth century, the distinct pattern of American-sponsored colonial

state formation facilitated the emergence of small-town bosses, provincial “warlords,” and authoritarian presidents, by providing mechanisms for private monopolization of the resources and prerogatives of the state.

By “bossism” and “bosses,” this essay refers to the prevalence of local power brokers who achieve sustained monopolistic control over both coercive and economic resources within given territorial jurisdictions or bailiwicks. Bosses, moreover, as James C. Scott has noted, must be distinguished from patrons insofar as a degree of monopoly is achieved, “coercion is a main pillar of power,” and authority rests “more on inducements and sanctions than on affection or status”: “the boss is a secular leader *par excellence* who depends almost entirely on palpable inducements and threats to move people” (Scott 1972, 96). Bosses, finally, are not simply large landowners who have won elective offices through mobilization of tenants and other dependents, control over local economies of scale, and deployment of private coercive and monetary resources at their disposal. Rather, as detailed below, the postwar Philippines has witnessed the emergence and entrenchment of several different kinds of bosses in municipalities, congressional districts, and provinces throughout the archipelago.

Against the backdrop of a state apparatus whose extractive and coercive agencies are subordinated to several tiers of elected officials, geographic and temporal variation in the longevity of individual bosses has corresponded closely with patterned diversity in the political economy of various localities in the archipelago. In short, bosses have emerged and succeeded in entrenching themselves when and where the so-called ‘commanding heights’ of the local economy have lent themselves to monopolistic control. Insofar as these ‘commanding heights’ have entailed privately owned economies of scale and secure property rights (landholdings; agricultural processing, credit and marketing networks; transportation facilities; industrial plants), a solid base in proprietary wealth invulnerable to state intervention has allowed capital-intensive and relatively paternalistic bosses to withstand the hostile machinations of superordinate power brokers and pass on their bailiwicks to successive generations in classic “dynasty” form. However, insofar as control over the ‘commanding heights’ of the local economy has hinged on state-based derivative and discretionary powers (as in the case of illegal activities, nodal commercial/transportation chokepoints, public lands, and heavily regulated crops and industries), coercion-intensive and gangster-style bosses have depended heavily upon superordinate power brokers, whose backing has underpinned their emergence, entrenchment, and survival, and whose hostility has spelled their downfall or death. However, where such state-based prerogatives and resources can be *converted* into a solid base of proprietary wealth, bosses have proved capable of passing on their bailiwicks to successive generations and thus establishing a local dynasty.

The remainder of this essay focuses on these diverging manifestations of bossism at the municipal, congressional district, and provincial levels in the two provinces of Cavite and Cebu. A study of these two provinces, while hardly representative of the Philippines as a whole, nonetheless may offer new insights for the understanding of boss rule throughout the archipelago. Neither Cavite nor Cebu possesses sizeable plantation belts or other large concentrations of landownership, yet both provinces offer numerous examples of protracted boss and dynastic rule at the municipal, district, and provincial levels. Moreover, the contrast between the entrenchment of single-generation bosses in Cavite and the longevity of multigeneration dynasties in Cebu suggests the relevance of the study for comparison of so-called “warlords” and “political clans” elsewhere in the Philippines.

## The Dynasties of Cebu Province

A Central Visayan island province noted for its dry, mountainous interior, Cebu features a major regional port, entrepôt, and manufacturing center, Cebu City. Unique in the Philippines in its long dependence upon corn as the local staple crop, Cebu is also known for its scattered coconut and nipa groves, a small sugar plantation belt, and extensive mining, poultry, and fishing industries. In some parts of the province, medium-sized sugar plantations and coconut groves are in evidence, but even smaller farms have predominated, with share tenancy rising over the years up to the 1970s, when Marcos-era agrarian reform encouraged conversion to cash tenancy and greater reliance on farm workers. Since 1900, Cebu's population has grown dramatically, from roughly six hundred thousand at the turn of the century to nearly three million today, even as agricultural involution and environmental degradation have led to declining corn yields and depleted mangroves and coral reefs around the island province. Since the 1970s, a steady inflow of foreign and domestic capital into Cebu has transformed the regional entrepôt and agricultural processing center of the Visayas and Mindanao into a major location for tourism and manufacturing, but today provides low-wage employment for only a small fraction of the rural and urban poor.

