

GUARDIA DE HONOR: REVITALIZATION WITHIN THE REVOLUTION

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OUT OF THE STRIFE-TORN YEARS FROM 1892 TO 1902 emerged a series of contradictory social forces. The decade of discord in the Philippines—like similar upheavals elsewhere—produced intense, sometimes bitter, rivalries. *Ilustrados* and *Katipuneros*, Catholics and Aglipayans, Manileños and *provincianos*, landlords and tenants, regionalists and nationalists, pro- and anti-Americans, all contended for control of the truncated revolution. Because of their direct bearing on the development of contemporary Filipino nationalism, these factions have monopolized the attention of historians.

Often overlooked in the evaluations of rival claims to leadership is a sub-plot of provincial protest which had little or no relevance to the nerve-fraying drama in Manila, Kawit, and Malolos. While real and aspiring members of the elite jockeyed for prominent positions in the center of the revolutionary stage, and defiant young protagonists addressed themselves to the awesome tasks of nation building against the ominous backdrop of well-armed foreign troops disembarking in Manila Bay, rustic players acted out a far different scenario in remote barrios. The politically cognizant rallied to Aguinaldo, Mabini, and the men of Malolos. But many villagers followed charismatic local leaders into a series of "New Jerusalem." The anarchistic goals of the religious rebels were antithetical to the objectives of their more sophisticated contemporaries. Spanish friars, Filipino nationalists, and American conquerors found little in common. They did, however, agree on one point: all of them dismissed the bucolic experiments as gross examples of *bundok* heresy, crude superstition, primitive fanaticism, or worse.¹ Students of the period have unconsciously underlined those turn-of-the-century interpretations by ignoring the provocative innovations of provincial redeemers.

In neglecting these popular expressions, scholars have missed an opportunity to gain insights into the dynamics of rural discord in the Philippines. This is not an oversight limited to Filipinos or to foreign students of Philippine affairs. It is an intellectual "set" which threatens systematic inquiry into the social history of Southeast Asia. In the December issue of *Asian Studies* Professor Harry Benda pointed out the documentary and conceptual difficul-

* The author is examining a series of religio-political expressions in the Philippines under a Fulbright research grant for 1965-66. This article represents a preliminary report of findings on one movement. It is primarily descriptive rather than interpretative. Since materials are still being collected, please regard it as a tentative first look at the *Guardia de Honor*. Gratitude is extended to the Joint Committee of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council for a grant to Washington, D.C. during the summer of 1963. United States records on the *Guardia* were examined at that time. Neither the ACLS-SSRC nor the United States Education Foundation in the Philippines, however, is responsible for any of the views or conclusions expressed.

¹ The literal Tagalog translation of *bundok* is mountain.

ties that plague the examination of agrarian movements in this part of the world.² A kind of “conspiracy of silence,” as he so aptly put it, shields the peasantry from the historian’s curiosity.³ The student of rural unrest must work from frustratingly small and scattered fragments in his effort to reconstruct the elements of the Little Tradition. Despite the difficulties, the rewards make the quest worthwhile. Benda’s stimulating essay reveals some of the potential results. Implied within it is a rough continuum of increasingly sophisticated dissent throughout the region. At one end, was the “gentle anarchism” of the Samin Movement in nineteenth century Java; at the other, the “city-oriented” but peasant-based protest of the *Sakdalistas* on the eve of the Commonwealth’s inaugural in the Philippines.⁴ Between the two lie many forms and variations of agrarian unrest.

