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Mafia-style Domination: The Philippine Province of Pampanga

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Summary

This PRIF-report analyses provincial politics in Pampanga, one of the economically most developed provinces of the Philippines outside Metro-Manila. The report argues that the observable patterns of local domination in this province can best be likened to Mafia-style domination.

That is not to say, however, that organised crime dominates Pampanga. The concept of Mafia-style domination has been developed and applied to Pampanga in order to describe a social order in which political domination is gauged in the language of kinship, relying on a combination of patronage and intimidation/violence that together closely resemble patterns exhibited by the Italian Mafia from the mid 19th century into the 1960s.

In the first section, the report develops a model of Mafia-style domination that is derived from an analysis of the 'traditional' Mafia. Mafia is understood not as a specific enculturated form of organized crime, but as a hybridised and fairly holistic system of political, economic and social domination, bridging and distorting tradition and modernity alike.

The report puts forth that the institution of the Mafia ought to be understood as a subtype of clientelism, sharing the overwhelming focus on (real or imagined) kinship relations linking individuals in networks. This is accomplished by horizontally linking 'friends' – thereby building personal alliance systems – and vertically by connecting patrons to clients, remaking the former into leaders and the latter into followers.

Similar to all other forms of clientelism, Mafia-style domination aims at treating public or collective goods as private goods that can be distributed to followers and clients in a non-categorical, discretionary way in the form of gifts and favours, highlighting and generating personal dyadic bonds and obligations.

That which differentiates the Mafia from other forms of patron-client relationships is the extent of outright criminal behaviour and, more importantly, an "emphasis on the element of violence" (Hess 1998: 176). The Mafia dominates through patronage and the selective application of violence that is inherent in the hierarchical relationship between patron and client. It aims for territorial sovereignty, most often by establishing an alternative order that rivals that of the state. It may, however, also attempt to corrupt or capture the state. When successful, Mafia-style leaders emerge as politicians at various levels of government, creating an effective fusion of Mafia and government.

From the perspective of the state, Mafia is criminal not only in that it is an organisation engaged in criminal business activities but also in that it poses a fundamental challenge, as it assumes the most fundamental prerogative of the state: the coercive assertion of a normative and 'legal' order aimed at regulating local society. Local perception could differ significantly from that of the state's, as the Mafia-prescribed and enforced order may be endowed with high levels of legitimacy if successfully linked to the local population's cultural and normative codes.

The analysis of Pampanga is divided into four parts, focusing on the oligarchic structure, the role of patronage, violence, and the criminal element of business.

The first part of the analysis investigates the 'government-business' nexus that qualifies the local political system as an oligarchy – i.e. a polity dominated by the rich. The analysis of oligarchy is based on two concrete examples of an established oligarchic family: the Nepomucenos, whose fortunes reach back to over a century; and, an oligarchic newcomer, the Piñeda family, that illustrates how new actors can emerge and rise in an oligarchy centred around families and strongmen. Whereas it cannot be resolved whether it was wealth that bred political power or vice versa in the case of the Nepomucenos, the Piñeda's rise commenced in the late 1980s with the family's control of sizable financial resources, which most probably derived from the management of illegal gambling activities, and the social power that comes with the control of a dense network of *cobradors* (collectors). These *cobradors*, as followers of their patron, can also be utilised as a 'vote-bank' and offered to politicians in need of an additional electorate or campaign personnel. Furthermore, the Piñedas have, from the outset, established a reputation for being highly benevolent patrons, caring for the people in their territory, earning them a significant degree of gratitude in response. Taken together, this enabled the family to assume political control of their home municipality of Lubao in the 1990s and extend their influence to the provincial and the national levels from there. The latter was achieved through financial support for other politicians and artificial kinship relations to one of the most important provincial political families of Pampanga and the Philippines: the Macapagal-Arroyos. In 2010, Lilia Piñeda finally managed to become provincial governor.

The second part of the analysis is devoted to the most essential basis for everyday Mafia-style domination: patronage. Patronage is notoriously difficult to pin down; nevertheless, as a first approximation of the phenomenon, various strategies and techniques of patronage – ones that can be retraced in Pampanga – are presented. These include tampering with public contracting, overstaffing public enterprises, arbitrary distribution of 'bonuses' to bogus NGOs and the outright buying of votes, only to mention a few. The focus of this segment, however, is on the interaction of the supply and demand side of patronage and its symbolic presentation related to the present governor Lilia Piñeda. The cognitive basis of patronal care and clientelist submission are pinpointed here. While deliverance of (particularistic) goods is at the heart of successful patronage, this analysis puts forth the crucial role of imagery in the defining of relationships and the satisfying of emotional needs in bonding. In the concrete case of Lilia Piñeda, media and church alike construct her as a benevolent, caring and highly religious leader, whose legitimacy rests not on her democratic credentials, but on her exemplary Christian traits such as compassion, providence, charity and magnanimity.

The third section illustrates that Mafia-style domination does not rely on patronage alone but combines it with coercion. It ultimately rests on the patron's capacity and willingness to employ violence in furthering his/her interest and safeguarding their patronal position, when necessary. In Pampanga, political violence carried out or assigned by the dominant forces exists in both horizontal and vertical form. Horizontal violence – structuring inter-oligarchic competition – occurs very seldom. Similar to many other regions of the Philippines, pre-election peace-pacts signed by the contenders for a political position are utilised when necessary to minimise the potential of conflict escalating beyond control. The symbolism underlying these pacts underlines the fact that factual sovereignty

does not lie with the state in many respects, but among contending elites, who voluntarily decide on whether or not to comply with state law and regulations and practice their 'right' to election fraud, intimidation or political assassination.

When violence does come into play in Pampangan political competition, it is directed at the supporters of opponents, not against the opponents themselves. The most critical cases in the past years were connected to the Piñeda family and the failure of Lilia Piñeda to become elected as governor in 2007. After this election, several village heads were assassinated, all of whom had initially promised to support Piñeda (and had supposedly been paid for that support), ultimately deciding to support another last-minute candidate.

Violence has also been constrained in top-down relationships. Nevertheless, two forms are worth mention: 1) extrajudicial killings (EJK) against political activists and suspected members of armed revolutionary movements and 2) police shoot-outs, closely resembling rub-out operations, being that there are no victims among the police. Shoot-outs between police and criminal elements rose dramatically with the advent of the new governor Piñeda, suggesting a certain degree of connection to the governor's hard-line stance on crime. Extrajudicial killings – as documented by the Commission on Human Rights – clearly occur more frequently in Pampanga compared to all other neighbouring provinces in Central Luzon. This corresponds to other data that also puts Pampanga in first place nationwide with respect to EJKs for the years 2001 to 2010. As complete impunity is still in place, this type of violence cannot easily be assigned to individual perpetrators. However, its temporal spread over the past years suggests that it cannot solely be attributed to the Armed Forces' counterinsurgency campaign.

The fourth and final focus of the analysis is on illegal business and its connection to the local elite, exemplified by *jueteng*: a widely popular illegal game of chance. Even though there have been no convictions, there is a copious amount of evidence that shows Rodolfo Piñeda (the present governor's husband) as being the most important operator in Pampanga and other parts of central Luzon. The Macapagal-Arroyo family likewise seems to have profited from the illegal numbers game, as well as many (most?) local police officers from the municipal up to the regional level. If the estimate made by a former president of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines is any approximation of the truth, then about 80 percent of local politicians are involved in the business in one form or another, mostly accepting protection money and, at times, also directly operating gambling syndicates or controlling local franchises.

The provincial analysis reveals that all elements of Mafia-style domination are in place in Pampanga, yet in a form that generally minimises the actual use of violence. The example of Pampanga – being one of the most modernized provinces in the Philippines – illustrates that this phenomenon can indeed endure, even in a setting where its traditional base – large-scale landholding and a dominant agrarian sector – are on the wane.

The Pampangan example also shows that economic modernisation poses no threat to Mafia-style domination so long as the leading oligarchs favour 'booty' or 'crony' capitalism. This refers to the situation in which the economic structure (irrespective of sector) continues to revolve around families and economic actors, aiming at cornering rents

gained by preferential access to the state and local monopoly franchises. Cross-sectoral family business interests inhibit the development of sectoral economic interests and the nexus between political and economic power undermines functional differentiation. The broad acceptance of patronage limits rule-bound practices that would otherwise respect state law and rely on categorical solutions to the problems of distribution. Criminal activity is understood and legitimated in the language of patron-client relationships which not only serve the interests of the dominant actors (and profiteers) but also satisfy demand by the broad mass of people.

This type of domination is able to survive even in a fairly strong state if the state has successfully been captured by the elite itself. Formally rule of law still exists, however, in practice it has successfully been subverted by a non-functioning security-sector, resulting in complete impunity. In order to catch the empirical phenomenon, rule-of-law should be reframed as rule-by-law. Rule-by-law effectively turns the law into an instrument geared towards upholding the interests of the dominant class, opposed to the advancement of interests by disadvantaged groups. It also combines well with electoral democracy when the latter is successfully saturated with patronal imagery. In the Philippines, democracy provides an ideal frame for perpetual balancing of a multitude of actors who put no trust in its very rules. They utilise the formal framework in a perennial competition for power that regularly oversteps the credo of democracy.

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1. Introduction

In this PRIF-Report, the reader's attention is directed to the province of Pampanga in Central Luzon, the northernmost major island in the Philippines. It gives a glimpse into the way in which domination¹ is upheld in the Philippines on the provincial level. In approaching the provincial level, this report (as did an earlier one on Negros Occidental (Kreuzer 2011a)) focuses on a level of politics that only rarely enjoys the limelight of scholarly consideration within Philippine political analyses, most either dealing with the national or local (municipal) levels. Conceptually, the report harks back to an earlier one that determined Philippine politics to be a type of domination that may be defined as Mafia-style domination (Kreuzer 2009).

In order to avoid misunderstanding, it should be made clear from the outset that Mafia is not simply understood as organized crime but used as a sensitising concept for "a special method for the consolidation of ruling positions" (Hess 1998: 6). Mafia then is a specific way of organising and dominating society. As such, it can best be understood as a subtype of clientelism.

A clientelistic society relies on dyadic relations between individuals, both horizontally and vertically. It is established and upheld by networking, i.e. by connecting dyadic relationships between individuals. Horizontal networking may be likened to alliance-building between actors of a similar status that mobilize their personal networks in support of other actors. Vertically, individual followers are linked to the same patron in the form of a multitude of follower-relationships (Landé 1973: 105).

Clientelistic societies are characterized by a dearth of public or collective goods. Most goods are privatized by the individual patrons in order to be dispensed as particular favours to their clients. This results in the systemic neglect of certain principles of 'Weberian' bureaucratic politics: rule-of-law, categorical goals and equal treatment of individuals of the same category. In social practice, "private goals may be attained in disregard of the law by members of all social strata" (Landé 1973: 117).

While clientelism is a first approximation of the local order of Pampanga, this report argues that a closer analysis can provide us with a much more substantial and differentiated

1 The term domination is used as an English translation of Max Weber's German-language concept of *Herrschaft*, meaning "the probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed by a given group of persons. [...] Domination ('authority') in this sense may be based on the most diverse motives of compliance: all the way from simple habituation to the most purely rational calculation of advantage. Hence every genuine form of domination implies a minimum of voluntary compliance, that is, an interest (based on ulterior motives or genuine acceptance) in obedience" (Weber 1968: 212). Domination is preferred to the more 'modern' term of governance, as it much more visibly focuses on several core features associated with the concepts of power and authority: e.g. coercion, obedience and legitimacy, whereas governance tends to neglect the phenomena of power and coercion that are crucial to this series of case studies.

model, one that should be understood as a sub-type of clientelism: Mafia-style domination. Oligarchy is a further specification that focuses on the structural dimension of domination by the rich. The concept provides an answer to the question of *who* dominates. Mafia-style domination – the main focus of this report – describes *how* domination is upheld. While Mafia-style domination relies on patronage as its core organising principle, it also includes the coercive side of domination. The resulting system is in accord with cultural expectations that aim at upholding the emotional benefits attached to the underlying patron-client relationships and likewise has significant repressive qualities.

Pampanga is an especially interesting example in the context of the Philippines, as it is one of the most-developed provinces, with an elite that, to a significant extent, no longer depends primarily on traditional forms of rent-seeking and also engages in the most modern sectors of the Philippine economy. By focusing on Pampanga, this report demonstrates that neither clientelism nor the more specified sub-type of Mafia-style domination are remnants of a pre- or semi-modern economy, but survive and prosper in contexts that are characterised by (relatively) high levels of modernisation and growth.

Before turning to the Pampanga case study, the report shall first introduce the core concept of Mafia-style domination informing this work. The case study itself is divided into four sections, the first dealing with the oligarchic basis of domination. The following sections lay out Mafia-style characteristics within the local system of domination with respect to its three core dimensions: 1) the fundamental role of patronage, 2) the central role of private control of the means of violence that may be deployed in order to uphold the local order (defined by the powerful) and defend the elite's dominant position, and 3) illegal business as an important economic support leg of continued domination. The conclusion discusses the repercussions of this order on the democratic quality of Pampangan and Philippine politics in general.

2. Conceptualising Mafia-style domination

In Pampanga, as is the case in the Philippines in general, political power tends to be monopolised by the rich. In this respect, oligarchy in the Aristotelian sense of rule by the rich is one core structural characteristic of politics. Oligarchy also provides the fundamental rationale for politics: the defence of oligarchic wealth. In accordance with Winters, it is assumed that oligarchy is not a specific form of political order but can coexist with a host of different structural and cultural environments (Winters 2011). It relates to the state not only via oligarchic control of political office but particularly via control of the legitimate as well as illegitimate means of coercion.

While oligarchy may indeed be an important perspective in the structural analysis of Philippine politics, it shall be taken for granted in the scope of this report. In its place, focus will be directed to the way in which oligarchs engage in domination, arguing that this may reasonably be likened to the type of domination exerted by the traditional Mafia in Southern Italy. It is important to note that the term Mafia should be understood not so

much as a criminal organisation but as a holistic system, providing order for society; the local population may deem this order to be highly legitimate and even prefer it to the 'official' one, despite many of its illegal aspects and practices. Resorting to a Mafia-model of politics allows us to understand crime as an integral and systemic part of domination, thereby complementing more standard perspectives of politics. Mafia-style domination is a specific method of governing a territory and people that provides a host of services to the wider community, effectively 'complementing,' if not replacing, the state.

All three major Italian variants of the Mafia – the Cosa Nostra, the Ndrangheta and the Camorra – may be likened to subtypes of patron-client systems as they depend and thrive on segmentary social orders that are structured heterarchically, i.e. orders in which horizontal differentiation of similarly-structured units predominates over vertical structure and functional differentiation (White 1995, Sigrist 1979). With respect to social control, a segmentary order implies a multitude of similar units. Each of them claims the same status and the whole panoply of 'rights,' among them the right to prevent or penalise deviance. Patron-client relationships provide important bonds that inhibit the centrifugal powers of segmentary environments which are characterized by a lack of generalised trust. Patron-client relationships establish particularism (particularized trust) as the core principle of social order and organization. In a clientelistic context, the foundation of order is a 'clientelistic consensus,' not any general idea of political legitimacy. Both imply "two mutually exclusive sets of solidarities, instrumental and highly particularistic in the case of clientelism, normative and collective in the case of institutionalized authority" (Graziano, cited in Allum 2000: 64).

If we therefore understand 'tradition-derived' forms of organised crime to be forms of domination, we can begin to develop a model for understanding certain clientelistic politics, their associated politics and the policies that provide coercion and crime as a complement to patronage.

In an environment characterised by low levels of trust, the Mafia initially can

"be seen as a successful cluster or coalition of clusters. It is successful not just at coping defensively with lack of trust – as in the case of weaker and non-violent forms of association such as clientele and patron-client relations – but at turning distrust into a profitable business by a relentless, and if necessary violent, search for exclusivity. Its single most important activity is the enforcement of monopolies over the largest possible number of resources in any given territory" (Gambetta 2000: 164).

These monopolies encompass both the political and the social spheres alike. However, they are fairly limited in scope, as the problem of trust pervades the Mafia itself, which is compartmentalised into segments – family-like units – that coexist side by side, with each claiming the equal status. As such, individual families not only enjoy similar comprehensive rights and duties, but are holistic entities (Paoli 2001: 159). The resultant order is constructed from below (the family), coalescing into a system characterised by a certain amount of anarchy that may tentatively be controlled through mutual recognition and alliance-building. The legitimacy of the individual segment derives from its proven control over a certain territory (Paoli 2003: 52). As in the case of nation-states, local Mafia groups/families also formally recognise each other. Mafia groups, as nation-states, tend not to tolerate competition within their claimed territories. For all intents and purposes,

traditional Mafia groups governed their territories by providing crucial goods that characterise government: security, law and public order. For the most part, these activities, while technically illegal, were not necessarily deemed illicit by the local population (Sabetti 2002; Fentress 2000). Historically, Mafia domination, as far as it abided by locally held codes of conduct and norms, “enjoyed the support of many, if not most, villagers, who stood to profit from it and did not regard state laws as the final determinant of what was criminal or illegal” (Sabetti 2002: xxi). Santino argues that Mafia shapes “a system of violence and illegality aimed at accumulating capital and gaining power, through the use of a cultural code and the enjoyment of social consent” (quoted in Scalia 2011).

For all intents and purposes, the Mafia, while not necessarily being a state, certainly was a government at the local level. Its bosses “not only controlled the various illegal activities” but also had important roles as decision-making authorities, mediators and informal judges, “law givers and law imposers.” They were also businessmen of various sorts, relying on their predominant “power and status in the community” (Allum 2000: 146). Their local leader was “the reference point in the community to whom all turned when they encountered problems; he was, to a certain extent, an alternative to the State authorities which seemed to be absent” (Allum 2000: 143). At the local level, the Mafia turned itself into “a form of political dominance” (Fentress 2000: 163) that effectively monopolised illegal violence” (Hess 2009: 165), aiming to exercise “sovereign control over the people in their communities” (Paoli 2004: 24; see also Paoli 2001, 2003, 2007). The emerging structure was one in which the Mafia monopolised the role of broker, connecting local society to the state and the world economy while at the same time to a certain extent insulating the local order from the fundamental principles governing the state and world economy: rule-of-law and a (more or less) free market.

As a general rule, Mafia families attempt to minimise the actual use of physical violence. Even though the ability to use violence is a “generalized ingredient of Mafioso behaviour” (Gambetta 2000: 168-169), everyday control is normally upheld through the bonds of natural and artificial kinship and the dispensation of favours through which debts of loyalty are earned (Catanzaro 1985: 46, see also Gambetta 2000: 170). This capacity to dispense favours is crucial for continued domination and must be nourished through economic activities.

Natural or artificial extensions of the family (marriage, godfather relationships, etc.) and instrumental friendships (the latter being utilised as “an instrument for attaining goals outside the friendship itself” (Catanzaro 1985: 38)) are additional core mechanisms for overcoming the problem of distrust.

Historically, Mafia organizations thrived by: siphoning off various types of economic rents they extracted by virtue of the debts of loyalty; control over local political positions; their connection to party officials; and their capability at employing violence. Nevertheless, it would be fallacious to connect the Mafia with illegal activities only, as many of their activities were, in fact, perfectly legal. Nevertheless, their status as ‘Mafia’ obviously aided in legal business, where Mafia entrepreneurs could rely on their reputation and, if necessary, selectively use “mafia methods” (Paoli 1994: 224).

In order to maintain his local legitimacy, the Mafia boss had to pose as a 'profitable altruist,' someone who is also able to help himself by helping others in the community (Sabetti 2002: 96ff). This limited the options for repression and exploitation open to the local Mafia (Sabetti 2002: 127) and cognitively transformed the Mafia-boss into a more or less benevolent patron, while at the same time legitimating the Mafiosi's right to local domination in principle, including the right to coercion.

Even though the traditional Mafia resorted to violence, its most crucial foundation was the congruence between people's perceptions of the ways of handling business and the actual social practice of the Mafia leaders. Patronage only works if there is top-down supply as well as corresponding bottom-up demand.

What differentiates Mafia-style domination from the common phenomena associated with patron-client modes of social organization is the "emphasis on the element of violence" (Hess 1998: 175-176). This, however, must not be understood as signifying high degrees of violence; while the capacity and will to employ violence is one core ingredient of the Mafia, actual degrees of violence may be fairly low. When analysing the three core Mafia regions of Italy (Sicily and the Cosa Nostra, Campania and the Camorra, and Calabria and the Ndrangheta), it becomes clear that the numbers of Mafia-related homicides vary significantly, with Sicily exhibiting the lowest levels during the past quarter century, despite its notoriety.

What Sheila Coronel calls "old-style small town Pinoy politics"² closely accords with the pattern that might be used to describe the workings of the 'old-style' Mafia.³ Mafia in this context clearly is not an organisation, but a

"milieu [...] where the mayor is boss and takes a cut from a variety of illicit activities that takes place in his area, whether it is smuggling, gambling or illegal logging. In this milieu, the mayor and the police, which is under his control, provide protection for illegal activities, ensuring that the syndicates are able to operate with a minimum of harassment from officials and the law.

- 2 Pinoy is a term utilised by Filipinos to refer to themselves as Filipinos. In the above context it is synonymous to Filipino politics or Filipino-style politics.
- 3 To the author's knowledge, the first scholar who explicitly employed a Mafia-model in Philippine politics was Sidel (1989). He argues that "Mafiosi, like their Latin American and Chinese counterparts, maintained their political positions through coercive and patronage resources and the skillful maintenance of personal loyalty within their armed retinue" (Sidel 1989: 24). Sidel tends to dissolve the Mafia-model under a more general one of petty sultanism that draws on Juan Linz's work, but focuses on local sultanistic orders.

In 2001 Walden Bello followed Sidel's lead and argued that in the Philippines the Mafia is more or less synonymous with government. He cites an unnamed Colombian friend, who argues: "In Colombia, the mafia is stronger than the government [...]. But you know, we still are luckier than you Filipinos [...] Because the mafia is the government in your country." (Bello 2001).

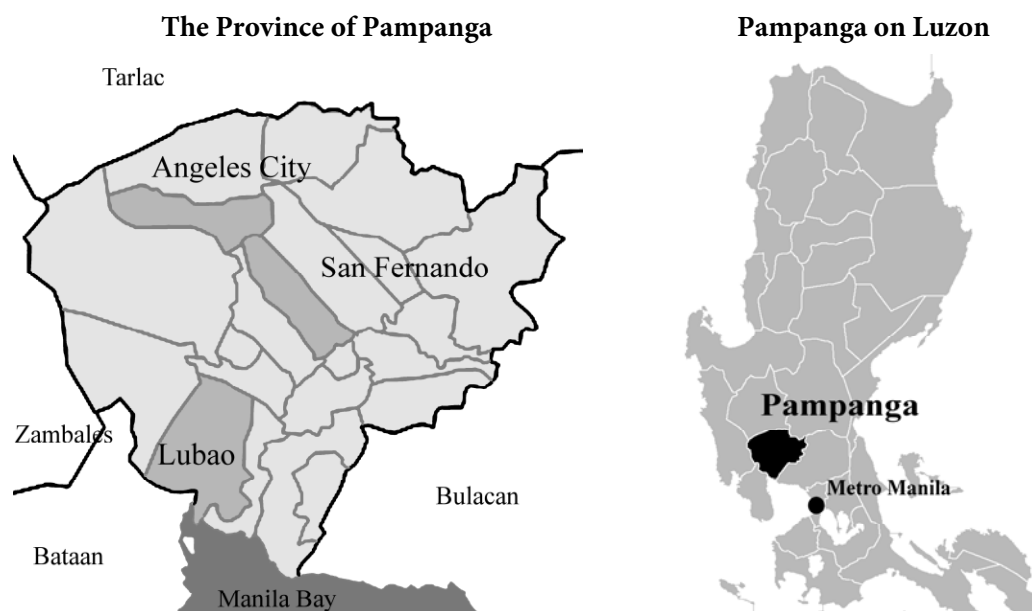
Bello's sketch, however, simply puts Mafia as an eye-catcher and abbreviation for organised crime, missing out on the comprehensiveness of the established order and its non-criminal dimensions related to social, economic, and political domination. Bello argues that the dearth of crime syndicates in the Philippines is directly related to the organisation of the most important fields of organised crime – illegal gambling, prostitution, kidnap-for-ransom and drugs – by political and administrative elites.

Hardly ever is anyone called to account – not the mayor, or the police, or the criminals. The operative word is impunity: Everyone knows, but no one is caught” (Coronel 2000).

The following provincial study will focus on the core characteristics of the Pampangan expression of this type of ‘Pinoy politics.’ Due to restrictions of space, the historical development of the current system will be largely disregarded. Instead, priority will be on giving a rough picture of the system as it exists today. After a short introduction into Pampanga history and the oligarchic background of the elite (3.1), the first part of the analysis of Mafia-style domination will deal with non-coercive, norm-based forms of bonding and domination via patronage (3.2). The second part focuses on the coercive side of domination (3.3), whereas the third part deals with the sordid economic underbelly of this Mafia-style domination as it is represented in illegal gambling (3.4).

3. Mafia-Style Domination in Pampanga

The Philippines can be described as a country where “the state is dominated by agrarians who are simultaneously capitalists” (Angeles 1999: 667-668). Even though landholding still plays a crucial role for political domination in a number of Philippine regions, its importance has significantly diminished in the past decades. Even so, this shift has not resulted in a corresponding loss in influence of landed elites, as these were able to “divest and diversify their economic holdings and shift into commerce, banking and industry, thus ensuring their dominance” (Angeles 1999: 669).



While oligarchic power is, to a certain extent, ‘hereditary’ in Pampanga (as in the rest of the Philippines), and political families dominate certain territories for generations, the

oligarchy is no closed club. Rather, it is able to integrate and co-opt rising forces that manage to climb the social ladder on account of their individual qualifications.

3.1 The Economic Foundation of the Provincial Oligarchy

3.1.1 Some Remarks on Pampangan History

Being blessed with fertile soils and only a short distance to the Spanish colonial capital of Manila, the greater Pampanga area included various territories of all its current adjacent provinces up to the latter part of the 19th century. It was one of the core areas used for supplying the capital region with food, a number of other raw materials and soldiers since the late 16th century.⁴ Whereas the Spaniards managed to formally control much of Pampangan territory on the basis of the *encomienda* system at the beginning,⁵ from as early as the early 18th century onwards, local control of the land lay in the hands of an indigenous elite that also manned the Spanish municipal and provincial bureaucracy below the provincial governor (*alcade mayor*). Control of land (and its people) merged with control of local political and administrative positions, producing a fairly integrated elite that came to be known as *principalia*. The vast majority of the population was reduced to share tenants on the lands monopolised by the elite.

The 19th century saw the coming of Chinese *mestizos* who took over economic leadership and gained control over vast tracts of land – which had been mortgaged by locals in exchange for credit – within a few decades. These new landowners eventually merged with the indigenous elite families through marriage (Larkin 1993). A few decades after the arrival of the *mestizos*, land was opened to sugarcane farming, which deepened the commercialisation of local agriculture that had already produced for the Manila market and now turned towards international markets. Export production brought about a further rationalisation of economic organisation and consolidation of landownership, changing the landowner into a “businessman, the *cacique*, with extensive power and responsibility” (Larkin 1972: 76).

The American colonial era brought new opportunities for the local elites who were able to climb the ladder of the democratic political system established by the Americans from the early years of the 20th century onwards. The early indigenisation and democratisation of colonial governance by the Americans provided a unique opportunity for the

4 For an excellent study on Pampangan history up to the 1920s see Larkin 1972.

5 *Encomiendas* effectually granted a person (the *encomendero*) control over a specified number of Filipinos inhabiting a certain territory and allowed him to extract tribute from them. These rights did not include ownership of the land. While most early *encomenderos* were Spanish conquistadores or soldiers, the Spanish crown later also granted *encomiendas* to natives before abolishing the system in the 17th century altogether. While the *encomiendas* did not constitute large-scale landownership in themselves, they were significant forerunners in the development that was to come, as they endowed a small class of people with immense power and economic control of the local population in various regions of the land.

wealthy and fairly powerful *principalia* to capture the state from the municipal to the national levels (for the early years see Hutchcroft 2000). The provincial elite's power was further enhanced by the relative decentralisation of American colonial governance, entrusting a number of fairly-elected municipal officials with full control of the municipal police. The latter often seem to have been "used as the personal servants of the municipal presidents" (Bureau of Insular Affairs: 1904, 84).

From the 1920s to the 1950s Pampanga was the centre of agrarian unrest in the Philippines (Kerkvliet 1979: 40-41). Here – probably even more so than in the neighbouring provinces – the economic situation of the tenants had been in decline. Even though the tenants initially only protested against usurious interest rates charged by the powerful landlords, aiming at a moderate change in the sharing agreements, landlords seem not to have been interested in any form of compromise, opting instead for repressive measures. (Sturtevant 1976: 250). Despite some success, unrest continued until the coming of the Japanese in 1942.

The post-war years saw further degeneration into violence as landowners tried to enforce their claims against a local population that had gained significant experience in armed struggle in the years of fighting the Japanese. While the heyday of revolutionary violence and repressive counter-violence did not extend beyond the early 1950s, rebellion still exists in this province that serves as one of the strongholds of the Communist New People's Army (NPA). Whereas in the late 1940s and early 1950s the landlords put up their own private armed groups to suppress local resistance, this has now become a task solely entrusted to state institutions, most importantly the Philippine army.

Economically, the Pampangan landlords, while dependent on sugar cane during the late 18th and up to the mid 20th century, continuously produced rice. They also branched out into other business areas within the province as well in nearby Manila.

The last few decades, from the 1970s onwards, have seen a decrease in large landownership in Pampanga. Several decades of land-reform have taken their toll, and, even more importantly, the past two decades have significantly diminished the relative importance of landownership as the core basis of oligarchic status. While landlords still cling to their land, it is less for economic and more for political reasons, as control of land still equates to control of the people who work the land.

For the local elite, however, agricultural earnings are only a secondary source of income; the past two decades have brought about a significant turn-around of the Pampangan economy from agriculture to service provision and non-agricultural production. In the middle of this 'conversion,' was the outbreak of Mount Pinatubo, which brought with it much misery. However, along with the termination of the Philippine military bases agreement with the USA in 1991, the transition led to the establishment of two free-trade zones on the former bases – one of them in the northern part of Pampanga and the other in Subic Bay to the West of Pampanga. Both provided significant opportunities for local oligarchs to productively invest their surplus and also brought about further investments in the wider region. The two zones Subic and Clark have become the most important of the Philippine Economic Zones (Lee/Terosa/Maquito 2007: 32). With Clark set to har-

bour the future international Airport of Manila, local perspectives for business have been changing, with Pampanga moving towards a service-oriented economy. By 2000, employment was mostly in the service sector (58 percent), while industry accounted for 30 percent and only a small remainder (13 percent) of the province's labour force employed in agriculture (Delgado et al. 2003: Annex I, 4.1). On the national basis, agriculture accounted for 33 percent of employment in 2011, industry for 14.9 percent and services for 52.1 percent (Department of Trade and Industry 2012).

This significant economic growth is highlighted by the dramatically rising income levels of municipalities in Pampanga. In Mabalacat, the municipality that is home to the Clark Economic Zone, the municipal income has grown by nearly 500 percent, while most municipalities achieved a 100 percent or greater increase (for precise data on a municipal basis for the years 2001 to 2011 see the Bureau of Local Government Finance no year) during the past decade.

3.1.2 *The Nepomuceno Family of Angeles City*

The way this policy of diversification has worked out in practice is illustrated by the example of the Nepomuceno family from Angeles City, one of the oldest political families in the province. The Nepomucenos represent: the historical depth of family domination; its multi-dimensional form in connecting the economic and political spheres; and a wide diversification of family-business interests, which on the whole, guarantee sustained influence on the locality that serves as a basis of family power.

The Nepomuceno family is one crucial locus of power on the local level, holding significant political power and controlling the major service providers for electricity and water as well as the local university and the business-district. Economically, the very broad range of family interests precludes a differentiation of economic interests along sectoral lines, thereby following a typical Philippine pattern. As for other powerful families, the Nepomucenos' economic interests go far beyond Pampanga Province, extending to the national level and even including some international investment.

The family's history dates back to the early 19th century when Rafael Nepomuceno married the granddaughter of the founder of Angeles City and became *governadorcillo*⁶ in 1852. His son, Juan Gualberto took over the position twice in the latter half of the 19th century, followed by the grandson, Juan de Dios Nepomuceno, who was mayor of Angeles from 1922-1928 and became representative for the 1st district of Pampanga in 1935, passing his mayorship on to his brother Ricardo. The children of Juan de Dios held positions as leading executives of the Ayala Corporation,⁷ councillors of Angeles City and

6 A *governadorcillo* may be likened to a modern-day mayor, who also takes on the functions of judge and, depending on the municipality, had certain economic functions. He was appointed for two years by the Governor General in Manila from a list of three candidates chosen by the leading twelve local barangay heads (*cabeza de barangay*), who collectively formed the *principalia*.

7 Ayala is one of the largest corporations of the Philippines.

presidents of Holy Angel University (owned by the Nepomucenos), among others. Francisco Quitong Nepomuceno – also a descendent of Juan Gualberto Nepomuceno – dominated Angeles City and Pampangan politics from the 1960s to the late 1970s with his wife. During this timespan, the two alternated as provincial governor and congress-representative. In the late 1980s, Francisco turned his attention back to Angeles City, becoming city mayor. This couple’s heritage was continued by their sons in the 1990s. One son, Francisco “Blueboy” Nepomuceno, became vice-mayor of Angeles City from 1995 to 1998, then serving as congressman until 2007. He came back to the city and served as mayor from 2007 to 2010. In the meantime, his brother looked after the family’s local interests by staying on as *barangay*⁸ captain of one of the most important *barangays* of Angeles City and occupying the position of President of the Barangay Mayors’ League. The economic fortune of the Nepomuceno’s is largely in the hands of Peter Nepomuceno (born in 1936 to Juan and Teresa Nepomuceno) who *inter alia* manages the Angeles Electric Corporation, the 6th largest private electricity provider in the Philippines (founded in 1923) that has (among others) a local monopoly franchise over the delivery of electricity to Angeles City and parts of the Clark Special Economic Zone.⁹ Angeles Electric Corporation also branched out to the United States.

Peter Nepomuceno also chairs Teresa Waterworks, which supplies water to the local industrial park and much of Angeles City. He likewise chairs the Nepomuceno Realty Group, which manages a subdivision established in the 1960s. Additionally, he has held leadership positions at Holy Angel College and University. All of these are family corporations of the Nepomuceno family. Peter also holds chairmanships of various (likely family-owned) companies that share a single address in Ortigas/Manila – one financial holding company and two real estate companies. Besides that, he is involved in the Nepomuceno Group of Companies, the Mindanao Energy Corporation and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Philippine Electric Market Corporation.

Some of his relatives have been chairs of an ice plant that was founded by their mother in 1921, and ran a Printing Press (Punsalan 1969: 113). In addition, the family owns agricultural farms (poultry, piggery) (Punto¹⁰ 3-4-Dez. 2010: 1, 6). During the early decades of the 20th century, the Nepomuceno family also founded several other local businesses, from soft drinks to the production of agricultural sacks (Mendoza no year: 49). Apart from the Angeles Electric Corporation, the most important economic venture was a sub-

8 The *barangay* is the smallest administrative division in the Philippines and can be compared to a village or a ward in urban areas. The *barangay* is headed by a *punong barangay* (Barangay Captain/Chairman), who is aided by a council, manned by seven regular councilors and one youth councilor.

9 Angeles Electric Corporation established a joint venture, Clark Electric Distribution Corporation (CEDC), was established for servicing Clark special economic zone. This joint venture is owned (65 percent) by Meralco and by Angeles City Corporation (35 percent). CEDC is chaired by Peter Nepomuceno (Meralco no year).

10 Punto is a local newspaper for Central Luzon. Its print-edition is accessible via the paper’s homepage archive section <http://punto.com.ph/news/archive>.

division in Angeles City, developed on part of the family's agricultural land in the 1960s, thereby multiplying the family landholding value. Shortly thereafter, they constructed the Nepo-Mart, taking control of the city's central business and commercial district. Currently, the Nepo-Mart includes various department stores, cinemas, banks, and other businesses.

3.1.3 *The Piñedas – the Making of a new Power*

Whereas the Nepomucenos stand *pars pro toto* for the old oligarchs that survived as economic and political powers for more than a century, the Piñedas are the most important new power still in its first generation. The family is currently attempting to transfer economic and political status to the second generation of the founding couple. Roberto and Lilia Piñeda represent the openness of the Pampangan oligarchy towards new players, who, with sufficient skills, networking activity and the build-up of economic resources, can make their way into the ranks of the established oligarchy.

Not much is known about the background of Rodolfo and Lilia Piñeda. Though Rodolfo Piñeda is said to be a businessman, information on his businesses is scarce and can hardly explain the couple's wealth and the magnanimity shown to his followers and the population of the Piñedas' hometown of Lubao. Supposedly, Rodolfo Piñeda "was raised on income his father Jose made from operating the Spanish card game monte" (Orejas 2007a), and turned to this business himself during his time assisting a former Pampanga congressman and *monte*-operator. From 1969 on, he is said to have become the overseer of these operations in Rizal Province and parts of metro Manila. After having built up contacts in this business for nearly two decades, Piñeda is said to have struck out on his own, establishing a *jueteng* business¹¹ in parts of his home-province of Pampanga, slowly taking over the business of competitors and branching out into other provinces (Coronel 2000). He made it into the headlines for the first time in 1987 when then newly elected senator Joseph Estrada (who was later to become the national *jueteng*-godfather during his stint as Philippine President 1998-2001) exposed Bong (Rodolfo) Piñeda as operator of the game in Ilocos Norte. In the mid-1990s, Rodolfo Piñeda had become sufficiently prominent and was called up with other supposed operators to testify before a congress committee on the practices of *jueteng* in Central Luzon. He seems to have eased his way to power by supporting the election bids of other politicians, earning their gratitude in turn. These politicians relied either on additional money provided by Rodolfo or his extensive network of bet-collectors and other personnel. These *cobrades*, along with other members of their families, not only constitute a secure vote-bank, but are also called upon to advertise the name of whomever their boss wants to become mayor, governor or congressman, as they are in contact with literally hundreds of thousands of people on a daily basis.

11 *Jueteng* is a form of illegal betting game widely popular in the Philippines (for details on Pampanga see Chapt. 3.4).

While Rodolfo Piñeda has evaded publicity in the past decades, his wife – who is said to have been a coconut vendor before she met Rodolfo Piñeda – took over the task of politically securing the family's fortune. She was mayor of Lubao from 1992 to 2001, handing the position over to her son Dennis, who managed Lubao from 2001 to 2010 and presided over the Pampangan Mayors' League. After his third term as mayor, Dennis' sister Mylyn Piñeda Cayabyab took over (she ran unopposed). She is currently also the treasurer of the Pampangan Mayors' League. After finishing her three mayoral terms, Lilia Piñeda served one term as a member of the provincial board (2004-2007) and unsuccessfully ran for governor in 2007, finally gaining the position in 2010. She is going to run for re-election in 2013, together with her son, who will run for the position of Vice-Governor.

Not much is known about the family's economic basis, though it is apparent that they have no significant agricultural interests. Most of their legal businesses are partnerships with other local powers or followers. The Piñedas have been active in trade, real estate, cable TV, garment manufacturing, education, tourism and the economic development of the former Clark airbase. They also seem to have economic interests in two companies in the United States, both situated in Cerritos, California. Additionally, Lilia Piñeda is said to own "several businesses, among them fast-food franchises, a construction firm, and a hardware store" (Orejas 2007). Lilia Piñeda also chairs a charity that cares for the sick (GMA news research 2006).

Several of these businesses connect the Piñedas to other families comprising both allies and followers. The *Aguman Da Reng Pasabung Ong Capampangan Inc.* (Association of Kapapangan Cockpit Operators) has Rodolfo Piñeda, Robin Nepomuceno and Zenaida Cruz-Ducut amongst its incorporators. While Robin Nepomuceno connects the Piñedas to this powerful Angeles City-based family, Zenaida Cruz-Ducut seems to be a client of both the Piñedas and the Arroyos, using her positions to advance the interests of her mentors. She was born in Lubao, the hometown of the Piñedas, and is a former Congresswoman for the 2nd district of Pampanga (from 1995 to 2004, when she yielded to the president's son Mikey). In 2008, she was appointed chairwoman of the Energy Regulatory Commission by her co-provincial President, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. During her tenure at the Energy Regulatory Commission, all applications made by the Nepomuceno-owned Angeles Electricity Corporation were granted. Discussing a possible comeback of Zenaida Cruz-Ducut as congressional representative for the second district of Pampanga in 2013, a journalist commented that she most probably "is out of contention [...]. Out of gratitude to the former President, and in deference to the ruling Piñeda family, ERC Chair and former congresswoman Ducut will not contest" the seat, but leave it to the son of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo (Mercado 2011).

In the case of the Piñedas, wealth and control of large numbers of followers translate into political power, creating local oligarchs from entrepreneurs who, in all likelihood, owe their rise to illicit business.¹²

3.2 Control through Patronage

3.2.1 Patronage as Social Practice

Patronage is notoriously difficult to prove in concrete cases, as it is generally easy for practitioners to hide behind a seemingly clear-cut adherence to standard operating procedures. Patronage is based on non-documentation: it relies on individual memory and is supported by an informal 'code of honour' that closely resembles the Sicilian '*omertà*,' a code of silence and non-disclosure. Whereas patronage need not be denied in private business, denial is crucial in public office and with respect to all types of favours and 'gifts' that can be granted and obtained in the context of public finance.

On the basis of a rather small number of sources (mostly the Philippine Commission on Audit reports), several features of local Pampangan politics that closely resemble patronage can be elucidated. In the Municipality of Lubao in Pampanga (the core territory of the Piñeda family), the Commission on Audit has criticised the government for rarely consulting with the Municipal Development Council when identifying projects that should have been included in the Development Plan. Here, as in many other municipalities, various types of taxes (especially business taxes and real property taxes), which would be a burden to the affluent, were either not collected or collected inconsistently. Cash advances to public servants are regularly granted without enforcing subsequent liquidation in most municipalities, making it impossible to control how the money is spent. Typically, physical inventories of government property are not undertaken, effectively making any checks on the accuracy of the presented data impossible (see the various Commissions on Audit reports). Many recommendations from the Commission of Audit are not implemented, allowing for continued malfeasance. While it is not possible to prove the utilisation of government resources for electoral patronage, there is strong evidence that this is a fairly regular practice. In September 2009, shortly before the beginning of the election campaign for the 2010 elections, several municipalities ordered back pay-

12 Another example of a rapid rise would be that of the Lapid, with the father, Manuel "Lito" Lapid, a former stuntman and actor, becoming governor of Pampanga in the 1990s and handing over the position to his son in 2001, while he took over the position of Senator. Though it cannot be proven, there are a number of clues implying that Lapid's initial bid was supported by the Rodolfo Piñeda, who later fell out with Lapid on account of the latter's embezzlement of a significant amount of provincial taxes. In early 2012, Lapid's wife was arrested in the United States for violating travel restrictions as she carried US\$ 50,000 in her bag when entering the country. Manuel Lapid's son Marc was appointed chief operating officer of the Tourism Infrastructure and Enterprise Zone Authority after having lost in the 2007 elections. After reports on irregularities, Marc (who is also an actor) returned to the film business in 2012. Another son, Maynard Lapid, will run as vice-governor in the 2013 elections in Pampanga.

ments of up to fifteen years (1989-2004) for cost of living allowances (COLA) to their employees.¹³ In the Porac Municipality, this was largely made “in a form of cash advance to a Disbursing Officer”, amounting to more than 5.5 million pesos (about US\$ 128,000), “while other payees were paid off each with individual check amounting to a total of P1,484,000.00” (Philippine Commission on Audit 2011a: 13; for Floridablanca see: Philippine Commission on Audit 2011b).¹⁴ This happened despite the fact that such allowances are illegal, being that they are already integrated into the standardized salaries. Furthermore, the practice of handing a cash advance of such a large sum to one disbursing officer is not covered by administrative procedure. Various types of funds that are meant for non-personnel expenses are often used to pay for salaries and wages of regular and contractual personnel who are employed for reasons of patronage.

An important medium in the provision of patronage are the providers of electricity and water. One fairly widespread practice is their utilisation in the placement of clients and followers of various kinds. This has been documented for the Pampanga Electric Cooperative II (PELCO II), whose board of directors features the top municipal officials of the five municipalities serviced by PELCO II. According to an independent study of a large number of Philippine electricity cooperatives, PELCO II is characterised by “patronage driven overstaffing [...] and considerable procurement irregularities” (Hasnain/Matsuda 2011: 20). In the case of PELCO II, overstaffing is extraordinarily high. The appropriate ratio for the typical areas serviced by PELCO II should be around 500 consumers per employee; at PELCO the ration is 1:187, indicating extraordinarily high levels of patronage politics (Hasnain/Matsuda 2011: 17).

Another venue for patronage utilised by the dominant powers is the establishment of non-governmental organizations (NGO), most often in the form of foundations that claim to further projects in the interest of the poor and needy. Members of the Arroyo family function as incorporators in at least nine foundations and are connected to a num-

13 On a much larger scale, this strategy of showering the constituency with money before an upcoming election was replicated by former president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who ran for the post of Congressman of Pampanga’s 2nd district in 2010. This year saw P434 million worth of projects flooding her prospective district, a number that fell to P218 million upon the completion of many of the projects granted during her last year in office and then to a meager P20 million in 2012. This resulted in speculation that the new administration was taking revenge on the former President and the comment that “Funds falling as fast and furious as political fortunes” (Punto 23-24 July 2012: 4). In the 2010 elections, Arroyo got 77 percent of the vote cast in the second district of Pampanga, with her closest rival taking less than 10 percent.

14 A municipal mayor’s salary, which is by far the highest at the local level, is about 67,000 Pesos (~ US\$ 1,560) per month. If this officer actually had handled the sum of P5.5 million, he would have held 82 monthly mayoral salaries in cash(!) in order to distribute them to the recipients. For a comparison, nurses earn around P400 per day or P8,000 to P10,000 per month. Police officers start with about P13,500 per month (PO 1), with a top monthly income of the national police chief of P57,500 (Recueno 2011). Aside from this, there are a number of allowances, which, however, are not easily specified. Teachers start out at around P15,000 (Sunstar 2011). Compared to this, AFP personnel is well paid, with a private making about P19,000 per month and a 2nd Lieutenant more than P32,000 (Philippine Army no year).

ber of others, most of which are not accredited (and thereby only controlled to a minimum extent) by the relevant regulatory body (Peraan 2009).¹⁵ Hardly any of these foundations discloses its sources of funding or reports on their expenditures, programmes or projects; many of them do not even have a working telephone number. If their activities correspond to an NGO sponsored by other politicians (with their share of the Priority Development Assistance Funds (PDAF)),¹⁶ they are then used to garner additional financial resources for the politician, which he/she can then dispense to clients. Senator and former Pampanga governor Lito Lapid, while not directly being connected to a 'family-foundation', "has used big sums of pork-money to roll out medical missions across the nation" with his wife owning "a franchise of the Generics Pharmacy in his hometown of Porac in Pampanga" (Mangahas/Rowena 2012). The latter was caught red-handed by US-authorities when she attempted to smuggle US\$ 50,000 into the USA in November 2011. A large amount of the PDAF funds released to Lapid went to his home province, mostly in the form of lump sum allocations for local infrastructure projects (2010: 30%; 2009: 71.5% of total; Department of Budget and Management 2012).

A fairly direct form of control by way of patronage is election rigging. While there is no conclusive proof, there are two independent sworn statements by a Presidential staff officer of former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo and an election officer from Pampanga. Several election officers from Pampanga, Congressman Carmelo Lazatin, and political ally Marino Morales (Mayor of Mabalacat) attended a meeting with President

15 In addition, none of these foundations is certified by the Philippine Council for NGO Certification (PCNC), even though a PCNC-certification would enable donors of such institutions to deduct these donations from their income tax (PNPC). They share this characteristic with most of the other major NGOs entrusted by congressmen with PDAF funds.

16 Every congressman can make use of up to P70 million per year, every senator to up to P200 million. Whereas congressmen normally use this money for the support of projects in their constituency, senators (who have a national constituency) spread their PDAF funds nationwide. Even though there are theoretically a number of checks and balances on the choice of implementing agency and the application of funds in practice, the individual congressman can decide on the agency, and control is largely non-existent. Many NGOs "disappear as soon as their PDAF patrons have finished their term in Congress, and with them, the millions they had received from the pork barrel" (De los Reyes 2012).

Currently, the record in unaccounted funds is held by a foundation, the Harry C. Angping Academic Excellence Award Foundation. From 2009-2011 it drew an unknown amount of money from only a single source, Representative Maria Zenaida B. Angping, the wife of Harry Angping. As of 31 March 2012, more than P17 million was still listed as outstanding cash advances that had not been liquidated. Since then, the NGO appears to no longer be existent, and even its phone number is invalid. The Don Arroyo Memorial Hospital still had an outstanding amount of P1.5 million from PDAF, granted by the late Representative Ignacio Arroyo in 2005 (De los Reyes 2012). There is overwhelming evidence that a significant number of these 'NGOs' probably never existed at all but only functioned as conduits to channel PDAF into the pockets of individual politicians. Even when not misappropriated, allocating PDAF funds to a representative's own family foundations obviously helps in strengthening the politician's patronage capabilities. The same probably holds true for a number of NGOs which are not directly connected to any individual politician (officially), as, for example, the Palacian Economic Development Association, that garnered more than P105 million from Representative Junie Cua from 2008-2010 in cash advances that remain outstanding.

Macapagal-Arroyo a few days before the 2004 elections. At the meeting, then Pampanga provincial board member Lilia Piñeda gave the election officers P20,000 each (The Manila Times 11 August 2005: A6). In his sworn statement, presidential staffer Michelangelo Zuce admitted that the Piñedas also paid for accommodation of a large number of election officers from Mindanao in a Manila hotel. As the staffer reports, “Bong Pineda asked me how much was needed and when I gave the estimate of more than 100,000, Bong Pineda immediately gave me P150,000 in cash and, if this would not be enough, to tell him how much the shortage would be” (Zuce 2005: 6). Piñeda also provided for the vehicle that was to fetch the officials for a secret dinner with the President.

3.2.2 *Supply and Demand for the Patron: Imagining “Nanay Baby”*

“I will be celebrating my 66th birthday on March 8, 2009. [...] Having (been) declared, awarded and honored from your office as ‘Peace Champion of Caraga,’ I am grateful to God that He has made me an instrument of His peace. [...] It is in this view that I am asking a favor from your Excellency. At present, I really need a brand-new car, possibly a 4x4, which I can use to reach the far-flung areas of Caraga. I hope you will never fail to give a brand new car which would serve as your birthday gift for me. For your information, I have with me a 7-year-old car which is not anymore in good running condition. Therefore, this needs to be replaced very soon. I am anticipating your favourable response on this regard. [...] Be assured of my constant support and sincerest prayers to your Excellency” (Letter of Bishop Juan de Dios Pueblos to President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo 2009, printed in: Santos 2011).

These few lines – written by one of the highest ranking officials of the Catholic Church in the Philippines to the Philippine President – paradigmatically symbolise the demand side of patron-client relationships. First the client (the Bishop) refers to the personal relationship, establishing the patron-client bond that he intends to utilise. He then declares a *personal* need (“I”, not the parish), connecting this to a higher good (servicing the poor), while at the same time making clear that the demanded good was to be owned by him personally (birthday gift to *me*) and not by the institution he represents. The relationship is described as a personal one in which the client asks for a favour from the patron. In exchange, he promises an unknown quantity of goods of a different form (support and prayers). The rhetoric defines the relationship as one among friends, at least amongst emotionally bonded individuals. The instrumental basis of the letter becomes clear when the Bishop anticipates the President’s favourable response, offering his support in exchange for the “brand-new” car, thereby defining the ‘gift-giving’ as an exchange relationship in which a tangible good (car of a certain value) is exchanged for an intangible one (support and prayers).

As evinced in this example, patronage is based on and continuously recreates a personal bond. Patronage shares the “latent purpose [...] to establish conditions of solidarity” with gift-giving (Eisenstadt/Roniger 1980: 52), conditions that are upheld by moral sanctions. As the relationship is an asymmetrical one, the gift-taker cannot reciprocate in a symmetric fashion, offering loyalty and a general submission to the perspective and general demands of the patron in exchange. This generally translates into votes and an acceptance of the relationship as such, infusing it with high levels of normative and cultural legitimacy.

With respect to Pampanga, the interrelated supply and demand logic of patron-client relationships are best illustrated by the example of the present Governor, Lilia “Nanay

Baby” (Mother Baby) Piñeda, who appears to act as an archetypical benevolent patron and consequently enjoys an exalted reputation. As governor, she practices a role that was exemplarily described by the famous Philippine writer F. Sionil Jose in the 1950s:

“ the benevolent landlord [...] plays a peculiar role among his tenants. Over them he presides as a minor god and his presence and money is much in demand during baptism, wedding and funerals. To him the tenants go for advice, medicine, small loans and sometimes unction. They look up to him as the Apo, ever provident and wise. And the benevolent landlord – if he is democratic as he would like himself to be so identified – would stoutly declaim that he doesn’t breed tyranny. He prides in the sustenance which he gives to the tenants who are ‘lazy’, in those tokens of virtue and sympathy which he doles out.” (Jose cited in McLennan 1980: 102).

It is exactly this image and practice that is now – more than half a century later – exhibited by the Governor and highly esteemed by both the population and representatives of the Catholic Church alike. Local media spread the message by extensively reporting on the activities of Nanay Baby, as the Governor is universally called. The myth of the exemplary patron has even received a metaphysical twist (and added legitimacy) in discourse that endows the Governor with ideal Christian (patronal) qualities. By transforming her into a Christian Saint, the clientelistic relationship of the people versus the governor is legitimated in the language of the Catholic faith, an extraordinarily strong form of symbolic capital in this highly religious country.

During the past decades, Lilia Piñeda has built up a “reputation for legendary generosity” for herself and her husband, acquiring the local title of “mother of perpetual help” by contributing to church-building projects. She also

“reportedly helped hundreds of people ill with cancer or with psychological problems, as well as provided shelter for many abused women and children. With her maternal instinct seemingly in perennial overdrive, Lilia has been called ‘nanay (mother)’ even by her new political rival” (Orejas 2007a).

This image is transmitted by the local media. It is further underlined by active support through the local Catholic clergy. The image, as it is spread by the media and the Church alike, almost completely relies on Catholic symbolism, thereby endowing her with an extraordinary level of legitimacy. This legitimacy, however, does not derive from or relate to her being elected *by* the people but from her supposed governance *for* the people. The essential image, supported by both local media and clergy, is one of a generous benefactor of the community who indefatigably devotes herself to the service of the people. The core concept that the media and church officials propagate is that of the Mother, sanctified through frequent comparison of Lilia Piñeda with the Holy Mary.

Support from the church became obvious at the beginning of Lilia Piñeda’s 2010 election campaign, set off with a mass in her honour that took place in her hometown, celebrated by 20 (!) priests. During this mass, “all political aspirants [Piñeda and her allies; P.K.] were given a special blessing by the Mass celebrants” (Punto 29-30.03.2010: 8) Mercado 2010a). The foremost representative of the Catholic Church, the Archbishop, is likewise reported to have “only the highest regards for Piñeda, as nanay [mother; P.K.]

and governor both”, explicitly claiming that “Nanay Baby is a blessing of the Lord” (Isang grasya mula sa Panginoon si Nanay Baby) and hailing her for “bringing to the people the graces and blessings from the Lord” (Punto 01 March 2012: 6).¹⁷

This “transcendental” legitimation is spread and amplified by the media, who compare her to the “virtual patron saint of the unfortunate” and mystify her as a “sincere giver [...] for whom there is no written account of her long continuous service to the poor”. As the local media sees it: “in all her public incarnations – mayor, board member, and now governor – as much as in her private persona, compassion and motherhood have become the very definition of Lilia Piñeda” (Punto 10-11 January 2011: 1).

This compassion elevates her far beyond all possible competitors, elevating her to the level of a saint:

“Dead saints are many [...] Living saints are few. One of these [...] is Governor Lilia ‘Nanay Baby’ Piñeda of Pampanga. [...] The compassion of Nanay Baby is beyond compare. I mean, I lack adjectives to describe her being. But for sure, there is no one who came to her for help and was cast away” (Pangan, 2011).

Quotes from ordinary people, as cited in local newspapers, consequently reflect on her as the one who is all-knowing and rules for the people, leading to the sentiment that “she needs not explain anything to us, because with Nanay-Baby we get the feeling of protection and love” (anonymous woman cited in Punto 22-23 August 2011: 6). A teacher describing his joy in being able to see her personally explains that “it is good that she is here, so that we can thank her in person for her help, for example for our salary” (cited in Punto 22-23 August 2011: 6). Even the salary becomes a personal gift from the governor.

While the motherly image is reserved for the female governor, the religiously loaded image of personal and compassionate leadership is extended to other officials (and allies of the Governor) and municipal mayors, one said to “[treat] his constituents well with a heart that bleeds for the poor”. (Pangan 2012).

The role of the people is also clearly placed at the receiving end of the multitude of gifts showered on them by the governor. Gift-giving has been of an extraordinary scale

17 A similar superhuman analogy has been used for former president Arroyo, when she decided to run for congressional representative of the 2nd district of Pampanga. Like Piñeda, her campaign commenced with a mass in the same church in Lubao that featured the opening of Piñeda’s campaign. This mass was concelebrated by 22 priests and “beamed live to crowds outside”. In his homily, the local priest managed to compare her to Jesus Christ, liking her candidacy – which is supposedly meant to serve the people – with Jesus: “There was a person who came down to serve us, Jesus Christ.” With about 5,000 people witnessing the event, the priest continued: “If some people put you down because of what they think of you, we Kapampangans will lift you up. If some people will put you down because of what they think you’ll do from President to congresswoman, we the Kapampangan people will raise you up”. Here, he implicitly declares standing by her side to be a patriotic (Pampangan) duty (Cayabyab et al. 2009).

Even though such transcendental support is important, it is particularistic gain that counts in patronage. It is likely no coincidence that the President spent more than P450 million on various projects in her legislative district, “more than six times the P70 million annual pork barrel allocation per congressman” (Newsflash 2010), sending the clear message that it pays to support her.

over the past two years of Lilia Piñeda's governorship, when, in one instance, she gave donations in the form of 'gift packs' to 30,000 beneficiaries in the provincial capital of San Fernando, and to more than 10,000 others in various other municipalities on Christmas in 2011. She explained that she "wanted our poor province-mates to feel the spirit of sharing this Christmas" (Piñeda cited in: Philippine Daily Inquirer 2011). A year earlier, she was reported to have hosted a flurry of "Christmas parties [...] for local media" that turned it into

"a harvest season for our colleagues in the press whose cars' [sic] back compartments as well as pantries [...] are now filled to the brim. A few others amassed groceries and gift items that is more than enough to start a small business" (Mercado, Ram 2010b).

The author of these sentences (an ardent supporter of Lilia Piñeda) obviously does not realise that the 'gift-giving' closely resembles corruption.

In a similar way, Piñeda contributed P150,000 cash to a Christmas lottery for provincial employees, and made good on a promise to provide provincial job order personnel with cash gifts for Christmas: "Each job order personnel received P30,000 plus two whole chickens as Christmas gifts, a much welcome personal gesture from the provincial governor." The regular and casual employees received "P40,000 productivity enhancement cash incentives [and; P.K.] two whole chickens as additional gifts." As a first token of their gratitude

"the employees rendered a Kapampangan song thanking the Governor for making their Christmas happy and colorful even as they wished her good health, happiness and continuous blessings from the Lord Almighty" (Province of Pampanga 2010).¹⁸

Two things need mentioning here: the overtly all-encompassing discretion of the governor with respect to public funds and the perception that the dispensed funds were personal gifts made by the governor.

All of these activities closely resemble past patterns in Piñeda's home base, when

"(i)n an annual rite that has become a tradition in Lubao, hundreds of residents line up for the bags of goodies that the Piñedas give their constituents every year. The schoolteachers get a leg of ham, corned beef and other canned goods. The ordinary barriofolk take home gift bags containing dressed chicken, sardines, rice and noodles. Such generosity ensures that the Piñedas have loyal and enduring grassroots support in their hometown" (Coronel 2000).

This discussion on the social practice and image of patronage in Pampanga suggests that patronal relationships are still in high demand. They actually seem to be the preferred form of vertical social interaction, being that patronage not only delivers many sought-after (particularistic) goods, but also satisfies emotional needs of bonding in a way institutionalised, categorical practices of social organisation and need-satisfaction do not. In the

18 The various 'gifts' or 'bonuses' handed out to the regular and casual employees amounted to around 23 percent of the average annual Filipino per capita income (US\$ 3,925; 2010). The individual contribution of the governor to the lottery amounted to 87 percent of an average yearly Filipino income (exchange rate: 44 Pesos per US\$ 1). A governor's monthly income is about P85,000 (US\$ 1,930; 2011). This translates to Lilia Piñeda contributing nearly two of her monthly salaries as Governor of Pampanga to the lottery.

fairly fragmented Philippine networking society, patronage harmonises well with electoral democracy, as the latter provides an arena for patronal competition (electioneering) and a clearing-house for the division of spoils amongst the patrons (formal political institutions such as congress, provincial and municipal councils), without undermining clientelism per se. Both sides prefer to view social relations in a patronal frame, shunning the categorical- and rule-of-law-based conception of ‘bureaucratic’ politics.

3.3 Control through Violence

“The man with the gun is the state and the state is everything” (Jose 1988: 15).

In the Philippines, physical violence in domination comes in two different forms: First, there is a significant amount of horizontal violence, aimed at controlling or neutralising political contenders for power. This type of violence translates into a large number of political assassinations, peaking around elections and exhibiting significantly lower levels in the years between. Second, we find an equally high level of vertical violence, aimed at controlling or neutralising actors who try to undermine the elite’s grip on local power from the margins of society. These may be journalists, prosecutors or judges, but also include local agrarian reform beneficiaries, members of critical NGOs and others. That which unites them is the collective threat to the local powerbase and the members of the dominant elite. One need also not underestimate the number of killings of socially deviant persons such as criminals or drug users. In this field especially, the level of extralegal killing is difficult to estimate, as such killings can easily be camouflaged as shoot-outs or simply as inter- or intra-gang conflicts.

3.3.1 *The Place of Violence in Intra-Oligarchical Competition*

With respect to the first type of horizontal violence between contenders for power, Pampanga stands out as a relatively violence-free province. Whereas the neighbouring province of Nueva Ecija and especially Ilocos Sur further north regularly exhibit high numbers of casualties, electoral violence in Pampanga is clearly an exception.

This, however, does not imply a principled rejection of violence as a means of political competition. In critical situations, rule abidance – defined as the relinquishment of physical violence – is symbolically underscored by an explicit peace-covenant signed by the contenders for political power. Those specific instances of symbolic politics aim at preventing escalation and violence in situations in which conflict is unavoidable and the parties are not sure whether or not the established non-violent practices will be respected by all contending forces. As an example, the last local elections of October 2010 – when positions at the *barangay*-level were at stake – saw a peace-covenant forged among “at least 20 aspiring village chiefs and 39 aspiring council members” from three villages. The covenant committed the signatories to abide by the election rules as well as state law and pledging not to carry out acts such as “the use of threats and violence against other candidates or their supporters” (Sunstar 2010b). A similar covenant was signed by the top-level candidates for provincial governor “at the San Fernando Cathedral in the presence of Archbishop Paciano Aniceto” and the provincial police director before the 2007 elections (Lapid 2007).

Even though this practice seems to provide some practical benefits, it is most importantly a symbolic confirmation of the elite's superiority over the law. While peace covenants send the message that elites abide by the law on the surface, the critical message here is that they do so voluntarily and temporarily. This practice resembles those pacts that aim at averting or ending bloodshed between competing Mafia families to a certain extent. In both cases, the peace-pacts clearly signal the autonomy of the individual actors to do as they please.

Those manifestations are not only tolerated by the state, but even actively supported. What is more, the ceremonies are normally witnessed by high ranking government representatives as well as church officials, both of whose attendance underscores the ceremonies' legitimacy and validity. Reliance on peace-pacts illustrates that the core personnel of the political system, the mainstream-politicians themselves, do not feel bound by state-law but reserve the right to either voluntarily sign or turn down a commitment to the formal rules of the game that they are supposed to represent.

Among the rare instances of political violence, the most prominent example occurred at the 2007 election for governor, which saw a clash between Governor Marc Lapid, Lilia Piñeda, and Eddie Panlilio. The election campaign was marked by the shooting of two active political supporters of incumbent Governor Mark Lapid, both having campaigned for him in Lubao, the hometown of the Piñedas. Neither of them reported the incident to the police "because they feared for their lives", with Lapid reporting that other campaign leaders had been receiving death threats (Cervantes 2007). In another incident, a *barangay* chairman, supporting the re-election bid of the incumbent mayor of the town of Arayat, was shot and killed by two assailants a few days prior to the elections (Philippine Daily Inquirer 13 May 2007: A2; Philippine Daily Inquirer 14 May 2007: A2).¹⁹ Further trouble ensued when several *barangay* chairmen, who reportedly had already accepted money in exchange for their promise to secure Lilia Piñeda a majority of the votes in their *barangays*, changed their minds and actively campaigned for a last-minute candidate, former priest Eddie Panlilio; Panlilio ended up winning the elections. Shortly following the elections, two *barangay* captains were shot and killed, while a third one survived an ambush attempt. This incident forced others into hiding for fear of their lives. At the time, it was argued that these *barangay* captains were assassinated on the order of Piñeda. The only confirmed news are reports that after the election, Rodolfo "Piñeda had been calling several Barangay captains to meetings to make them explain where they spent the money he had given them and why they failed to make Lilia win" (Philippine Daily Inquirer 29 May 2007: A1+A8). A police investigation revealed that the gunmen were rebels of the RHB (Rebolusyonaryong Hukbong Bayan), a splinter group of the NPA (New People's Army), a claim that was denied by the group's spokesperson, who argued that the RHB had no reasons to kill the *barangay* captains. The RHB's spokesman claimed that

19 Up to the 2007 election day, campaigning had cost the lives of 118 people all over the Philippines (Philippine Daily Inquirer 15 May 2007: A10).

“(t)here are many village chiefs now who are threatened by retaliation as a result of defeat by candidates. Others are in hiding” (cited in: Philippine Daily Inquirer 31 May 2007: A17).²⁰ The cases remain unresolved. In interviews with policemen and local civil society leaders in 2011, it became obvious that all interview partners accepted the conclusion that the *barangay* captains had been killed on the order of Rodolfo Piñeda. Locally, Piñeda is connected to both illegal gambling and strongarm tactics. The Piñedas are perceived as all-powerful, allowing them to easily penalise anybody who dares go against them.²¹

3.3.2 Top-down Violence in the Control of the Population

Whereas the positive image of patronage is plainly visible, its negative facets with respect to the use of violence for repression generally elude public scrutiny. Though the stories told by the locals are fairly consistent, there is hardly ever any proof that affixes the stamp of truth to the stories and beliefs of the people.

This may be deemed as a fundamental problem for research on the topic. However, it should not be overstated, as the crucial aspect of coercive domination is not whether or how often the politically powerful are willing to kill in order to uphold domination, but whether the people believe in their coercive capacities. Belief conditions, causes and gives meaning to social action.²² If people believe that the dominant powers are willing to kill to enforce their will, they will react accordingly, irrespective of the objective truth of the matter. Even though some of the allegations and myths surrounding local political figures may be unfounded, they are nevertheless crucial configurations of local political discourse and behaviour.

Currently, visible top-down violence emerges directly from the patronal order only seldom in Pampanga. Private armed groups (PAG) appear to be scarce, despite the fact

20 This is not to deny that the assassins may well have been members of the RHB or another splinter-group. However, it is important to note that rogue elements of left-wing guerrilla groups sometimes also work for established politicians, intimidating or eliminating their rivals. One rare case of a rebel group admitting such practices was during an intra-rebel split in Negros Occidental, when the leader of one group accused other group members of having “allowed themselves to be used as goons for politicians before and during the elections”. The accused retorted by arguing that their accuser “and his men had worked as assassins for various missions in Luzon that included the plot to kill Batangas Governor Sanchez” (Philippine Daily Inquirer 25 May 2007: A20).

21 Several policemen related the same story to the author as testament to the Piñedas’ power. According to their testimony, in early 2010, a car was stopped by the local police and several high-powered weapons were found inside – a clear violation of the pre-election gun-ban. The driver of the car, however, was Dennis Piñeda, who still held the position of mayor of Lubao. Shortly thereafter, all policemen who participated in this activity were transferred to other places, some as far as Mindanao.

22 This is based on an understanding of social action as put forward by social interactionism. Following Herbert Blumer, “human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings which these things have for them” (Blumer 1969: 2). This meaning is seen as “arising in the process of interaction between people”, which makes meaning a social product. If, then, the death of a person is cognitively connected to a specific cause and agent in the minds of the people, they will act accordingly, despite if their line of interpretation may be utterly wrong on a factual basis.

that the year 2012 saw the dismantling of one such group that was supposedly upheld by a former rebel and (losing) candidate for the mayoral position of Arayat in the 2004, 2007 and 2010 elections, Alejandro Alexandrino. At least one of the members of the PAG seems to have held an official position of *barangay* Captain. The executive director of the Presidential Anti-Organized Crime Commission commented that “with the arrest of these targets, the PNP has not only solved the past criminal activities of Alexandrino but also effectively nipped in the bud their plan to liquidate some rival candidates in the forthcoming May 2013 mid-term elections” (cited in: Journal online 2012).

Most of the cases of supposed extralegal executions and harassment are attributed to the police and especially the armed forces. Both are, with all probability, responsible for a large number of extralegal killings of left-leaning political activists.²³

When seen in historical perspective, present levels of repressive violence are certainly of a minor scale. Historically, repressive violence was rooted in protest that developed against increasingly unequal tenure relations in Pampanga in the 1920s and 1930s, against which the landlords utilised not only the state security forces but also private armed groups that were tasked with suppressing dissent. These latter groups were often given a semi-official standing as a type of government militia. This policy was institutionalised under the dictatorship of President Marcos in the 1970s and continues up to this very day. Whereas from the 1930s to the mid 1950s and again from the 1970s to the late 1980s, large parts of Pampanga Province were hotbeds for rebellion, the past two decades saw a significant downturn in rebel activity and an encapsulation in a small number of fairly rural municipalities. Simultaneously, the communist New People’s Army has partly fallen into pieces in Pampanga as in many parts of the Philippines, resulting in the coexistence of various small armed bands that: claim revolutionary credentials; tax local politicians, landlords, and businessmen; dispense revolutionary justice; and commit petty crimes. On the other end of the spectrum, the most important actors are the armed forces and police. Private armed groups no longer play any significant role. However, there are recurrent reports of guns-for-hire that commit contract killings in Pampanga as well as many other Philippine provinces – a practice that would closely accord with the vast number of execution-style killings that fill the newspaper headlines. Four suspected guns-for-hire, who seem to have been active in Pampanga and adjacent provinces, were shot and killed by police in March 2012.

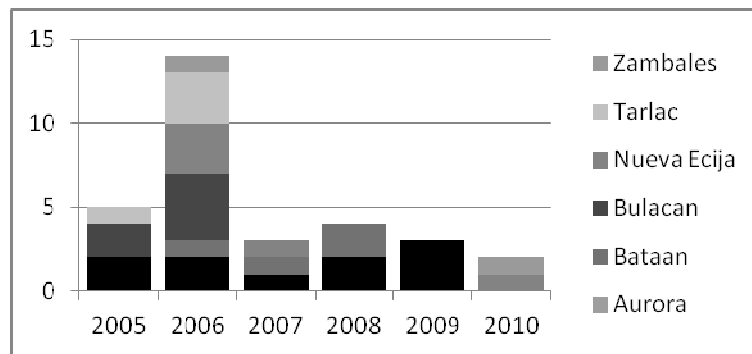
Nevertheless, Pampanga registered the highest number of extrajudicial killings (EJK) of all provinces of the Philippines with at least 37 incidents resulting in 41 deaths during the past decade. Most of the victims are said to have been members of the NPA, some government officials, and a number either ex-members of the NPA or representatives of radical organizations like Bayan Muna (Parreno 2010).

23 See the special report of the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, Philip Alston (2008); see also Parreno 2010 for a further study.

It is generally assumed that in Region III (to which Pampanga belongs), most of the enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings have been perpetrated by the Armed Forces, especially during the time when General Jovito Palparan was Commanding General of the 7th Infantry Division in Central Luzon from September 2005 to September 2006.²⁴ This assumption corresponds well with data on relative frequency of the killings over time in most provinces of the region.

The pattern of EJKs in Pampanga cannot be explained in a similar way. Here, according to data provided by the Regional Bureau of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights, EJKs appear to have been carried out in a continuous pattern from 2005 to 2009. It is only in 2010 – when the new government of Lilia Piñeda took over – that extralegal executions turned to zero.

Extrajudicial killings in Region III per province 2005-2010

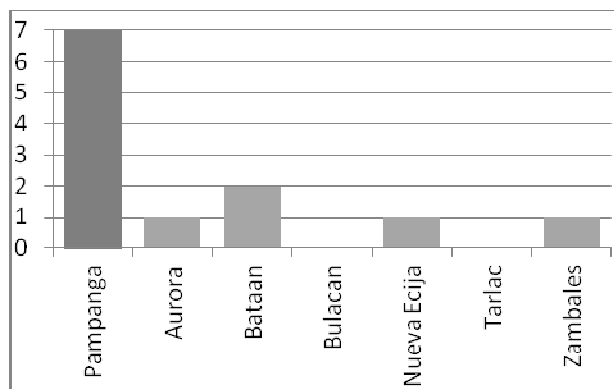


(Based on a dataset provided by the CHR Reg III, May 2011)

Pampanga also stands out with respect to torture (here, the data available to the author only encompasses about 1½ years); the differences between Pampanga and the other provinces in Region III are striking. Only five cases have been reported from all other provinces to the regional Commission on Human Rights, whereas seven Pampangan cases were filed during the same short time span.

²⁴ Palparan is the most prominent high ranking AFP officer, who time and again has been connected to extrajudicial killings.

Suspected Cases of Torture in Pampanga in regional comparison 15 May 2009 to 31 Dec 2010



(Datasets provided by the CHR Reg III, May 2011)

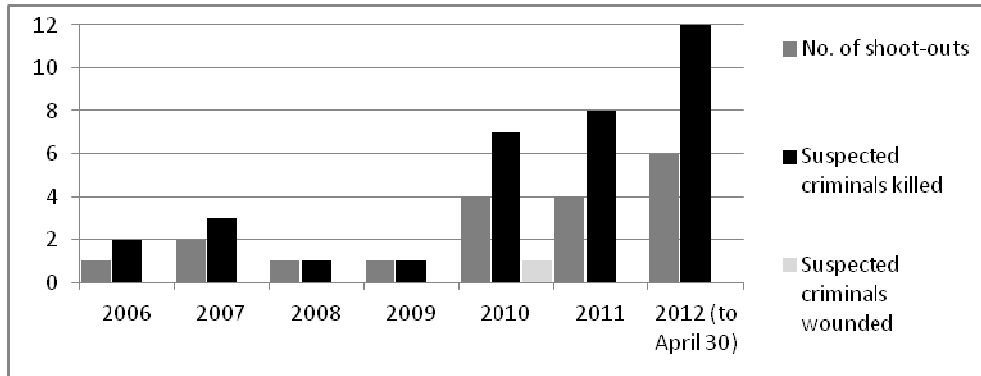
A further dimension of violent domination that does not show up in official datasets, despite being predominant in Pampanga, is the shoot-out between police and criminal elements. During these events (and this makes it a dimension of violent control), the criminal elements are killed while the police generally suffer no casualties. This type of violence is not aimed at political but social deviance, targeting members of carjacker-syndicates and small-scale drug pushers in most cases.

Whereas the number of extrajudicial killings dropped to zero with the advent of the governorship of Lilia Piñeda, the number of suspicious police shoot-outs rose dramatically, corresponding to the strong intention of the new governor to combat crime, which she pronounced publicly. In the years before Lilia Piñeda took over as governor, the number of shoot-outs and their victims were rather low. With respect to the 2010 data, it is important to point out that all four shoot-outs happened after her election in May. What is especially outstanding is the year 2012, which witnessed six shoot-outs with a total of 12 victims in the first five months.²⁵ This author argues that most of these shoot-outs were veiled efforts at extralegal killings. Except for one lone exception, there are no survivors who reported on the side of the suspected criminals. Even more disturbing is the fact that despite the total number of 34 killed suspects, the newspapers did not report on even a single killed or wounded policeman. In one case, an investigation was ordered by the national chief of the PNP who reacted after ABS-CBN reported that a video that was taken after the gun-fight “showed one policeman casually walking over to the suspects lying motionless on the ground and firing at one of them.” The provincial police director argued that “field officers act accordingly when they consider a captured armed

25 Since then no further shoot-outs have been reported (Oct. 2012). This somehow resembles similar patterns in other regions (e.g. Davao City, Cebu City, General Santos City), where local officials resorted to violent anti-crime strategies. In many cases the actual numbers of crime went down and after some time, also the number of killings receded, as with all probability many criminals had left the locality.

suspect to still be dangerous. ‘It is a judgment call for our police operatives if there is still an imminent danger against their life and limb’” (Pazzibugan 2011).

Pampanga Police shoot-outs January 2006-April 2012²⁶



This data is supported by a Pampanga court official who, in an interview with the author, argued that in certain cases

“the police have a way of doing it [‘solving’ certain cases; P.K.]. Sometimes they would send you feelers: ‘You are a much wanted suspect. We will give you a chance. I am sending you somebody. Will you surrender, or will we just find you dead one day.’ If you surrender, good for you. But if you stay in hiding or operating, one day they will gun you down” (interview Pampanga 2011).

3.4 The Criminal Element: Jueteng Business

“(I)t’s the drug lords and the gambling lords, the jueteng lords, who finance the candidates. So from Day One, they become corrupt ... because of poverty, votes are for sale. So the whole (political) process, the whole society, is rotten” (Jose de Venecia, House Speaker, 2007, cited in: House of Representatives 2007).

Illegal business in a multitude of shades certainly does constitute one of the mainstays of Mafia-style domination. However, it does not only provide for oligarchic wealth: its profits are also crucial for extending the scope of patronage in order to gain and regain political office or survive the times when contenders for power are able to grab office, rendering the public coffers temporarily unavailable. It likewise provides additional networks and non-financial resources that may be necessary, depending on the overall economic foundation of the individual boss or political family. Whereas illegal business is no direct mechanism for domination, it is an important backbone that either enables or strengthens the individual boss or family’s capacity for domination.

26 Data are based on an internet-search using the search terms ‘Pampanga’ and ‘shoot-out,’ ‘shootout,’ and ‘shoot out’. Data for earlier years is less complete since the archives of most newspapers only extend back a few years and others are no longer available from earlier years. Data include Angeles City, which does not formally belong to the Province of Pampanga. The majority of the news is from Sunstar Pampanga, Inquirer and Punto. The 2007 data include suspected NPA members who died in a firefight with the police.

While there is a host of news on shady business deals and special congressional and senatorial committees regularly convene to check individual cases, arrests and convictions are very rare. Most cases are not extended beyond initial investigations, and those few that do normally get bogged down in drawn-out trials that usually end inconclusively.²⁷

Part of the problem of illegal business and rent-seeking has already been dealt with above. The examples advanced there share one common characteristic: the ‘businesses’ are perfectly legal in themselves but some concrete practices that constitute various types of (semi- or illegal) rent-seeking, bribery, or the granting of undue advantages to clients or followers are not.

The following discussion focuses on one business sector, in which both the social practice and the whole field of business itself are illegal: *jueteng*. It is a widespread and highly profitable form of illegal gambling taken up by the broad masses of the rather poor population. *Jueteng* is the most popular (and illegal) numbers game in which the gambler selects two numbers from one through 37.

Jueteng is generally supposed to be either directly organised or at least skimmed off by politicians and the relevant representatives of the state security institutions. *Jueteng*-derived money is partly doled out to a variety of clients, providing a prominent form of patronage. At the same time, the vast networks of betting agents function as the eyes and ears of the operators and can be utilised for ‘propaganda’ as well. *Jueteng*-operators at times substitute the

“departments of social welfare and of public works in many towns and provinces, considering the amount of money they pour into community projects such as artesian wells, basketball courts, and roads, as well as the doleouts they give to almost anyone who approaches them for financial help. This then gives *Jueteng* bosses a deep well of goodwill into which the politicians they deem worthy of their time and attention (among other things) can also dip and use to help propel themselves into public office” (Orejas 2007).

Thus, *jueteng* can, to a significant extent, be analyzed *pars pro toto* as one crucial criminal denominator of politics and governance.

In a privilege speech from September 2010, Philippine Senator Miriam Defensor-Santiago gave a succinct and precise overview of the functioning of *jueteng* as a nationwide system of illegal gambling that functions in a highly regularised way, with institutionalised ‘taxation’ and proportional profit-sharing regulations. According to her data, which encompass about 50 percent of the Philippine *jueteng* industry, there is a daily turnover of P 14 million in Laguna province, 9 million in Pampanga and Pangasinan each, 8.5 million in Batangas, 8 million in Bulacan, and 7.5 million in Nueva Ecija and

27 Besides the prominent plunder case against former President Estrada, one of the few cases that may finally result in a lawsuit is the case against the former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, her husband and a number of high ranking officials. They allegedly tried to pocket about US\$ 260 million in connection with a national broadband network deal. The deal (with an estimated value of about US\$ 130 million) was approved by the president in 2007 at a value of US\$ 329 million, but had to be retracted after the details became public. Her trial will likely commence in October 2012.

Quezon each. Altogether this amounts to P 63.5 million (~US\$ 1.5 million). On the national level, 1 percent goes to the secretary of the Department of Interior and Local Government, the chief of the Philippine National Police (PNP) and the head of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group; another 2 percent to the leadership of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office and another 1 percent to the Games and Amusement Board and the media. On the regional level, various responsible heads of bureaucratic positions (mostly PNP regional directors) are said to receive 1 percent. On the provincial level, 3 percent goes to the governor, vice-governor and the members of the provincial assembly, 2 percent goes to the congressman, a further 1 percent goes to the PNP provincial director, and 0.2 percent to the provincial director of the National Bureau of Investigation. The municipal level profits most, as 5 percent go to the mayor, vice-mayor and the municipal board members, and 1 percent to the chief of the local police.²⁸ The *jueteng* operators named by Miriam Defensor Santiago include the Governor of Ilocos Sur Luis (Chavit) Crisologo Singson, his brother Jose (Bonito) Luis Singson, and his son Ronald Singson. Another crucial name is Rodolfo (Bong) Piñeda, the husband of the current Governor of Pampanga province. According to Defensor-Santiago, Piñeda controls illegal gambling in the provinces of Nueva Ecija, Bulacan, Tarlac, Pampanga, Bataan, Camarines Sur, Sorsogon, and the City of Angeles (Defensor-Santiago 2011).²⁹ The Senator's information accords with the testimonies given by various witnesses in former hearings conducted by a blue ribbon committee in 2000 (www.nenepimentel.org/bluerib/TOC.shtml³⁰) and by a congressional committee in 2005. It is also indirectly supported by the testimony of Ilocos Sur Governor Luis Singson, who, in the trial against former president Estrada, admitted to delivering bags containing 5 million pesos of *jueteng* money in cash to the president every two weeks.³¹ Despite the overwhelming evidence of *jueteng* being an important eco-

28 Corresponding data for the late 1990s are in one province, Ilocos Sur, "P1 million for the regional PNP director; P500,000 for the provincial police chief; P150,000 for the local congressman; and P7,500 to P30,000 for the municipal police chief, depending on the size of the town" (Coronel 2000).

A gross profit of nearly US\$ 1 billion has been estimated for Luzon, of which 180 million were said to be used to bribe the police and politicians (McCoy 2009: 226). For more data on the sharing-rates of *jueteng* profits see: Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism/Institute for Popular Democracy 1995, Tan 2003. The police director's P1 million were equivalent to about US\$ 26,000, the municipal police chief's share would be between US\$ 200 and 800.

29 The problem with the information presented by the Senator is that, as another Senator, Juan Ponce Enrile, opined "this document is hearsay. [...] It was known even in previous hearings that this Bong Piñeda is involved in the numbers game, and his wife Pampanga Governor Lilia Piñeda has been mentioned many times" (quoted in Sunstar Philippines 2010a).

30 This site is no longer accessible on the internet.

31 For the mind-boggling details of the Estrada case see the Decision of the Sandiganbayan on the plunder case against former President Estrada (Sandiganbayan 2007; see also the transcripts of the impeachment trial on PhilippineLaw.info). In court, Governor Singson (among others) admitted that he had regularly received *jueteng* protection money from *jueteng* operator Bong Piñeda. This money went not only to the President but also to the Chief of the Philippine National Police and other officials. The regular pattern of police involvement in *jueteng* has also been corroborated by a number of policemen informally interviewed by the author in Pampanga. These policemen complained that the allowances for gasoline and ex-

conomic venture for most politicians from the local to the national levels, complete impunity exists. In a senate committee hearing on the 2004 elections, an aide of a former election commissioner reported that “Rodolfo ‘Bong’ Piñeda contributed P300 million to fund President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo’s campaign in 2004.” This information was confirmed by a relative of the commissioner, who claimed that the large amounts of pay-offs that had to be made in order to win the elections through vote-buying in Mindanao “came from Piñeda and his wife Lilia”. This relative detailed that the president had hosted several dinners for field personnel of the Commission on elections “during which Mrs. Piñeda gave out envelopes each containing P30,000” (Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism 2005).

A former president of the League of Municipalities of the Philippines estimated that about 80 percent of local politicians elected won their elections “primarily or largely with the help of *jueteng* money” (quoted in: Go 2003a: 111).

Even the church profits, for example from the Piñedas in Lubao, who

“usually offer large amounts of cash in Masses and donated hefty amounts for the construction of churches, homes for the aged, and orphanages. Their family also regularly donates to scholarship and outreach programs sponsored by the local clergy [...]. The Piñedas were so generous to a number of priests that they usually sent roast pig (lechon), wine and other goodies during their birthdays. The ‘beneficiaries’ would return the favor by not missing special occasions, such as birthdays of any Piñeda family member or their closest friends” (Philippine Daily Inquirer 05.Aug 2005 p. A6).

In addition to the direct income from the *jueteng* business and the vast influence created by patronage directly financed through *jueteng* on all levels, the numbers game further enlarges the operator’s power indirectly, as the locals working for him as collectors can readily be utilised during election time. The collectors (and their immediate family members) will vote for whomever the *jueteng* lord wants to win, and, even more importantly, they will function as free campaign aid for the respective politician (Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism/Institute for Popular Democracy 1995).

In Pampanga, crime and politics seem to be securely ‘in the family.’ It appears to be a typical husband-and-wife team, augmented by the children and strengthened by alliance-building with *jueteng*-money,³² which has been utilised to bankroll the election campaign

pendable items provided for by the DILG line the pockets of their superiors and has to be replenished by the municipalities. They also lamented that their superiors were regularly provided with their share in *jueteng* revenues. Depending on the individual police director, these revenues are either individually pocketed or utilised for police interests (interviews 2011).

32 During the past years *jueteng* was said to have been partly replaced by an official, state-sponsored lottery, called STL (Small Town Lottery). However, numerous reports claim that franchises are awarded to known *jueteng* operators or their henchmen, and that STL actually functions as a front for *jueteng*. For Pampanga, the proceedings seem to be fairly clear. Whereas the papers used for *jueteng* in the last years were just ordinary slips of paper, they are now copies of the official slips used for STL: “Bet takers from the illegal numbers are using the paper. They have their ID, very difficult. [...] It is very difficult to distinguish. [...] It’s everywhere. Did you notice, you go to the jeepnies, you go to the newsstand and they have that

for other politicians, amongst them then Vice President and later President Arroyo as well as President Estrada (PDI 1 June 2005: A4). Furthermore, Piñeda seems to have “mobilized his network of *jueteng* employees to campaigning for them and protect their votes”, as a senior police officer and at least two local officials claimed (Philippine Daily Inquirer 1 June 2005: A4).³³

The Piñedas strengthened their alliance with the neighbouring Macapagal family via a godmother relationship with Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo acting as godmother to Piñeda’s son. There has been repeated evidence that the Macapagal-Arroyos are likewise involved in *jueteng* (and smuggling). Similar to the Piñedas, the wife secures the political front and the husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, is assumed to be involved in illegal business. He is supported by their son, who likewise appears to bridge the fields of politics and crime. In a confidential cable to Washington, the U.S. Embassy in Manila cited a prominent businessman who claimed that “Mike Arroyo is heavily involved in the illegal gambling or ‘*Jueteng*’ networks and closely connected with major smuggling syndicates”, with another businessman echoing these concerns by “pointing to his links to ‘*Jueteng*’ and the many politicians and local officials involved in the illegal gambling racket”. Other sources go into more details, accusing “a relative of a top government official’ (widely believed to be the First Gentleman) of doling out PNP assignments in Central Luzon in exchange for 60 percent of the *Jueteng* protection money paid to Luzon PNP commanders” (US Embassy 2005a; see also US Embassy 2005b, US Embassy 2005c; Philippine Daily Inquirer 2010). This information was elucidated in significant detail during various congressional and senatorial hearings a few years ago when witnesses independently claimed to have either worked as *jueteng* operators or bagmen for Piñeda or other officials or to have allotted or delivered several hundred thousand pesos to the president’s son (Philippine Daily Inquirer 1 June 2005: A4; Ibid. 7 June 2005: A17). A bagwoman detailed how she once delivered the regular *jueteng* payoffs to then representatives Juan Miguel and Ignacio Arroyo. On orders from her superior – a high ranking police officer – she set out to meet them in Congress in Manila, handing one envelope to Juan Miguel and a second to Ignacio:

“She said Iggy Arroyo opened the envelope and complained that the deal was for him to get P500,000. [After explaining the reason for the reduction – a tropical storm; P.K.] “He (Iggy) looked at me straight to my eyes and said, [...] Tell your boss there is no such thing as storms. A deal is a deal” (Philippine Daily Inquirer 10 June 2007: A4).

small paper, it’s yellow, that’s the *jueteng* paper. So they have this official paper, and they are using it” (Interview Pampanga 2011).

33 It is claimed that Piñeda lost some of his control of *jueteng* after the downfall of President Estrada, having to compromise with other operators. The election victory of Gloria Arroyo (partially made possible by his donations) seems to have given him the opportunity to reclaim most of his former areas, albeit “allowing small operators to exist through franchises at a minimum of P1 million monthly” (Orejas 2005).

In 2007, Pampanga Archbishop Paciano Aniceto became vocal – a rare critical move – in that, just before the elections, he had a statement read in all churches that clearly targeted both the Piñedas and the Lapid.³⁴

As leaders of the church, we challenge all candidates running for any government position in Pampanga to categorically and truthfully declare in public that they have not been – and never will be – involved in *jueteng* and forms of illegal gambling, indiscriminate and corrupt quarrying, vote-buying, any form of cheating in the elections, exorbitant campaigning, violence and extrajudicial killings, illegal drug business” (Philippine Daily Inquirer 31 March 2007: A15)

The police are powerless against this type of semi-official predation and crime for several reasons: First, police officers are dependent on local politicians, from the mayor up to congressman and governor, for their career development,³⁵ with the latter enjoying operational command of the respective police-forces. Second, police on all levels rely on additional income that is voluntarily granted by their respective politicians. Without this, they would be unable to operate to a large extent, lacking in fuel, office equipment and a host of other necessary provisions. Third, policemen are regularly supported by the *barangays* or municipalities with daily necessities for their personal life – especially the lower level –, such as small amounts of money or rice (interviews with police officers 2011). Finally, police officers profit from *jueteng*, with the officers regularly receiving a portion of the profits which they share with their subordinates, as mentioned above.³⁶ A police officer explained that the devious officers “are not the driver, they are only a passenger. They have their own driver which is the politician” (interview police officer 2011).

Finally, a few remarks should be made about the connection between *jueteng* and violence. On the level of the operators, violence seems to be fairly rare. Even though there are conflicts between operators when they encroach on others’ turf, such incidents are generally resolved peacefully: “Turf disputes and takeovers are more often resolved at the level of the padrino than by shoot-outs on the street” (Fabella 2007, 109). However, this does not hold true in all cases. One locally prominent incident is that of Melchor “Ngongo” Caluag, who faced several warrants of arrest for illegal gambling when he was shot in 2002. Caluag is said to have controlled the *jueteng* business in the capital of Pampanga,

34 The father-son team of Manuel Mercado (“Lito”) and Mark Lapid is said to have squeezed the quarry tax to a great extent. The father collected a mere P34.5 million from mid-2003 to 2004, his son collected P86 million during his term from mid 2004 to mid-2007. The new governor Eddie Panlilio managed to collect a staggering P588 million during his three years in office, more than seven times the collection of his predecessor and greater than the current governor Lilia Pineda (who has collected P480 million after 2 years in office) (Punto 28 May 2012: 4).

35 According to various informants (most of them policemen), not even the lowest level policemen can receive a promotion without the explicit approval of the Piñedas. Everyday control is upheld by Dennis Piñeda and Juan Miguel Arroyo, the son of former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

36 They also profit from a range of other illegal practices, for example the informal taxation of *jeepney* drivers. These ‘taxes’ are paid by various drivers associations. Should a *jeepney* driver be issued a ticket, the organization takes care of it. According to one of the local informants it is “a very lucrative thing. You will see many of this policemen, the chief of police wearing expensive jewellery, they have a lot of cars, their children are all first born” (Interview Pampanga 2011).

San Fernando, and did not comply when Bong Piñeda informed him that he intended to take it over. He was shot in broad daylight in front of a number of witnesses, none of whom was willing to testify. Being that he survived, he was able to retrieve his money from the *jueteng* business, become Barangay captain of Dolores (Angeles City's prime commercial district) and invest his money in various legal businesses – among them a hotel that he converted into a casino. The casino proved to be very profitable and he received a further offer from Bong Piñeda, likely one he could not refuse (interviews Pampanga 2011; on the assassination attempt see: Cervantes 2002).

Violence does exist at lower levels, but it is impossible to establish any sound estimate on its prevalence.³⁷ As the aforementioned case illustrates, in principle

“anyone who competes or gets in the way of the *jueteng* lord, will possibly face death. How do you get in the way of the *jueteng* lord? One, you put up your own *jueteng* mechanism, you put out your own collectors etc. But you will have a hard time to looking for collectors, because they are exposing themselves to danger, right? Second, if you cheated the system. How? [...] You pose yourself as a collector. ... Someone realizes later that you are not remitting the money, you are dead. Or you have been operating as a bookie. A bookie is one who operates and gives the impression that he is really official. [...] That is why they die violent deaths” (interview Pampanga 2011).³⁸

4. Mafia-style Domination in Pampanga: a Synopsis and Conclusion

The study of the province of Pampanga has confirmed that wealth is an important ingredient of political power. While political power is a fundamental requirement of wealth de-

37 One interviewee in Manila, who is a representative of the Catholic Church (CBCP), argued that

“Pagcor is the legal [state managed gambling corporation; P.K.], but there are down-the-line illegal, Jueteng [...]. The three sisters of gambling, prostitution and drugs. They go together, these cannot be separated. In these three sisters, violence is part of the game. This is how they operate. So you will see a lot of disappearances. The police will say ‘Yes, it was a personal quarrel. He had been liquidated. You just see somebody dumped somewhere.’ No, this is because of gambling. It's not because of ideology, not because this guy is NPA or what. No, it's not. It's something is wrong with non-payment or drugs. It's all related to that. Another layer of government sponsored violence – because of gambling. Gambling brings about violence in this country. That might not be true in Las Vegas or Atlantic City in the US, but here it is. A lot of violence, although it is not reported as such, is the fruit of gambling. Because down the line, to the village level, the moment you fail to pay even just 100 peso, you're dead” (interview Manila 2010).

Pagcor is the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corporation.

38 This estimate is nearly identical to one given by another informant connected to the Catholic church in Pampanga, who, with reference to Piñeda, stated:

“The way this gambling lord works is more: ‘Do not go against me or else you will be in trouble.’ Before, we used to have another gambling lord, like name of Ngongo. But he is no longer inside the theme because it is really Piñeda who came in. Maybe he is still operating but not that much compared before. Mainly because the life of this person was threatened already” (interview Pampanga 2011).

fence, wealth is probably one of the most important requirements for obtaining political power in the first place, making for a circular relationship. The case of the Piñedas illustrates that wealth, even if ill-gotten, enables individuals to enter the fold of politics; firstly by supporting established oligarchs and then slowly rising 'through the ranks,' from the municipal to the provincial level, even bequeathing the newly won status to new generations.

The only meaningful and durable category for an analysis of political agency remains the family. While the system of a small number of dominant families is fairly insulated, entry is possible if the newcomers cater to the interests of a significant segment of the elite. Throughout the Philippines, cooperation between political families exists but tends to be fairly unstable, leading McCoy and others to describe the Philippines as an "anarchy of families" (McCoy 1994). Here, the state is merely a clearing-house for transactions between contending families that dominate in local level politics and economy. However, the case of Pampanga illustrates that the 'anarchy' can also resemble an oligopoly in which competition is controlled for the sake of additional options for rent-seeking by the dominant few.

The case of Pampanga makes clear that oligarchy is not restrained by democratic institutions but is able to utilise these institutions for its own perpetuation. Democracy is widely accepted in Pampanga (and in the Philippines in general), but not because anybody really believes in it as government 'of, by and for the people,' to paraphrase Lincoln's famous definition. The above analysis has shown that democracy in Pampanga is not government of nor government by the people. Those who govern almost inevitably represent a fairly tight-knit and family-based ruling oligarchy, relying on patronage and (to a much lesser extent) intimidation to secure their base of followers. Government, at best, may be categorized as government for the people insofar as there has been some trickle-down effect during the past decades. Yet democratic institutions and mechanisms should not be discounted as meaningless; whereas in other regions of the Philippines, election-time often results in a number of dead or injured candidates and their supporters, the Pampangan elite manages to avoid such escalations, instead utilising elections as a convenient backdrop for the perpetual balancing of power as well as for selective co-optation of new aspiring forces. It may be said that the formal game in Pampanga is democracy. However, a more detailed analysis of Pampangan politics shows that this game is played according to different rules: activities that would be severely penalised as foul-play under a democratic set of rules of the game are tolerated here.

The provincial oligarchy has proven itself adept at self-modernization, not only with respect to politics, but also economically. It has taken the lead in regards to political domination and new fields of business that have emerged over time, thereby upholding economic domination at the local level. Local political domination is strengthened by an economic structure in which the interests of most families are cross-sectoral, aiming at economic influence in most, if not all, crucial sectors of the local economy (electricity, water, real estate, trade, construction, etc.) and branching out into the trans-local sphere in some cases. This clearly inhibits any sector-oriented policies and political organisation of business along sectoral lines: "Because the families were so powerful, business as an independent voice could not emerge. But individual families were very strong, so the state

could not create coherent policy either” (Kang 2002: 134). As most families tend to resort to extralegal means to maximise their economic gains, the family representatives in their capacity as law-makers or law-implementors (‘the state’) do not have any significant interest in enforcing the rule-of-law.

By fusing economic and political domination, the Pampangan oligarchy is able to circumvent all theoretical expectations. This includes functional differentiation – associated with complex modern societies – and the division of powers – associated with democratic governance – that should provide the checks and balances that prevent multidimensional control by one small group.

Even though oligarchs can rely on coercion to foster control, domination comes mostly in the form of social and cultural hegemony, forcing the subaltern to accept the dominant order. As the section on patronage showed, the clientelistic provision of particularistic goods is not the only the pattern preferred by the elite. It is also expected, demanded and highly valued by the broad population, and, as such, a crucial cornerstone of a hegemonic order in which domination is based on consent to a large degree.

Wilful acceptance of the hierarchical clientelistic order is significantly strengthened by a successful connection of the social to the religious, of the inner-worldly to the transcendental and non-disputable order of the Catholic faith. Ethnologist Richard Maddox, in an analysis of Catholic Spain that clearly fits model of the Catholic Philippines, speaks of a

“dominant cultural formation that had been structured by the discourses of religion, honor, and patronage and had legitimated relations of inequality for centuries. [...] Society was represented as a spiritual and corporal hierarchy whose members were bound together through the critical sociomoral relations of patronage that were imagined to exist between unequals in rank, power, and virtue. [...] cultural hegemony was exercised by assuming the role of patron and rendering social relations significant in terms of the adjustment of the life of the flesh to the life of the spirit and vice versa” (Maddox 1995: 128).

Even though the Catholic worldview rests on the intermediary role of the patron saints, whose authority is not to be questioned, these saints are also expected to ‘deliver’ the goods expected of them. Otherwise, loyalties can turn to new – and hopefully more resourceful – patron saints.

The role of violence and the criminal dimension of politics are what makes it possible to categorize Pampangan domination as Mafia-style. The latter is expressed in outright criminal forms of business, such as illegal gambling, and a simple overstepping of legal limits within perfectly legal spheres of activity. Though violence in Pampanga is a seldom used means of intra-elite competition or the repression of dissent and securing of obedience, violence has not become taboo in either of these two areas. Peace-pacts signify that the options of going to extremes in intra-elite conflicts still exist and that individual competitors retain the right to do so. The violent underpinnings of politics became visible in the 2007 elections. Similarly, while violence is not prominent in vertical, top-down control, it should be born in mind that the province topped the list of extrajudicial killings for the first decade of the new millennium. Furthermore, the province has quite high numbers of torture cases, even though these are clearly not systematic. It also has a record of drastically increased numbers of police shoot-outs that have left suspected criminals dead

under the new governor. This makes the message to socially or politically deviant persons clear.

The 'creative' ways of handling state resources, the furtherance of private gain via various illegal practices, the exploitation of legal loopholes, and the outright illegal profiteering from gambling all point to the irrelevance of the category of legality, except in the case of utilitarian considerations. They point to a further similarity with the Mafia: a profit-maximising business attitude that ignores the legal-illegal divide. The Pampangan case study shows that modern 'democratic' politics may centre on the interests of individuals, kinship groups and networks, who in no way feel bound by the formal principles that are supposed to guide their political activities. They regularly overstep them, thereby establishing and upholding a para-political sphere of which criminal activity is a systemic feature.

The concept of Mafia-style domination helps establish a relation between crime, politics, and economy. In so doing, an integrated order becomes visible, claiming validity in all three spheres. The problem in Pampanga is not so much the collusion or collaboration between the criminal underworld and the political and economic establishment, but the criminalisation of the political and economic elite itself. While no Mafia that exerts its influence on municipal or provincial politics in Pampanga exists, Pampangan politics follow a pattern that is akin to traditional tactics in the core Mafia areas of Sicily and Calabria.

This does not bode well for change. In all probability, the next decade will bring more of the same for Pampanga and for the Philippines at large. With respect to the former, this may mean some economic spill-over to the broader masses via relatively fast-paced economic development. This will occur despite the fact that most of the profits will be channelled to the regional elite and their most important clients. While government of and by the people is an unrealistic vision for the near future in Pampanga, government for the people does seem to be possible to a certain extent, even if it serves the enlightened self-interest of the local elite.

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