At the municipal level, politics in Cebu has been dominated by local families—"clans" or "dynasties"—whose roots can often be traced to the emergence of a largely Chinese *mestizo* commercial-landowning élite in the province in the nineteenth century (Cullinane 1982; Fenner 1976). Owning sizeable corn fields, coconut groves, and sugar plantations, and controlling the links (corn mills, copra trading networks, rural banks, bus companies) between their municipalities and Cebu City, these local élite families have in recent years moved into more capital-intensive ventures, including aquaculture, tourism, real estate, and construction. By activating networks of dependents and vote brokers, manipulating alliances with other local notables and Cebu City-based politicians, and dispensing private and public funds, these families have over the years engineered the election of their scions as municipal councilors, vice-mayors, and mayors in various municipalities of Cebu Province. Although clientelist bonds have no doubt served as resources for electoral competition in Cebu over the years, election-related violence, fraud, and vote-buying have also been in abundant evidence in the province since well before World War II (Mojares 1991, 67).

While enjoying solid bases in proprietary wealth largely outside the realm of state regulation, these local families have rarely commanded sufficient resources to establish a monopolistic position in the local economy and dynastic self-perpetuation and hegemony in municipal politics. In politics, shifting alliances and factional rivalries between local clans have prevailed in most towns, with closely contested municipal elections and high turnover rates for mayors persisting against the backdrop of continuity in municipal council membership. In the economy, a similar pattern of cartels and oligopoly has likewise obtained. Perquisites of office notwithstanding, incumbent mayors have fallen prey to local rivals enjoying the support of town notables and provincial politicians.

In several municipalities, however, small-town dynasties have succeeded in entrenching themselves for decades, consistently winning the mayorship and largely dictating the membership of the municipal council. Combining their proprietary wealth with the discretionary powers of the mayor's office and the state patronage made available by congressional and provincial allies, they have seized control of the

commanding heights of the local economy. In most cases, these families' preeminence stems largely from the sheer size and centrality of their landholdings, trade and credit networks, and other business operations (e.g., bus companies). Yet state-based resources and prerogatives, rather than landownership, have undergirded the unparalleled longevity of the Escarios of Bantayan, who have ruled their municipality with only one brief interruption (1986–88) from 1937 to date. Isidro Escario, the clan's founder, was in fact a small-town political operator of relatively modest means who first won the mayorship in 1937, thanks to the benefactions of established local notables and provincial politicians, the manipulation of state prerogatives and resources (as municipal tax clerk prior to his election), and an unprecedented use of electoral violence. Once in office, Escario succeeded in using the mayor's powers to assume regulatory and proprietary control over the commanding heights of Bantayan's local economy, and subsequently to pass on this small-town empire to his family in "dynasty" form.

Located on an island off the northwest coast of Cebu, Bantayan has provided—through its insular location, rich fishing grounds, and close seaborne linkages to other nearby Visayan provinces—a local political economy highly susceptible to certain forms of monopoly. Thanks to Escario control over the town police, selective enforcement of regulations prohibiting dynamite and purse-seine trawl fishing in municipal waters has proven a useful mechanism for extortion and patronage and allowed Escario cronies to monopolize the sale of explosive materials in the town. Moreover, for many years, the family has served as the sole labor broker and recruiter of seasonal migrant workers in Bantayan for sugar plantations on nearby Negros Occidental. Finally, the family has seized Bantayan's key commercial bottlenecks, securing the lucrative stevedoring and launch contract for the town's ferry service and constructing the sole private port in the municipality. Alongside landholdings inherited from the maternal side of the clan, these forms of state-based monopoly have underpinned the Escarios' alliances with local elite families and networks of personal dependents, thus helping to ensure continued electoral success in a mutually reinforcing nexus of political and economic power. The Escarios' reputation as a family of generous patrons, while considerable, has not sufficed to guarantee electoral victories, but their long-standing preeminence has underwritten the machinery, vote-buying, intimidation, violence, and fraud necessary to win local office (Sidel 1995, 297–317).

At the congressional district and provincial level in Cebu, family dynasties have likewise constructed enduring political machines and economic empires in a two-tiered pattern reflecting the distinct political economy of town and countryside in the island province. In the six rural congressional districts, supramunicipal dynasties have emerged and flourished where they have achieved domination over large population centers, control of nodal commercial and transportation chokepoints, and/or command over concentrations of private capital in the local economy. In the premartial law 4th District, for example, the Argao-based Kintanar clan, the dominant political force in the district's most populous town, held the congressional seat from 1938 through 1969. The Cuenco family, proprietor of the bus company linking the small and impoverished towns of the southern coast to Cebu City, represented the 5th District in the legislature for over fifty years. Since the restoration of Congress in 1987, moreover, this pattern has been replicated in several re-gerrymandered rural districts. On the southern end of the province, for example, the Abines family, which controls the ferry route to nearby Negros Oriental, the bus franchise to Cebu City, and the local fishing industry, has entrenched its scions and allies in several town mayorships

and claimed the 2nd District congressional seat. In the northern sugar plantation belt, the Martinez clan, through large landholdings and alliances with other major *hacendado* clans, has occupied the new 4th District seat and a score of other local offices. Finally, in what was the 1st District bailiwick of longtime congressman Ramon Durano, Sr. (1949–72), heirs to the coal mines, sugar lands, and business empire accumulated by the family patriarch today hold the 5th District seat and control populous Danao City (Cullinane 1993).

Like municipal-level boss Isidro Escario in Bantayan town, Congressman Durano began his career as a small-time political operator of relatively modest means, who used the resources and prerogatives at his disposal once in office to amass a districtwide empire that he succeeded in preserving and passing on to his children in classic “dynasty” form. Promoted in the 1930s and 1940s by the Cuenco clan through coal mining concessions and government appointments and contracts, Durano won as the Cuenquista candidate for the 1st District congressional seat in the notoriously bloody and fraudulent elections of 1949. Once elected, moreover, he used behest loans, rigged government contracts and concessions, and control over local law enforcement agencies to acquire enormous landholdings and coal mining claims, build a cement plant and sugar mill, and establish a local ice plant and electric company. In addition, Durano’s Manila connections facilitate protection to Danao’s internationally renowned cottage industry in homemade firearms (*paliik*), through discretionary law enforcement and the creation of an official port and customs entry point in the chartered city under Congressman Durano’s aegis. This vise-like regulatory and proprietary hold over the district’s legal and illegal economies combined with Durano’s domination over the local government machinery, mobilization of armed followers, and repeated use of violence and intimidation to guarantee infamously huge election-day margins in the old 1st District for the congressman and his favorite local, provincial, and national candidates (Cullinane 1993). Despite Durano companies’ financial troubles and family feuds following the patriarch’s death in 1988, the longtime congressman’s son Nito has succeeded in claiming the lion’s share of his father’s estate and the congressional seat for a remodeled 5th District, while other Durano family members have entrenched themselves in various local executive posts (Sidel 1995, 394–431).

Meanwhile, at the provincial level, a single dynasty based in Cebu City has retained preeminence throughout most of the twentieth century by maintaining alliances with urban commercial interests and by building a political machine centered in the provincial capital but radiating out into the province as well. Over the past ninety years, as Cebu City evolved from an island entrepôt into a major manufacturing center, and as the provincial electorate expanded from less than five hundred voters in 1906 to more than five hundred thousand in 1992, the Osmeña clan has remained at the center of politics in both Cebu City and Cebu Province. In the prewar period, Sergio Osmeña, Sr., represented Cebu City for five terms in the national legislature, won a Senate seat for five subsequent terms, and served as Vice-President (1935–44) and later President (1944–46) of the Commonwealth. For most of the postwar, premartial law period, his son, Sergio “Serging” Osmeña, Jr., served variously as Cebu Provincial Governor, Cebu City Mayor, Cebu 2nd District Representative, and Senator. In the post-Marcos era, moreover, a revival of Osmeña family fortunes has seen a third generation take power, with Serging’s son Tomas winning successive terms as Cebu City Mayor and a second son and two nephews occupying the provincial governorship and congressional and senatorial seats.

Beginning with family patriarch Sergio Sr., the Osmeñas have used their close ties to the urban commercial élite of Cebu City, office-based discretionary powers over

the local state apparatus, and linkages to national-level patrons in Manila to maintain their preeminent position in Cebu. A scion of one of Cebu City's most prominent and wealthy Chinese *mestizo* families who won prominence as a journalist and lawyer, Sergio Osmeña, Sr., enjoyed the support of the local commercial élite, the incumbent governor, and American colonial officials when he first won election as Governor in 1906 and as Assemblyman in 1907 (Cullinane 1988).

Subsequently, the installation of successive Osmeña protégés and clan members as Mayor of Cebu City facilitated the construction of an urban political machine. Broad discretionary powers over property taxes and zoning ordinances, municipal licenses and permits, personnel appointments and salaries, and public works contracts and monopoly franchises has combined with selective law enforcement to allow the family to exercise considerable regulatory powers over the city's economy. With thousands of ward leaders throughout populous Cebu City, the Osmeñas have also used this political machine to muster majorities for the family's candidates in local, congressional, provincial, and national elections, delivering large blocs of votes to allies among candidates for the Senate and presidency. Beyond Cebu City, moreover, the family has expanded its influence throughout Cebu Province, using discretion over national state patronage to build up a network of small-town notables loyal to the city-based clan (Mojares 1986; Mojares 1993).

Over the generations, the Osmeñas have used their access to state patronage and control over the local state apparatus to enhance and enlarge their family's considerable properties in Cebu, yet the family has remained at best a *primus inter pares* among Cebu City's commercial élite. An entourage of political lieutenants, lawyers, contractors, fixers, ward heelers, and assorted hangers-on has always surrounded the Osmeña family, linking local law firms, construction companies, and a host of small businesses to the family's political machine. Moreover, the predominance throughout the twentieth century of Chinese immigrants in business in Cebu City has served to strengthen the leverage of those entrenched in City Hall over a preponderantly 'pariah' local capitalist class. Yet the Osmeñas could never simply parcel out the commanding heights of the thriving Visayan port economy among family and friends. Instead, a close-knit local oligarchy, comprising a handful of merchant dynasties of Chinese, Spanish, and *mestizo* lineage, has operated a virtual cartel of agricultural processing centers and shipping companies in the city that has dominated the copra and corn trade throughout the Visayas and Mindanao and the interisland shipping industry of the entire archipelago. Over the years, these dynasties have by and large supported, befriended, and on occasion intermarried with the Osmeña clan, while refraining from entering Cebu politics themselves. In exchange, the Osmeñas have provided these dynasties access to government financing and contracts and guaranteed friendly regulation of their business operations (Sidel 1995, 448–90).

As the Osmeñas' success in maintaining their urban political machine and servicing local business interests has partly depended upon the cooperation of presidential patrons eager to reward and reinforce the Osmeñas' election-day vote delivery services, the dynasty has experienced the greatest difficulties when in conflict with hostile presidents. Following Serging Osmeña's failed 1969 bid to dislodge incumbent president Ferdinand Marcos, for example, Osmeña fortunes waned. With Serging and other leading Osmeña family members in exile, Marcos used his martial law powers after 1972 to gain a foothold in Cebu, forging a close alliance with a Cebu-based labor federation and awarding government appointments, state bank behest loans, and key public works contracts and franchises for business in Cebu to presidential family friends and cronies. Yet against the backdrop of this heavy-handed

Marcos intervention in the local economy, Cebu's opposition politicians and disaffected elite families alike rallied around the Osmeña family as the Marcos regime unravelled in the mid-1980s, helping a third generation of the dynasty to resurrect its urban political machine and its preeminence among the leading Chinese and Spanish *mestizo* merchant families of Cebu City.

## The Gangster-Politicians of Cavite

In contrast with Cebu, Cavite Province is notable for its contiguity with the Metro Manila area, its long sheltered coastline, and its diverse topography. Primarily a rice-bowl province, Cavite also features significant zones of banana, coconut, and sugarcane cultivation, and coffee has long been a major cash crop in its southern upland towns. Scattered smallholdings, rather than large *latifundia*, have been the rule, with farm size in steady decline over the century and share tenancy predominant in the American period but gradually replaced in the postwar era by employment of landless workers, mechanization, and capital-intensive methods and inputs. Since 1900, Cavite's population has grown dramatically, from less than one hundred thousand at the turn of the century to more than one million today, and the province's already modest fields, fishing beds, and forests have considerably shrunk over the years with the resultant increasing extractive pressures. A massive inflow of foreign and domestic capital into Cavite since the 1970s has financed the creation of myriad industrial estates, residential subdivisions, and agro-business ventures, but failed to provide employment for thousands of displaced peasants and marginalized suburban poor in the province. Today, an estimated forty percent of the now predominantly urban population of Cavite lives on or beneath the so-called poverty line (McAndrew 1994).

Against this backdrop of economic diversity and change, an enduring pattern of violent electoral competition and gangster-style mayoral bossism has characterized municipal politics in Cavite over the years, a reflection of two distinctive features of the overall provincial landscape. First of all, since the Spanish colonial era when friar estates comprised roughly 35,000 hectares in Cavite, control over land in the province has depended to a large degree upon access to local state agencies, and land settlement patterns have not led to the concentration of land in vast *haciendas*. Auctions of the former friar estates by the Bureau of Lands in the American colonial era, implementation of land legislation in Commonwealth and early post-war years, and real estate rezoning and agrarian reform provisions from the 1970s onwards have continued to make property rights in the province highly contingent on political power. Secondly, the suburban province's proximity to Metro Manila has stimulated the growth of extensive illegal economies (cattle rustling, highway robbery, carnapping, illegal lotteries, smuggling, narcotics) available for regulation and monopolization by those in charge of law enforcement in Cavite (Sobritchea 1984-1986; Sidel 1995, 50-136).

As in Cebu, a number of wealthy small-town clans are easily identifiable in the municipalities of Cavite, but these families, whose ancestors enjoyed leasing rights to the Spanish friar estates and won land titles to large tracts from the American-era Bureau of Lands, have achieved neither economic predominance nor political longevity comparable to their Cebuano counterparts in the postwar era. Instead, small-time political operators with backgrounds in criminal activities and installed by provincial politicians have dominated the ranks of Cavite's municipal mayors. Aside from

regulatory powers through the police over the lucrative illegal economies noted above, these mayors have enjoyed considerable discretion over the awarding of petty monopoly franchises and concessions (e.g., cockpits, ice plants, fish trap licenses) and local public works contracts. Since the 1970s, moreover, the transformation of many Cavite towns into suburban clusters of residential subdivisions, golf courses, and industrial estates has heightened the importance of mayoral powers over land use, through municipal zoning ordinances, building permits, government-owned land, public works, reclamation projects, and agrarian reform implementation. Yet these extensive mayoral powers have often encouraged intense and bloody competition—rather than the entrenchment of long-time bosses—in Cavite municipalities, as suggested by the thirteen mayors in the province who have been assassinated in the postwar period. Even in those towns where a single boss has retained his hold over the mayorship for many years, transfer of state-based control over the local economy to successive generations in classic “dynasty” form has proven extremely rare (Sidel 1995, 233–57).

Cesar Casal, for example, longtime municipal mayor (1955–79) and provincial board member (1980 to the present) has run the eastern inland town of Carmona as his personal fiefdom for several decades but failed to establish a secure economic base for his family. First elected in 1955 as a cog in the wheel of longtime congressman Justiniano Montano’s provincewide machine, Casal has enriched and entrenched himself by using mayoral regulatory powers over public lands in Carmona to assume a central role in the town’s agricultural economy. In the late 1950s, with the assistance of Congressman Montano, Casal engineered the expropriation of two large estates (more than three hundred hectares) in Carmona under the rubric of agrarian reform and used his subsequent administrative powers over the estates to acquire large portions of the land from the would-be tenant-beneficiaries. Over the years, Casal also took ample advantage of his mayoral discretionary powers over Carmona’s more than three hundred hectares of prime “communal” rice land, which since the late Spanish era has been triennially parcelled out through a lottery to residents of the municipality. Those Carmona residents fortunate enough to win parcels of communal land have found themselves effectively dependent on and indebted to Mayor Casal for provision of irrigation as well as capital, with Casal assuming effective property rights over their parcels in exchange for cash payments and labor services or offering credit and agricultural inputs in exchange for a share of the harvest. In addition, through ownership of a local rice mill, shares in the town’s rural bank, the local franchise from a major fertilizer company, and control over the town’s quota at a nearby sugar mill, Casal has come to occupy a central role in Carmona’s economy. As with the Escarios of Bantayan, occasional challenges to Casal’s preeminence have been effectively suppressed, with his own fortune and supportive provincial political allies bankrolling the vote-buying, intimidation, and violence necessary for electoral victory.

Nevertheless, the economic base of Casal’s protracted rule in Carmona has remained heavily contingent upon continued control over local state office. The communal land is owned by the municipality, and many of the properties that he acquired through unscrupulous means (fraud, intimidation, and murder) over the years are in fact titled to various relatives and cronies, under litigation in local courts, or identified as targets for mandatory redistribution under agrarian reform. Upon Casal’s death or political demise, lawsuits and land reform implementation measures previously impeded through political pressures are certain to lead to a dissolution of the Casal estate and to prevent an heir from asserting control over Carmona through dynastic succession (Sidel 1995, 257–75).

At the provincial level, a pattern similar to that observed in Carmona has also prevailed in Cavite. Lacking a major urban center like Cebu City or a single plantation like, for example, the Yulo clan's 6,000-hectare Canlubang Sugar Estate in neighboring Laguna, Cavite's economy has not provided the basis for prolonged dynastic rule at the provincial level. Nonetheless, the extent of criminal activity and insecurity of land tenure in Cavite (a province that until recently claimed only one congressional seat) has facilitated successive periods of protracted provincial-level boss rule. From 1901 to the inauguration of the Commonwealth era in 1935, for example, famed revolutionary general Emilio Aguinaldo commanded a provincewide political machine in Cavite. Though born into a family of only small-town prominence and modest leasehold claims to tracts of friar land, Aguinaldo's following among influential war veterans in Cavite and throughout Luzon and close links with high-ranking colonial officials afforded him privileged access to state patronage and discretion over personnel appointments in key state agencies. Aguinaldo used these contacts to obtain more than one thousand hectares of prime sugar land on a former friar estate in Cavite as well as generous loans from the Philippine National Bank. Finally, these connections allowed him to play a key brokerage role vis-à-vis local notables in the province, providing assistance in the purchase of former friar estate lands from the Bureau of Lands and protection to cattle rustlers and operators of illegal lotteries (*jueteng*). Yet when Aguinaldo opposed longtime senate president Manuel Quezon for the Commonwealth presidency in 1935, defeat spelled the dissolution of his empire in Cavite. With far greater access to state patronage and a nationwide network of client machine politicians, Quezon won a landslide victory and even succeeded in sweeping in a protégé, Justiniano Montano, as the new Cavite representative in the Assembly (Sidel 1993).

Once installed in the legislature, the interloper Montano began to decimate Aguinaldo's political machine and economic base and entrenched himself at the provincial level for nearly forty years. Montano, a former provincial fiscal whose family owned large landholdings along the coast of the province, pushed through a law that confiscated all former Cavite friar estate land remaining unpaid for, and disqualified as purchasers all those who (like Aguinaldo and his many cronies) had previously been delinquent in payments for the land. Aguinaldista cattle rustlers and *jueteng* operators likewise received harsh treatment from constabulary and police authorities installed at Montano's recommendation. In the legislature, Montano enjoyed considerable discretionary powers over the allocation of Cavite-bound pork barrel funds and the assignment of various national government agency officials to Cavite and to key posts in Manila (e.g., the Bureau of Customs). Moreover, by the late 1950s, following the election of his son Delfin to the provincial governorship, Montano's control over public office had facilitated the conversion of provincial constabulary and other police forces into a "private army" that facilitated massive electoral fraud and violence in Cavite and control over lucrative cigarette smuggling operations along Cavite's extensive Manila Bay coastline. In the 1960s, profits laundered from these smuggling operations, funds from government financing sources, and selective allocation of public works projects facilitated a massive real-estate spree by Montano in the province (Sidel 1993).

Yet these investments failed to provide Montano a permanent base in landholdings invulnerable to the ebbs and flows of national politics and crucial for dynastic succession. Against the backdrop of Montano's support for Ferdinand Marcos's opponents in the presidential elections of 1965 and 1969, constabulary campaigns against smuggling, Commission on Elections crackdowns on election

anomalies, and congressional intrigues to undermine Montano's influence and resources considerably weakened Montano's hold on Cavite. Following Marcos's reelection to the presidency in 1969, Montano's son Delfin lost the gubernatorial race in 1971, and Marcos' declaration of martial law and closing of Congress in September 1972 dashed whatever hopes the Cavite warlord had entertained for a comeback. When Montano returned to the Philippines in 1986 after years in exile, he found his family's properties and political influence in Cavite considerably diminished, and a new boss, Cavite Governor Juanito "Johnny" Remulla (1979–86, 1988–95), already entrenched in the province.

Like Montano before him, Remulla's emergence and entrenchment as Cavite provincial boss owed less to landownership and clientele than to the sponsorship of powerful patrons and the use of elective office to control the commanding heights of the provincial economy. A well-connected Manila lawyer with a small-town following in his Cavite hometown of Imus, Remulla won elevation from the provincial board in the 1960s to the governorship in the 1970s, thanks to the support of his fraternity brother, then-president Ferdinand Marcos. As governor, Remulla facilitated the entry of Marcos cronies into Cavite in real estate, tourist resorts, and industrial estates, and, after Marcos's fall in 1986, reestablished himself as the "godfather" of Cavite's industrial revolution through the consistent application of strongarm tactics to overcome in land disputes and union-busting. Through municipal/provincial board resolutions, moreover, he pushed through the conversion to industrial use of massive tracts of land in Cavite so as to allow exemption from agrarian reform (Coronel 1995).

While servicing big businesses' expanding interests in Cavite, Remulla, like Montano before him, used state powers and resources to amass proprietary wealth commensurate with his political position. Through state bank behest loans, pressures on local landowners, and manipulation of agrarian reform laws, Remulla came to own over one thousand hectares of prime land in various parts of Cavite. While depositing various kickbacks, protection payments, and purloined government funds into the war chest of his political machine, he thus tried to establish a permanent economic base in the province independent of his grip on the state apparatus. Following the elections of 1992, however, in which Remulla worked against winning presidential candidate Fidel Ramos, the longtime Cavite governor's empire began to unravel. Sequestration of Remulla's properties and diversion of appointments, contracts, and pork barrel funds away from his machine led to his defeat at the hands of a well-financed Ramos candidate in the elections of 1995 (Sidel 1995, 369–87).

Over the course of the twentieth century three successive provincial bosses achieved entrenchment in political office and control over the 'commanding heights' of the economy in Cavite. Emerging from small-town obscurity by dint of their prowess and the patronage of national politicians, these three bosses used their mastery over state resources to construct provincewide political machines and economic empires. Exploiting access to government financial institutions and pork barrel funds, influence over the assignment of government personnel, and discretion over legal and illegal contracts and monopoly franchises in Cavite, these three bosses assumed extensive regulatory powers over the provincial economy, amassed "private armies" from among the ranks of the provincial and municipal police forces, and accumulated landholdings in the province commensurate with their political position. Heavily reliant on state office for electoral self-perpetuation and capital accumulation, these three bosses failed to establish bases in proprietary wealth free from state regulation and to pass on their provincial empires in dynasty fashion.

## Conclusion

In both Cavite and Cebu, bosses have emerged and entrenched themselves when and where the commanding heights of the local political economy have lent themselves to monopolistic control. Insofar as such monopolistic control over the local economy has hinged on state-based derivative and discretionary powers, bosses have depended heavily upon superordinate power brokers, whose backing has underpinned their emergence, entrenchment, and survival, and whose hostility has spelled their downfall or death. Insofar as control over the local economy has rested upon a solid base in proprietary wealth outside the purview of state intervention, bosses have withstood the hostile machinations of superordinate power brokers and successfully passed on their empires to successive generations in dynasty form.

While Cavite and Cebu are hardly representative of the Philippines as a whole, the patterns of variation observed within their boundaries shed new light upon local politics in other provinces and illuminate the underlying structures and trajectories of bossism throughout the archipelago. In Ilocos Sur, for example, the predominance of small landholdings and a heavily state-subsidized and state-regulated tobacco industry have underpinned the long rule of two successive provincial bosses, Floro Crisologo (1946–70) and Luis Singson (1971 to the present). In Negros Occidental, by contrast, the concentration of landholdings in large sugar plantations and the establishment of several sugar centrals in the interwar period have prefigured the entrenchment of several district-level dynasties over the years. Other longtime frontier-zone (Beckett 1993; Bentley 1993) and logging-based (Vitug 1993) “warlords” likewise contrast with established landed clans in such provinces as Leyte, Albay, Bukidnon, Capiz, Negros Oriental, and Tarlac. Additional variants include urban bosses who lord over large “squatter” settlements, Chinese immigrant business communities, and/or lucrative illegal economies; Osmeña-style machine politicians operating in condominium with landed clans; Durano-style bosses who evolve into large landowners and local business magnates; and major logging concessionaires. Nationwide, the diversity of bossism thus replicates the full spectrum of bosses found in Cavite and Cebu: state-based, coercion-intensive bosses lacking private economic bases; state-based bosses who do establish private empires and lasting dynasties; dynasties whose proprietary wealth provides the basis for prolonged boss rule; and dynasties combining proprietary wealth, state-based resources, and brokerage services to local landed/commercial oligarchies.

While explaining patterns of variation and change in the degree of “bossism” found at municipal, district, and provincial levels, this essay has also portrayed the structure of Philippine politics in tones strikingly at odds with the dominant paradigms in the scholarly literature on the archipelago. Unlike accounts that depict Philippine politics in terms of clientelist networks and portray violence as symptoms of the breakdown of patron-client ties, this essay has highlighted the longstanding role of coercion in electoral competition and social relations. Local politicians in the Philippines have indeed maintained patron-client relationships, but they have also long relied heavily upon vote-buying, fraud, intimidation, and violence to win elections. In localities where bosses succeed in entrenching themselves, monopoly over coercive means, access to scarce resources, and state office also seriously compromise the terms of exchange that lively electoral competition is assumed to dictate to patrons in need of loyal client supporters.

Moreover, as a corrective to descriptions of the Philippines that stress the tenacity and power of a national oligarchy, this essay has underscored the extent to which violence and control over elected office have offered keys to capital accumulation, *rather than vice versa*. From the Durano's government-financed cement factory to Montano's smuggling rackets, myriad state resources and prerogatives have provided the bases for small-time political operators' accumulation of great wealth and power. Contesting the caricature of an emasculated, "weak" state lacking in capacity and autonomy, this essay has highlighted "the ability of state leaders to use the agencies of the state to get people in the society to do what they want them to do" (Migdal 1988, xiii). While admittedly 'porous' and 'decentralized' in its subordination to several tiers of elected officials, the Philippine state has demonstrated an impressive capacity "to *penetrate* society, *regulate* social relationships, *extract* resources, and *appropriate* or use resources in determined ways" (Migdal 1988, 4). Far from exemplifying a "strong society" and a "traditional elite," the so-called local strongmen or bosses who have 'captured' the state apparatus have often been political entrepreneurs who emerge out of the state and operate largely unconstrained by "any set of organized social interests" (Evans 1989, p. 562). In short, the structure of the Philippine state, rather than that of Philippine society, lies at the root of the "bossism" phenomenon.

As the preceding discussion has suggested, the Philippine state is neither simply a resource for patron-client relations nor merely an object of oligarchical plunder, but also a complex set of predatory mechanisms for the private exploitation and accumulation of the archipelago's human, natural, and monetary resources. The discriminatory enforcement of laws and regulations, discretionary provision of monopoly franchises, concessions, and contracts, and diversionary collection of public revenues and disbursement of public land, funds, and employment have served as the essential instruments of state-based predation. Due to the distinctive institutional legacies of colonial state formation under American auspices, the main predators have been elected government officials and their allies, who through a system of bossism have retained control over the state apparatus throughout the twentieth century.

Beyond the Philippines, the pattern of local politics observed in other countries in Southeast Asia confirms the argument that some form of bossism will emerge with the subordination of a poorly insulated state apparatus to elected officials—that is, with competitive electoral democracy—at a relatively early stage of capitalist development. Local bossism flourished in Burma during the early postindependence period of parliamentary rule, but faded (at least in Burma proper) with the imposition of centralized military rule in 1962 (Taylor 1987, 249–70). Similarly, in early postindependence Indonesia, local gangs (Robinson 1995, 218–34), Outer Island aristocracies (Magenda 1989, chs. 2–4), and, in some regions, the Army's territorial commanders (*panglima*) (Harvey 1974), acted as major local powerbrokers under conditions of lively multiparty electoral competition and weak central Army command. However, with the demise of parliamentary rule and the onset of martial law in 1957 (McVey 1971), and the inception of military rule in 1965, a centralized bureaucratic state emerged to subordinate local aristocracies, magnates, and gangsters alike under provincial governors and territorial Army commanders rotated regularly by the ministries in Jakarta (Magenda 1991, 69–94). Meanwhile, under conditions of highly restricted parliamentary competition and effective one-party rule in Malaysia, locally based politicians have been encapsulated within very limited realms of influence and power (Shamsul 1986), squeezed between the perennial dominance

of the ruling Barisan Nasional (and UMNO within it) and the centralization of the state's coercive apparatuses in Kuala Lumpur (Ahmad 1977).

By contrast, recent years have witnessed the emergence of Philippine-style local bosses in one other Southeast Asian country: Thailand. Since the early 1980s, scholars have noted, the shift of power from the military to a competitively elected parliament in Thailand has encouraged the proliferation of so-called *chao pho* or 'godfathers' known for their service as politicians or vote brokers, local economic preeminence, gangsterlike activities and methods, and control over the local agencies of the state (Anderson 1990; Ockey 1992; Ockey 1993). As suggested above, this pattern of bossism in Southeast Asia's two competitive electoral democracies reflects a generic social formation seen elsewhere in English 'Old Corruption', American urban political machines and country courthouse cliques, Italian *mafia*, and Latin American *caciques*. Such is the promise of 'democratization': local forms of authoritarianism, which will generate new patterns of contestation and resistance—and attract more scholarly attention—in the years to come.

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