What prevails among the peasantry of Southeast Asia applies also to the broader context of mankind. Human beings under conditions of extreme or sustained stress—such as conquest, forced acculturation, rapid socio-economic change or breakdown—frequently become involved in what, at first sight, appears to be highly eccentric or exotic group behavior. A growing body of anthropological, sociological, and historical scholarship in Europe and the United States addresses itself to phenomena of this general type.⁵ Among the bewilderingly numerous terms in the emerging vocabulary designed to describe and explain such manifestations are the following: “cargo cults,” “chiliastic movements,” “charismatic movements,” “millenarian movements,” “nativistic movements,” “religious revivalism,” “social movements,” “sect formation,” and others.⁶ In an effort to eliminate semantic confusion and to evolve a

² Harry J. Benda, “Peasant Movements in Southeast Asia,” *Asian Studies*, III (1959).

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ See D. R. Sturtevant, “Sakdalism and Philippine Radicalism,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, XXI (1962), 199-215.

⁵ Mountainous sociological and anthropological literature on the subject assumes almost Himalayan proportions. Most helpful to historians entering the field are works by Redfield; see, for example, *The Primitive World and Its Transformations* (Ithaca, New York, 1953), and “Peasant Society and Culture,” in *The Little Community and Peasant Society and Culture* (Chicago, 1960). A pioneering sociological formulation was presented by R. D. Hopper, “The Revolutionary Process,” *Social Forces*, XXVIII (1950), 270-79. J. W. Vander Zander significantly modified the Hopper thesis in “Resistance and Social Movements,” *Social Forces*, XXXVII (1959), 312-15. Specific studies are too numerous to mention. For guidance, see Benda’s footnote on the subject *loc. cit.* A provocative essay on movements in a neighboring nation was produced by J. M. Van der Kroef in “Javanese Messianic Expectations: Their Origin and Cultural Context,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, I (1959), 299-322. The most stimulating historical treatments are: Norman Cohn, *In Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Messianism in Medieval and Reformation Europe and Its Bearing on Modern Totalitarian Movements* (London, 1962); E. J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York, 1963); and V. Lanternari, *The Religions of the Oppressed: A Study of Modern Messianic Cults*, tr. by Liza Sergio (New York, 1963).

⁶ The historian who ventures into the inviting land of sect analysis enters a territory considered sacrosanct by behavioral scientists. See “Book Review: The Religions of the Oppressed,” *Current Anthropology*, VI (1965), 447-65. The animated international discussion of Professor Lanternari’s book by fifteen specialists, reveals the vitality of this field of inquiry. Another glimpse of the proliferating literature can be gained by scanning the review article’s bibliography, 464-65.

theoretical basis for uniform analysis, Professor Anthony F. C. Wallace evolved the concept of "revitalization" and outlined the stages through which such expressions seem to pass.⁷

Since his "constructs" undergird this short study, their meaning together with the processes they involve must be clarified. Wallace defines stress as a "condition in which some part, or the whole, of the social organism is threatened with serious damage."⁸ Under these circumstances begins what some sociologists call the "milling process"—increasing disorientation and a corresponding, often confused, quest for solutions.⁹ Revitalization movements appear at this juncture. He defines revitalization as a "deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture."¹⁰ Innovations of this kind run the gauntlet from extremely naive and "unrealistic" millenarianism, to sophisticated and "realistic" secular formulations. Whatever their pattern, from a strictly cultural viewpoint, they constitute highly creative endeavors to cope with a hostile world.¹¹

If they fit the "unrealistic" category—as does the subject of this paper—they usually involve a charismatic prophet who is in regular contact with a "supernatural pseudo-community."¹² Principal aides of the leader, and in many cases the bulk of their followers, become involved in similar psychological experiences. Hallucinatory states become widespread, sometimes contagious, and a kind of other wordly convulsion sweeps the membership. Propelled by mounting irrationality, the leaders and some of the followers often take the next logical if unfortunate step: they "become" the guardian spirit or spirits.¹³ Once the social seizure is established along these lines, the aberration must run its course. If the redeemer's doctrines and his disciples' conduct seriously challenge the values of the larger society, those who exercise authority suppress and, when possible, eliminate the movement.

With the inevitable tribal prostrations to the tyranny of terms completed, the major work of this paper can be undertaken. It will consist of a preliminary inquiry into the *Guardia de Honor*, an intricate revitalization effort which swept northern Luzon at the turn of the century. Its brief but highly checkered career created a unanimity of dismay among deeply discordant elements. Clerics were reduced to anxious tongue clucking. Nationalists cried counter revolution and treason. Americans fumbled and mumbled in puritanical bewilderment. The movement which forged this strange consensus will be analyzed in regard to (1) Catholic origins, (2) relations with the revolutionary regime, (3) relations with the Americans, (4) internal structure, (5) overt demise and probable survival as a secret society.

The organization made its appearance under thoroughly prosaic circumstances. Founded by Dominican fathers sometime in the middle of the nine-

⁷ Anthony F. C. Wallace, "Revitalization Movements," *American Anthropologist*, LVIII (1956), 264-81. Wallace's carefully designed rubric is used here because it generates less semantic heat than other descriptive terms.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 265.

⁹ Hopper, *loc. cit.*, 271.

¹⁰ Wallace, *loc. cit.*, 265.

¹¹ Redfield, *Primitive World*, 51.

¹² Wallace, *loc. cit.*, 273.

¹³ *Ibid.*

teenth century, its purpose was to instill devotion for the Virgin among lay members.¹⁴ Known as the *Guardia de Honor de Maria*, the confraternity flourished in Pangasinan and contiguous provinces. Originally designed to provide a devout escort for the Virgin's image during sacred processions, the society grew beyond its inceptors' expectations and gradually assumed more complex responsibilities. By 1877, the size of its membership justified division into regional and local units for more effective work among the village laity.

To this point, the *Guardia's* development followed an orthodox pattern. The revolutionary tide of the 1890's, however, shattered the Dominican's conservative handiwork. When the flood crested, it left a ruin of religiously-oriented fragments which local artisans combined into a ramshackle radicalism unrecognizable to the society's original architects and builders. The genesis of the transformation came when curates attempted to use the confraternity's influence to counter propaganda and organization work by *Katipuneros*.¹⁵ With the rise of revolutionary fortunes, many clerics in Pangasinan were arrested by provincial leaders of the new regime. Others (some assisted by members of the *Guardia*), escaped and fled to the Order's sanctuaries in Manila. Abandoned parishioners blamed the revolutionaries for the disappearance of their spiritual guides. Dynamic provincial leaders—perhaps spurred on and assisted covertly by Dominicans in the distant metropolis—organized a counter movement which soon assumed regional proportions.¹⁶

Storm signals started to flutter in the tense time of waiting, from October 1898 through January 1899. While Aguinaldo and his aides attempted to deal with the ever-increasing threat of hostilities with the United States, ominous rumbles of an approaching Jacquerie began to reverberate across the plains and through the mountains to the north. Reports from provincial authorities portrayed a highly disturbing pattern of spreading disorder. Highwaymen, brigands, and irregular military units appeared in ever-widening circles emanating from Pangasinan. Prominent families, together with barrios and administrative centers loyal to the new government, came under sporadic attack.¹⁷ By late November and early December 1898, peace and order in the provinces of La Union, Pangasinan, and Tarlac had deteriorated to the danger point. Nationalist leaders grumbled over counter-revolutionary tendencies and complained to Aguinaldo of "treason on the part of our troops and civilians."¹⁸

¹⁴ United States, National Archives, J. R. M. Taylor (comp.), *The Philippine Insurrection against the United States*, galley proofs in five volumes (Washington, D. C., 1906), I, 45; cited hereafter as Taylor, *Insurgent Records*.

¹⁵ James Le Roy, *Philippine Life in Town and Country* (New York, 1905), 129.

¹⁶ United States, War Department, Bureau of Insular Affairs, *Compilation of Philippine Insurgent Records: Telegraphic Correspondence of Emilio Aguinaldo, July 15, 1898, to February 28, 1899, Annotated* (Washington, 1903), 36; cited hereafter as BIA, *Compilation*. A footnote describes the career of a *Guardia* leader in Tarlac Province. It is based on Joaquin D. Duran, *Episodios de la Revolucion Filipina* (Manila, 1901).

¹⁷ General Macabulos to Aguinaldo, November 30, 1898. BIA, *Compilation*, 30.

¹⁸ General Pio del Pilar to Aguinaldo, December 4, 1898. BIA *Compilations*, 31.

Christmas brought the gift of chaos. Simultaneous uprisings plunged Tarlac into near anarchy. Urgent telegrams jamming the wires to General Aguinaldo's headquarter in Cavite described widespread "criminal" activities by hands of "*tulisanes*."¹⁹ A *cordon sanitaire* was hastily thrown around the feverish province in an effort to isolate the infection. Reinforcements rushed north by rail to initiate martial law and to pacify the restless populace. Tarlaqueños remained under a state of siege throughout the month of January 1899. Efforts by the regime to withdraw detachments for strategic redeployment against the Americans proved futile. Within hours after the abandonment of a *poblacion*, poised guerillas fell upon the defenseless town to sack government buildings, destroy records, and attack leading citizens. The struggle quickly assumed the character of civil war. In a revealing message, the administrative head of Tarlac captured the fears of the provincial *principales*. "Many rich people here," he telegraphed Aguinaldo, "urgently ask the creation of a . . . body of volunteers . . . formed of trustworthy and prominent persons . . . for the pursuit of robbers and to fight the Americans if necessary. We have the money," he concluded optimistically, "and only need rifles."²⁰

Aguinaldo used a more cautious approach. He tried to tranquilize the area through a dual policy of attraction and coercion. Neither element worked. Rural rowdies stole his velvet glove and parried his mailed fist. That a religious under-current propelled the rebellious forces was quickly discerned by those in charge of pacification. One troubleshooter suggested that Bishop Aglipay be sent "to quiet Tarlac."²¹ Surging peasants, however, could not be stilled by either nationalistic bishops or bullets. When amnesties failed to turn the tide of discord, members of the burgeoning movement were proscribed, hunted down, and killed.²² But the organization continued to grow and flourish. Leaders of the dissenters began to call themselves "Brigadier Generals."²³ They applied, moreover, a ruthless counter policy of terror against government efforts to drain away their reservoir of popular support. By the end of February 1899, the trouble had assumed the proportions of a general peasant uprising. San Carlos, Pangasinan, for example, requested military detachments to defend its 23,000 inhabitants from the assaults of "those who call themselves the discontented or oppressed and Guards of Honor."²⁴

The Dominicans' carefully nurtured plant had borne unpredictably bitter fruit. Within a year, further mutations produced an ugly, self-propagating specimen which even the friar horticulturists came to regard as a noxious weed. After the outbreak of Filipino-American hostilities, provincial authorities turned from peace-keeping activities to the more pressing duties created by the advancing outlanders. United States troops, concentrating on Aguinaldo's ragged but defiant legions, paid little heed to the religious peculiarities proliferating around them. Late in 1899, however, when forward elements reached the warm plains and humid foothills of Pangasinan, the problem

¹⁹ See telegrams to Aguinaldo, BIA, *Compilation*, 35-7.

²⁰ Provincial Chief of Tarlac to Aguinaldo, December 28, 1898. BIA, *Compilation*, 41-2.

²¹ Secretary of Agriculture to Aguinaldo, December 28, 1898. BIA, *Compilation*, 37.

²² Taylor, *Insurgent Records*, 45.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

could no longer be ignored. A lush undergrowth of religious dissent covered the province. From the thriving seedbed, thick runners of discord twisted north, east, and south into La Union, Ilocos Sur, Nueva Ecija, Zambales, and Tarlac.

The contagion caused the Americans as much, if not more, difficulty than it had Aguinaldo. General Elwell S. Otis, the bemused commander of "pacification" forces in the Philippines, grasped neither the military nor social realities confronting his field officers. Weaned on the Anglo-Saxon sportsmanship of the War Between the States and shaped by the primitive clarities of Indian campaigns on the frontier, he regarded the "strange fanaticism" swirling through Luzon as but another streak of oriental perversity.²⁵ "Self-declared prophets," complained the disgruntled Otis to his superiors, "were revealing and proclaiming new creeds. . . quite markedly variable in origin and nature."²⁶ The general considered the malady to be essentially inexplicable. He fell back, therefore, on a tried and tested American approach. Assuming the sects were based on the pecuniary motives of their leaders, he ordered a crackdown. Subordinates wrested an established redeemer from the arms of devout converts in Calumpit, Bulacan and threw him behind bars for "illegal money exactions from the more ignorant natives."²⁷ After taking the first step toward confining the epidemic, the general consulted local diagnosticians. Manila's "educated Filipinos" proved to be uneasy. They spoke apprehensively about the increase of . . . fanatical sects," and warned Otis that difficulty might be experienced "in handling them if they were permitted to follow their inclinations."²⁸ The general found no answers; but he concluded his ponderous observations with a provocative remark: "Whatever the cause, the fact disturbed the Roman Catholic clergy and was the subject of much animated discussion."²⁹

While Otis conducted righteous opinion surveys and priests buzzed sanctimoniously over the American commander's heretical findings, General Arthur MacArthur sought the focus of dissent. Patrols reconnoitering Pangasinan's intricate village network found a variety of secular and sacred eccentricities, but the strangest encounter was a thriving community of ten thousand people where a slumbering barrio of five hundred was supposed to be. Cabaruan, which one scandalized American called, an "ill-starred town of religious fanatics and vulgar thieves," had been discovered by the outside world.³⁰ With a tactician's directness, MacArthur moved to eradicate the conglomeration of cultists. Hastily concentrated infantry occupied the place after a brief and practically bloodless skirmish. Shortly thereafter, a relieved General Otis received complete telegraphic information on the action's objective:

Cabaruan is . . . located some eight miles east of Malasiqui. . . It has been selected as the rendezvous of a fanatical religious organization of some kind and people from surrounding towns and barrios forced to assemble there. . . . The fana-

²⁵ *Report of Major General E. S. Otis: September, 1899 to May 5, 1900* (Washington, 1900), 142.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 143.

³⁰ James Le Roy, *The Americans in the Philippines*, II (Boston, 1914), 302.

tics are also robbers and murderers, and have recently committed the most cruel depredations on surrounding towns, especially Malasiqui, where nine murders have been committed within the last few weeks. . . . The. . . people there have been ordered home and in a few days it is hoped that the excitement that has kept this part of Pangasinan in an uproar. . . will subside. . . . Precisely how the religious and robber elements are combined I have not yet been able to ascertain, but it is a fact. . . that this part of Pangasinan has been terrorized by these people—the large town of Malasiqui being almost entirely depopulated. . . The importance of this day's work cannot be overestimated.³¹

General MacArthur's modest conclusion proved wrong. The "day's work" exerted about as much influence over the course of affairs in Pangasinan, as the nationalists' proclamation of martial law had worked on events the year before in Tarlac.

MacArthur galloped off to resolve other pressing difficulties leaving regimental officers to grapple with the complexities of Cabaruan. Early in 1900, they stationed an infantry company in the town to oversee the gradual dispersal of its residents. But the inhabitants did not fade away. The tumult subsided. Sectarians devoted more energy to marathon prayer sessions and correspondingly less to terrorizing neighboring settlements.³² Even the population leveled off around the ten thousand mark. With peace seemingly restored, the small garrison withdrew. Baffled officers in Dagupan headquarters instituted a wary surveillance of the troublesome community. Any hope that genuine stability might develop proved ephemeral. The soldiers' departure signalled a fresh outburst of perplexing growth. Within a year, ten thousand more people migrated to Cabaruan.³³ A new, heartier variety of religious dissent had apparently sprung up in Pangasinan.

The ominous revival constituted an additional source of frustration to military personnel overburdened with occupation duties in a large and populous province. Patrols visited Cabaruan regularly. Their sketchy reports revealed a series of mystifying contradictions.³⁴ The town was unusually clean and well laid out. Major streets radiated from the plaza like spokes on a wagon wheel. Each thoroughfare, together with the section through which it passed, was named after one of the twelve apostles. A personable young man, addicted to glittering top-boots and ornate uniforms, presided over the destinies of the devout and disciplined population. He was assisted by twelve efficient lieutenants. These encouraging aspects, however, were cancelled by some highly discouraging circumstances. Cabaruan's burgeoning population manifested all the trappings of rural prosperity, but the town lacked any visible

³¹ Otis, *op. cit.*, 143.

³² Dean C. Worcester, *The Philippine Past and Present*, II (New York, 1914), 944.

³³ Katherine Mayo, *The Isles of Fear: Truth About the Philippines* (New York, 1925), 181. Miss Mayo's book was probably the most "objectionable" collection of "objective" observations written during the 1920's. But her short description of Cabaruan was based on the account of an American officer stationed in Dagupan during the years, 1899-1902. If her remarks are stripped of their Kiplingesque veneer they reveal interesting details on the *Guardia*.

³⁴ United States, War Department, *Report 1900* (Washington, 1901). See I, Part 8, "Reports from Colonel J. F. Bell, Commander, Thirty-Sixth Infantry, U. S. V., to Adjutant-General Second Division, Eighth Army Corps, 331-335. Cited hereafter as *Bell Reports*.

means of support.³⁵ Few, if any, people worked. They made little effort, for example, to cultivate the surrounding countryside. Furthermore, detachments returning to Dagupan, inevitably picked up disturbing rumors concerning Cabaruan. Inhabitants of surrounding communities regarded the place with ill-concealed terror. They complained of chronic criminality and whispered of sordid and sadistic rites.³⁶

Headquarters doubled efforts to unravel the enigma. Suspicious American majors attempted to take the town's leaders by surprise. The new approaches produced no concrete evidence of wrongdoing, but they led to an entertaining cat-and-mouse game between Cabaruan and the United States Army. Patrol patterns were radically and constantly changed. When this failed, small veteran detachments made their way to the community *via* the most devious routes. Vigilant residents of Cabaruan's extensive environs, however, always discovered the interlopers. They notified messengers who, in turn, set into motion a unique alarm system. Within moments after receiving word of the patrol's approach, the ever-alert Cabaruan brass band—drums rolling, cymbals crashing, and trumpets blaring—was marching out to greet the dismayed troops. When musicians and military met, the bandsmen wheeled smartly, and triumphantly led the embarrassed Americans through orderly throngs of smiling residents to the *plaza* where they were graciously welcomed by town officials.³⁷ Incidents of this type led some Manila Americans to chide the Pangasinan regiment for the "Cabaruan fiasco."³⁸

Intelligence and legal officers in Dagupan, however, were not as naive as Cabaruan and Manila believed. While patiently awaiting the accumulation of irrefutable testimony, they compiled a quantity of revealing information on the mysterious town. The manifestation confronting them represented something far more complicated than simple superstition or religious racketeering. The specific problem of Cabaruan was linked to the amorphous and seemingly all-pervasive hysteria which anxious villagers called "*Guardia de Honor*." A lemming-like migration was underway in the north. Peasant families from surrounding provinces, particularly La Union and Ilocos Sur, arrived every day in Cabaruan.³⁹ For a people conditioned to servile acceptance of clerical and proprietary authority, the mass movement constituted a courageous act of spontaneous protest. The pattern of rebellion was devastatingly simple. When the harvest was gathered, farm couples packed up children, pitiful belongings, and poultry; seized the landowner's *palay*, livestock, and carabao; joined like-minded neighbors; and began the liberating trek to the promised land. On arrival, they deposited confiscated rice and

³⁵ Mayo, *op. cit.*, 182.

³⁶ The rumors led the commander in Dagupan to observe, "I am convinced that the conditions of affairs at Cabaruan are unhealthy and need some corrective action before a time of possible crisis arrives," *Bell Reports*, 332.

³⁷ Mayo, *op. cit.*, 181.

³⁸ "...on my recent trip through Pangasinan I passed and met... dozens of families who said they had come from... La Union and Ilocos Sur, on their way, with carabao, carts, and other domestic belongings to... Cabaruan," *Bell Reports*, 333.

³⁹ "Some of them are accused of taking all the palay, which their land produced, away with them... (thereby robbing the proprietor... of his share of the crop), together with the carabao which belonged to the proprietor of the land." *Ibid.*

animals in communal granaries and pens. This seemingly limitless bounty added to the impressive booty collected during terroristic raids on neighboring areas, produced a cornucopian atmosphere verging on perpetual *fiesta*. The town was living parasitically on a large portion of the agricultural yield of at least three provinces.⁴⁰ The place virtually reeked with the heady aroma of social revolution.

The peculiar political organization of the community posed greater analytical problems. Ostensibly anarchistic, the town was not chaotic. Opposition to external authority—whether clerical, national, or colonial—was balanced by rigid internal subjection to paternalistic figures. The resplendant headman and his uniformed aides were more than polite dandies. They directed a rigid, *pure* theocracy. Surrounding them was a discipline-producing halo of holiness. A publicity-shunning individual, known simply as Baltazar, had founded the town in 1897. Many residents believed him to be “God Almighty.” Antonio Valdez, the glittering headman; Gregorio Claveria, his principal aide; and Maria de la Cruz, their constant companion; were worshiped respectively as “Jesus Christ,” the “Holy Ghost,” and the “Virgin Mary.” The twelve lieutenants were reverently regarded as the “Savior’s Apostles.”⁴¹ Such an omnipotent assemblage made anything seem possible. A developing sense of invincibility powered Cabaruan’s gathering momentum.

While there were apparently no apocalyptic pronouncements, the euphoric behavior of the community indicated that the millenium was at hand. Mass elation of such magnitude can be attributed to few factors other than collective anticipation experienced by the elect on the eve of a final reckoning. The corrupt world would be transformed. Justice would replace oppression. If they conceived of the new era in simple terms, utterly incomprehensible to their more sophisticated contemporaries, it was because they were uncomplicated men and women. Pre-political rural folk seldom aspire to an affluent utopia. They “conceive of the good society as a just sharing of austerity rather than a dream of riches for all.”⁴² While awaiting retribution, it was the responsibility of the predestined to strike down perpetrators of evil. Blacklists of sinners, particularly landowners and apostates, were compiled. True believers convinced themselves that when the great day came, lands of those marked for extinction would be divided among the members of the organization. Cabaruan’s wide-ranging raiders, accordingly, did not strike in a hit-or-miss fashion. They preyed specifically on those obviously unfit to enter “the chosen kingdom of the *Guardia de Honor*.”⁴³

The town’s impossible “economy” bothered regimental officers in Dagupan more than its unorthodox “theology.”⁴⁴ The soaring population quickly

⁴⁰ Mayo, *op. cit.*, 182. After the movement had been suppressed, a member of the Philippine Commission observed, “On a trip to Lingayen I saw the persons who had impersonated God, the Son, and the Virgin Mary in a provincial jail.” Worcester, *op. cit.*, 944.

⁴¹ Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*, 82.

⁴² United States, War Department, *Report 1901* (Washington, 1902), I, Part 3, “Report of Brigadier General J. H. Smith, U.S.A.,” 114. