

BANDITRY IN CAVITE DURING THE POST WORLD WAR II PERIOD

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INTRODUCTION

Banditry is one of the most neglected areas in the study of peasant unrest in the Philippines. So far, no comprehensive study on this subject matter has yet come to the attention of this writer in spite of the fact that historical documents attest to its frequent occurrence in many parts of the country during the colonial period and even in the recent past. Folk accounts are equally rife with references to *tulisanes* or *ladrones*¹ (bandits) who preyed upon landlords, state authorities and itinerant merchants, sometimes with the benefit of protection from the rural populace. A few of them have become legendary and stories of their Robin Hood exploits remain alive in the rural folk's memory.

This paper is a modest attempt to compensate for the dearth of researches on the nature and dynamics of banditry on the Philippines. It is specifically focused on bandit activities in the province of Cavite during the first two decades following the Second World War. Cavite was chosen because it had the highest incidence of banditry during the period, a phenomenon amply documented by the press and the government. Moreover, the recentness of the subject under study has enabled this writer to interview some of the relatives and friends of bandits in Cavite, as well as military personnel and other people who knew and interacted with them. This paper also probes into the geographic, socio-economic and political features of and conditions in Cavite, which could account for the proliferation of banditry in that province after the Second World War.

BANDITRY IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Banditry is one of the many forms of unrest in peasant societies all over the world. Historical and anthropological literature accounts for two general types of banditry—social and mercenary or petty banditry. Although both types have common features such as commission of robbery, theft and

¹ These terms were used loosely by colonizers to refer to all varieties of peasant protestors.

various acts of violence against persons, they differ on account of the peasants' perception of them. In the words of Hobsbawn,² social bandits are "peasant outlaws whom the lord and state feared as criminals, but who remain within peasant society, and are considered by their people as heroes, as champions . . . perhaps even leaders of liberation and in any case, as men to be admired, helped and supported." The folk idealization of a social bandit consequently turns him into a myth. Mercenary bandits, on the other hand, are generally feared and disliked by the common folk and do not, therefore, receive any form of support and protection from the latter. They are believed to victimize anyone including the poor and their co-villagers.

Sturtevant notes that banditry of both mercenary and social varieties disrupted the countryside throughout the colonial period.³ It became most acute, however, towards the turn of the last century as a result of major changes in the local economy and the socio-political conditions that accompanied the Filipino-American hostilities. The deterioration of administrative control coupled with the spread of famine, pestilence and death created, in Sturtevant's own words, "a contagion of lawlessness."⁴ Nevertheless, once American takeover was assured with the surrender of the leading members of the Philippine Revolutionary Government, a decisive and systematic military campaign put an early end to many insurgent and brigand activities. By 1903, some 4,172 brigands alone, not to mention insurgents, were reportedly killed and captured by government forces.⁵ Some bandits however, managed to hold out with the help of relatives and friends who provided sanctuary and sustenance until they eventually vanished into the rural background or were captured in subsequent campaigns.

The common offenses attributed to brigands in colonial times were cattle rustling, burglary and raiding of towns, in the process terrorizing prominent residents and government officials. Towns with strong police protection such as those in Pampanga⁶ were somehow spared and bandit attacks were instead carried out in remote areas and isolated villages. A foreigner who wrote about the country during the mid-19th century, however, decried the general inefficiency of police forces. He noted that were it not for such inefficiency, none of the Spaniards would have been afraid "to live out of town or make distant excursions to the country from

² E. J. Hobsbawn. *Bandits* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), p. 17.

³ David R. Sturtevant, *Popular Uprisings in the Philippines: 1840-1940* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 115.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁵ *Report of the Philippine Commission* (1902), I. p. 180.

⁶ John A. Larkin, *The Pampangans; Colonial Society in a Philippine Province* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1972; rev. ed., Quezon City: Phoenix Press, 1975), pp. 255-256.

fear of the *tulisanes* or robber bands . . . scattered about in various places and . . . found pursuing their avocations in the neighborhood of the capital (Manila)."⁷

The bandits nearly never operated in their hometown nor victimized villagemates. Some, in fact, shared their booty with friends and relatives and offered swift revenge for any harm done against the latter by out-of-town brigands. But those who preyed upon the peasants often did so cruelly. Not only were peasants robbed of their much need carabaos and horses but also left with homes razed to the ground and crops ravaged. In the Southern Luzon provinces of Laguna, Tayabas (Quezon) and Cavite, brigandage was so rampant during the later part of the 19th century that many fertile lands situated far from the villages were left uncultivated for years.⁸

The following account probably typifies bandit operations during that time:

These robbers plunder the country in bands perfectly organized, and bodies of them are generally existing within a few mile of Manila—the wilds and forests of Laguna being favorite haunts as well as the shores of the Bay of Manila from which they can come by night without leaving a trace of the direction they have taken, in bodies of ten and twenty men at a time in a large banca. They have apparently some friends in Manila, who plan out their enterprises, send them intelligence, and direct their attacks, so that every now and then they are heard of having gutted some rich native's or mestizo's house in the suburbs of Manila, after which they generally manage to get away clear before the alguacils come up.⁹

Peasant reaction to bandit attacks was not always passive and ineffectual. In some villages, organized resistance was carried out and measures were taken to readily forewarn the residents of an impending ambush. In an incident which occurred in Laguna in the 1840's, for example, a party of young male excursionists decided to scare a village and, in jest, fired their guns into the air taking care not to harm anyone. Upon hearing the shots, the villagers immediately concluded that their village was under siege by *tulisanes*. The males gathered and arming themselves with all sorts of weapons, prepared for the anticipated attack. The women and children were also hastily brought to safety while a request for military assistance was dispatched by the *gobernadorcillo* to the governor of the province.¹⁰

⁷ Robert MacMicking, *Recollections of Manila and the Philippines During 1848, 1849 and 1850*, edited and annotated by Nestor J. Netzorg (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1967), p. 119.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Alfred Marche, *Luzon and Palawan*. Translated from French by Carmen Ojeda and Jovita Castro (Manila: Filipiniana Book Guild, 1970), p. 75; Paul Frost de La Gironiere, *Adventures of a Frenchman in the Philippines*. Rev. 9th ed. (Manila: Printer's Compositors, 1972).

⁹ Macmicking, *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 89-91.

But while the people were passive or utmost defensive in their treatment of bandits, the colonial government took the outlaws in all seriousness. Minor offenders were flogged, tied to a horse and dragged around town, confined in jail for periods of time or subjected to hard labor. The more serious crimes ended in public execution.¹¹

Agrarian unrest in the 1930's in several provinces of Central and Southern Luzon once again paved the way for the proliferation in these areas of bandit gangs. Some "slipped in and out" of various peasant organizations¹² and criss-crossed areas already brewing with peasant discontent. Two notable social bandit groups of this period were the Lope de la Rosa and Asedillo-Encallado bands. Another outlaw whose Robin Hood exploits have become a legend among the people of Cavite was Santiago Ronquillo or "Tiagong Akyat". He is said to have figured prominently in many peasant-landlord conflicts and became a fugitive for having been falsely charged of killing an oppressive *facendero*.¹³

The persistence of brigandage during the colonial period may be linked to the various socio-economic and political as well as physical conditions prevailing then. The extent of deterioration of peasant life determined, among the factors, by the degree of tenant-landlord antagonism, the greed of usurers and merchants as well as the frequency of typhoons and other calamities, all affected the ebb and flow, of brigandage. In addition, there were always the topographical features of the countryside and the degree of administrative effectiveness. It is apparent that bandits proliferated in times and areas of weak administrative control and of heightened agrarian difficulties.

CAVITE IN POSTWAR YEARS

The period following the Second World War saw another rise in crimes attributed to bandit gangs. It must be noted that the devastation brought about not only by the four years of Japanese occupation but more so by the American Liberation forces, was severe and extensive. It left the Philippines in economic shatters and with millions of destitute and sick inhabitants. Against this backdrop, roving groups of hungry and jobless young men stalked the countryside to scavenge and steal, while the communist-led Huk movement defied government order to return to "normal life" and instead tried to carry on their struggle to a revolutionary end. Thus, while a good part of the country was still in rubble, Filipino peasants had to come to grips with the disturbances created by petty out-

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 120-121; George Farwell, *Mask of Asia: The Philippines* (Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 1966), p. 60;

¹² Benedict J. Kervkiet, *The Huk Rebellion; A Study of Peasant Revolution in the Philippines* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1979), pp. 37-38.

¹³ Lamberto V. Avellana, *Ronquillo Alias Tiagong Akyat* (n.d.), typescript.

laws and by military encounters between government forces and Huk guerrillas. The peace and order situation was such that the government, with extensive American support, channeled enormous resources into the containment of all forms of peasant unrest.

After dismantling the backbone of the communist movement in the 1950s the national government again turned its attention to the containment of brigandage. Despite its efforts, military figures in 1965 still indicated a total of 68 bandit gangs with an aggregate strength of 643 or an average membership of 9.5 per group.¹⁴ A sizeable number of these groups operated in Central and Southern Luzon, particularly in Cavite.¹⁵

The province of Cavite lies 17 kilometers south of Metro Manila. It is bounded in the east by the provinces of Rizal and Laguna, in the southeast by Batangas and in the west, by the China Sea. It has a land area of 1,287.6 square kilometers, 85.15% of which was still considered unclassified public forest about a decade ago.¹⁶ The province is organized into 19 municipalities and three cities.

Cavite's geography presents striking contrasts. Its northern and north-eastern portions are generally flat while the south is generally characterized by rolling hinterlands and low mountains. The most rugged terrain lies along the Maragondon border in the southwest, where the mountains of Dos Picos are located. Until recently, most of the villages in the central and southern regions were inaccessible. There were few roads traversing the area and the ones that existed were surrounded by thick vegetative cover that became favorite haunts of bandits bands. The national road leading to Tagatay City, a popular tourist and vacation spot, and those connecting Cavite to adjacent provinces, were particularly vulnerable to bandit ambush during the fifties and sixties.

Agriculture has traditionally been the main source of livelihood with fishing and mineral production as subsidiary industries. Farming mainly involves the production of rice and a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, coffee, nuts and coconuts, while animal husbandry includes the backyard raising of cows, goat and poultry. Like the rest the country, the agricultural economy of the province suffered tremendously during the last World War. It took more than a decade to reach and surpass the pre-war levels of farm production. In 1948, for instance, rice production was still 20% lower than the output of 1938 while total cultivated land area was down

¹⁴ Jose M. Crisol, "Peace and Order in the Philippines Today," *Fookien Times Yearbook* (1954), p. 48.

¹⁵ Flaviano P. Oliveros "Keeping the Peace in the Philippines," *Fookien Times Yearbook* (1965), p. 101.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, "History of Cavite Province," (Trece Martires, Office of the Provincial Governor, n.d.), typescript.

Population of Cavite, 1939-1970

<i>Province/ Municipality</i>	1970	1960	1948	1939
CAVITE	520,180	378,138	262,550	238,581
Municipality of:				
Alfonso	17,703	17,477	11,714	9,797
Amadeo	13,030	10,560	7,960	6,402
Bacoor	48,440	27,267	20,453	16,130
Carmona	20,123	8,212	5,597	5,394
Cavite City	75,739	54,891	35,052	38,254
Dasmariñas	17,948	11,744	9,012	8,323
Gen. Emilio Aguinaldo ¹	10,275	7,301	5,002	4,599
General Trias	29,635	21,618	15,963	16,611
Imus	43,686	31,660	23,685	18,039
Indang	24,635	20,268	15,989	15,388
Kawit	28,447	19,352	13,970	10,783
Magallanes	7,294	5,436	3,998	4,095
Maragondon	12,743	9,994	8,465	9,449
Mendez-Nuñez	12,333	11,427	7,480	6,393
Naic	28,723	27,818	15,222	13,813
Noveleta	10,560	7,029	5,003	4,241
Rosario	23,817	16,227	11,894	9,894
Silang	38,999	28,631	20,292	18,909
Tagaytay City	10,907	7,203	5,233	1,657
Tanza	32,691	24,256	18,183	16,328
Ternate	5,930	5,345	2,383	4,082
Trece Martires City	6,522	4,422	—	—

¹ Bailen was renamed General Emilio Aguinaldo June 19, 1965 under R.A. No. 4346.

Source: Philippines. National Development and Economic Authority. *1970 Census of Population and Housing*. Manila: NCSO, 1970.

by 2%.¹⁷ Tenancy remained at its peak after the war with about 56% of all farmers still under the share crop, share crop-cash and cash tenancy systems and cultivating 55% of all farms in the province.¹⁸ Moreover, the traditional methods of farming utilized less than fifty percent of the productive capacity of the lands. It must be noted, however, that the agricultural communities mainly located in the central and southern regions were the ones greatly affected by these developments. Many of the northern towns were not that heavily dependent on agriculture in view of the presence of manufacturing, construction, mineral production, commercial fishing and other industries.

In contrast to the sluggish performance of the agricultural economy was the continuous increase in population. The "baby boom" which hit

¹⁷ Philippine (Rep.), Presidential Economic Staff, *Provincial Profile of Cavite* (Manila: PES, 1969), p. 19.

¹⁸ Commonwealth of the Philippines. Commission of the Census. *Census of the Philippines: 1939* Vol. III, Reports By Provinces for the Census of Agriculture (1940),

many countries after the war was much in evidence in Cavite. In years that followed, its social implications were readily apparent. From 1934 to 1948, and despite the war, Cavite's population increased by 10%.¹⁹ Then from 1948 to 1960, it swelled by 44%, exceeding national growth by about 3%.²⁰ This development correspondingly increased the size of the dependent population, putting further strain on what was already a weak economy. It is possibly the inability of the economy to cope with the increasing population, particularly the latter's growth of subsistence needs and the demand to stave off idle labor, which partly accounts for the resurgence of banditry and outlawry in postwar years. Moreover, the existence of a wide expanse of rugged terrain close to thickly populated and urbanized towns in the north and nearby provinces, where potential victims were plentiful, further maintained an atmosphere conducive to banditry. Hobsbawn notes that "It is commonplace that brigands flourish in remote and inaccessible areas such as mountains, trackless plains, forests or estuaries with their labyrinth of creeks and waterways . . ."²¹ In Cavite, however, banditry flourished not only in similar places but practically everywhere and the hinterlands seem to have served mainly as temporary refuge in times of intensified government manhunts.

Characteristics of Banditry

On April 20, 1954, ten municipalities were placed under complete Constabulary control. The main reason for this was the alleged inability of local police forces to contain the rise of banditry and other forms of lawlessness. Charges and counter-charges among rival politicians were rife with innuendos about police cuddling of bandit gangs in their respective territories. There were accusations against politicians using bandits to kill other politicians, disturb election proceedings and carry out illegal money-making activities like carnapping and smuggling of firearms and imported cigarettes. Not a single politician was ever proven guilty of these crimes, although political aides and allegedly conniving bandits were killed or suffered detention, supposedly because of these reasons. In the same year, one of Cavite's representatives to the national congress gave a privilege speech describing the grim situation in his province. He noted the existence of 130 "notorious outlaws" most of whom were organized in gangs with five to twenty members. He further claimed that from 1946 to 1953, there were recorded 24 kidnapping cases, 147 murders (90 percent of which were unsolved), 34 highway robberies and "hundreds of offenses of theft and petty robbery."²² Said figures were even considered insignificant since

¹⁹ Philippines (Rep.). Census of Statistics. *Census of the Philippines: 1948*, p. 553.

²⁰ Philippines (Rep.), PES, *Provincial Profile of Cavite*, op. cit., p. 12.

²¹ Ibid.

²² E. J. Hobsbawn, op. cit., p. 21.

80% of the crime committed were not actually reported and publicized.²³ The situation remained the same in the following years. By 1965, Cavite was already first in the Southern Tagalog provinces in frequency of murder, robbery, illegal possession of firearms, holdups and carnapping.²⁴ Most disturbing was the manner in which brigandage was committed. Ambushes were undertaken in broad daylight and sometimes even under the very noses of Constabulary forces. Bandits were frequently seen in public openly carrying high-powered firearms. Their activities did not, in fact, diminish despite many captures and surrenders in the mid-fifties since new groups kept surfacing all the time.

The composition and operation of bandit gangs show striking similarities. Many of the brigands started the life of a fugitive at the very early age of 16 to 25. Members of the same gang tended to come from the same municipalities or districts with friendships dating back to early teens. A number were even found to be related by blood and affinity. While some of the bandits were already married before becoming outlaws, most got married or entered into common-law relationships in the midst of their roving career. The prison record of a particular bandit showed, for example, that he was unmarried but had four natural children. Another bandit managed to maintain at least two families in separate municipalities. If these facts have any sociological importance, it is simply that the bandits were just as integrated as others in the social mainstream and lived almost normal lives for the most part of their career as fugitives.

Bandit gangs maintained specific territorial domains or areas of operation into which all others were not supposed to encroach. Such arrangement was generally honored by every group although some reported cases of bandit killings were attributed by the government to its violation. Coalitions between and among the gangs also existed, involving mutual defense in case of Constabulary attack and an exchange of information vital to each other's security. A particular case involved a bandit who started by joining the group of his co-villagers. After a few years of learning the ropes, so to speak, he left to form his own group but remained loyal to his old bandit leader. While this may appear to be an isolated case, the size of membership of brigand bands involved in publicized am-

²³ *Congressional Record*, Vol. 1, No. 31, Third Congress, First Regular Session (April 27, 1954), pp. 2006-20014; Some of the bandit leaders whose names and offenses were publicized are Nicasio Caminero alias "Camerino" (surrendered, 1954); Nestor Lumabos (captured, 1956); Esing Antonio; Guillermo "Ision" Teodoro; Felipe "Jose" Ferrer (surrendered, 1956); Rudolfo Legaspi (captured, 1956); Gregorio "Orion" Gonzales (surrendered, 1955), Felix Rementilla (surrendered, 1958); Aurelio Solid of the Solis gang (killed, 1963); Tinio Paper of Pitong Gatang gang (killed, 1963); Emong Mabuyo of Amora gang (killed, 1963); and Leonardo Manecio alias "Nardong Putik" (killed, 1971).

²⁴ *Ibid.*

bushes would seem to indicate that some alliances went beyond pragmatic considerations and may, in fact, reflect the beginnings of organization beyond the band unit. Another possible explanation may have been the high incidence of attrition. Outside the nucleus composed of three to four members, band participation seemed flexible, if not unstable, and allowed easy inclusion or purging of members.

The mercenary or common bandits were sometime ruthless to peasants, not to mention their treatment of the rich, passing tourists and military personnel. They took the farmers' carabaos, crops and farm implements and the jewelry, money, vehicle and other marketable personal belongings of the rich. Highway robbery was a particularly popular bandit exploit in those days, involving commercial vehicles plying the Manila-Batangas and Manila-Laguna routes. On some occasions, passengers were not only divested of their money and jewelry but even the clothes they wore. A bandit named Nestor Lumabos recounted upon his arrest in 1956 that he and his gang were successful in waylaying vehicles because they always posed as soldiers and threatened their victims with the use of high powered firearms.²⁵ In addition to cattle rustling and highway robbery, some bandit groups pillaged villages. The following account illustrates how such offense was carried out:

Heavily armed bandits in fatigue uniforms last night raided sitio Andingan, Buenavista, this town, killed a farmer, and then fled with 22 carabaos and two hostages after carrying out the most daring display of dissident effrontery by "zoning up" the whole village.

Santos Katapang, the barrio lieutenant, who was among those forced to walk over three rugged kilometers by the bandits, returned to the barrio . . . today with his constituents and immediately reported the incident and the cold-blooded slaying of his assistant, Sotero Luby, when the latter tried to escape to Mayor Prudencion Campana.

Katapang said that the bandits even displayed Luba's bullet-riddled body before the cowed inhabitants with the stern warning that a similar fate awaited those who would attempt to escape.

The barrio lieutenant related before army investigators that the bandits descended on the barrio at about 11 p.m. yesterday and forced an unidentified woman to round up all the barrio residents "on orders of the army."

Following the woman as she knocked on every door, the bandit awaited at the foot of the stairs and hogtied everyone who came down. At the same time, the other outlaws rounded up the carabaos in the barrio and left ahead with the animals.

At this moment, the barrio people realized that the men in fatigue uniforms were not soldiers so some of them, the women especially, started to cry, but they were silenced by the bandits. One of the housewives was slapped on the face.

²⁵ Johnny F. Villasanta, "Cavite: (Province of Peace and Disorder)," *Weekly Graphic*, Vol. 29, No. 34, (February 13, 1963), p.10.

Then the barrio population was herded, forced to walk ahead of the armed band on the way to Amadeo. After a few kilometers of plodding in the dark, Lubay managed to untie himself and made attempt to slip away, but he was spotted by one of the bandits and brought down with rifle fire.

The bandits later realized that the helpless caravan was slowing down their escape, so they released everyone, but not without telling them that they would be bringing the bandit's wrath upon themselves if they ever tried to show the route taken by the brigands to the soldieres. To make sure that no one disobeyed the orders, the bandits brought two of the barrio residents along as hostages.²⁶

Social Banditry

Among the hundreds of bandits who came and go during the postwar period, only one, Leonardo Manecio or "Narding Putik earned the respect and devotion of many residents in the province. The people's liking for him paralleled only the government's intent to picture him as the most dangerous outlaw of the time. He was known by the appellations "mud", "terror" and "village guard", terms which describe how the people regarded him. His life as a fugitive practically spanned two and a half decades (1946-1971) although about half of this period was spent intermittently behind bars. The press faithfully kept track of his activities and no less than three presidents of the country were directly involved in plans to capture or make him surrender.

This social bandit's personal background would not probably be any different from his mercenary counterparts. But what made him different from all the rest was the manner he related to the people and how the people in turn related to him. He was described as a helpless victim of power play among politicians, a kind, extremely good-looking and warm-hearted man whose fearless and invulnerable image served to scare other brigands from victimizing his poor relatives, friends and co-villagers. The man was born of a peasant family on October 25, 1924 in the town of Dasmariñas. He finished the fifth level of elementary education, after which he became, in turns, a farmer, a driver for a passenger bus, and a laborer for hire who took on varied short-term contractual services. At one point, after his first release from prison in 1947, he even served in the police force of his hometown and a security guard of a politician from Manila. It was probably on these occasions that he developed his marksmanship, a skill that was to be his trademark in years to come. The man's first brush with the law came in 1945 when, at the age of 19, he was charged but eventually acquitted of the crime of "brigandage" or robbery in band. His notoriety in the eyes of the government came years later

²⁶ "Army Nabs 4 Rustlers After Fight," *Manila Times*, (January 19, 1956), p. 27.

after an involvement in two cases of massacre, one of which included two Constabulary officers, four enlisted men and two civilian operatives. In addition were nineteen other convictions involving illegal possession of firearms, evasion of service, theft, robbery in band, illegal detention, kidnapping, assault on persons in authority and many others. While pleading guilty to some of the charges, he, however, vehemently denied having committed the others, claiming that they were fabricated by politicians who wanted him silenced for his extensive knowledge of their illegal activities.

In the classical formulation of a social bandit, the sharing of the loot, so to speak, was among the qualities that rose above all his misdeeds. In the case of Cavite's Robin Hood, it was his unusual sensitivity to the problems of the peasants which endeared him to them. He had the cunning ability to mediate in inter-family feuds, marital spats and bring forth immediate justice or revenge to those aggrieved by other bandits, petty criminals and even by government agents and politicians. His influence over underworld characters was believed to be so strong that he could negotiate the return of carabaos and other stolen items on appeal of the victims. He also mediated between warring bandit gangs and exerted pressures on them not to harass certain families or villages. As a high ranking official then conceded:

"Kung may nakawan man o harangan o holdapan, hindi na rin dumudulog sa gobyerno ang mga biktima sapagkat wala rin daw mangyayari. Ayon na nga sa mga bali-balita, kay Putik na nagsusumbong ang mga iyon, at nagkakamit naman agad diumano ng hinihinging katarungan." (If there are indeed robberies, kidnappings or holdups, these are hardly reported to the government since the people know that doing so will not get them anywhere. The word that gets around is that people go to Putik ["Mud"] instead of the government and in the end, get the justice they have come for).²⁷

For said reasons, some of the rural folks of Cavite welcomed the social bandit's presence in their villages, notwithstanding the danger of exposure to government forces who were always hot on his trail. On one occasion, he rejected the surrender appeal of former President Magsaysay because the people supposedly did not want him to do so. He said that

"These people look up to me as their best guarantor that peace will be kept in these barrios. This is no idle talk. You can ask the barrio folks themselves."²⁸

In order to evade arrest, he moved from one village to the other, seeking sanctuary among friends, relatives and those who owed him debts

²⁷ "Murder One, Kidnap Two as Hostages," *Manila Times* (January 20, 1956), p. 15.

²⁸ Rogelio L. Ordoñez, "Ang Kabite at ang mga Montano," *Asia-Philippine Leaders*, Vol. 1, No. 4, (April 30, 1971), p. 47.

of gratitude. There were also times when he hid in distant provinces and returned to Cavite only after government pursuit efforts cooled down. He had supporters from all kinds of people: politicians, law enforcers, professionals and plain town folks. As an informant aptly put it: "How else could he have survived the long years of running from the law if we did not clothe, feed and shield him?" Although arrested and detained on many occasions, people believed that he would have been caught more often or met an early death, if not for his magical powers. A golden image tied to his necklace and worn all the time served as an amulet. Another story tells of an old man who bequeathed him the eternal power of invulnerability so long as not a drop of blood would spill from his head. Thus, when he finally died in the hands of the law on October 10, 1971, people explained that it was because the spell was broken when an earlier accident caused the bleeding of his forehead. A few others believe that he was not the one killed on that fateful day—he is still alive and roams freely among the people. Nevertheless, a marker bearing his name now stands in a village cemetery and eye-witness accounts of his funeral attest to the hundreds of people who came and mourned for him.

CONCLUSION

The factors which brought about the resurgence of banditry in Cavite in postwar years were multifarious but not exactly unique to this place or period. The same or similar factors were to a large extent responsible for the existence of this phenomenon in the past and in other places. Hobsbawn's claim about the universality of banditry is again borne out by this study, yet nuances do occur and such have to be recorded and studied for they may reflect adaptations to changes impinging on rural society and possible variations to already noted features of banditry. In the case under study, the failure of the agricultural economy to keep pace with other societal developments, particularly the increase of population and corresponding growth of employment requirements and other social services, is seen as the most crucial factors that created a crisis situation and eventually, peasant restiveness. Moreover, the development which accrued from the postwar establishment of non-agricultural industries in the northern part of the province led to an uneven or lopsided pattern of income distribution where the agricultural communities most situated in the central and southern areas were generally poorer than those in the north. The slow expansion of areas for cultivation as well as persistence of traditional methods of farming were the factors that made for low agricultural production. On the other hand, the income generated by the non-agricultural sector paved the way for material progress such that by the sixties the north already had the "highest number of television aerials,

electrical appliances and private cars in the province."²⁹ It is no wonder that the bandits who came from the depressed farming sector often swopped down on their affluent neighbors in the north. The striking contrast in their quality of life further magnified by glaring disparities in material benefits, somehow stimulated discontent.

The geographic features of the province, specifically the existence of rugged terrains, made further inaccessible by the lack of efficient transport and communication systems, also influenced the growth of banditry. It must be noted, however, that the existence per se of hinterlands and other inaccessible areas may not automatically stimulate the condition of lawlessness. What is probably crucial is the proximity of suitable places for so-called tactical retreat to areas fertile with potential victims and where the crimes are actually committed. The speed by which bandits could escape from their pursuers or disappear from the scene of the crime seems to be an important adaptive requirement to modern times where faster modes of transport and more effective weapons undermine their very existence. For the social bandit, however, the factor of geography may not be so vital as the extent of support and protection he could get from the people.

The political situation prevailing during the period complimented the aforementioned factors. Political rivalries, often verging on violence, prevailed throughout the province and fragmented the population into various political enclaves. The ineptness of the local bureaucracy particularly in undertaking meaningful social reforms, and giving redress to the problems of the people also aggravated the condition. Although bandits have generally operated independently and outside the realm of politics, some manifestations indicate the contrary. As mentioned earlier, rival politicians frequently accused each other of using bandits to carry out political crimes and promote their political interests. Such development is significant in view of the assumed non-political character of banditry. Unfortunately, this paper has barely pursued this issue. Further studies on this aspect is definitely necessary to determine the more intricate relationship and theoretical implications between banditry and modern politics. Hobsbawn notes:

"Being extremely archaic and indeed pre-political, banditry and Mafia are difficult to classify in modern political terms. They can be used by various classes, and indeed sometimes as in the case of the Mafia, become primarily the instruments of the men of power or of aspirations to power and consequently *cease to be in any sense movements of social protest.*"³⁰
(underscoring supplied)

²⁹ "Outlaw Claims Barrio People Fear Rustlers," *Manila Chronicle*, March 22, 1956), p. 2.

³⁰ Gorgonio P. Fojas, "A Closer Look at Cavite," *Weekly Nation*, (July 5, 1968), p. 40.

³¹ E. J. Hobsbawn, *Primitive Rebels* (New York: Federico A. Praeger, 1959), p. 6.

Both the mercenary and social varieties of banditry existed, with the former largely dominating the latter in number and each somehow largely influencing the other. Social banditry, in particular, emerged from the very conditions of lawlessness and politico-economic instability. Its social role was made more relevant by the failure of the government to respond to the people's need for justice and protection. It must be stressed, however, that the popularity of a social bandit like Nardong Putik among the people was limited by certain considerations. There were those who also despised him and they were probably the people or those related to the people whom he had hurt in the course of helping others. He seems to be most popular today in his hometown and in places where he was known to have stayed for periods of time. A careful sociological analysis of his career as a fugitive indicates the preeminence of the principles of kinship and other traditional patterns of Filipino alliances. Many of those who joined his band or became loyal supporters were his relatives, close friends and/or villagemates. The same holds true for those who provided sanctuary within and outside the province. This observation therefore, indicates that Robin Hoodism follows, to a large extent, the same particularistic principles that have influenced social institutions in the Philippines.

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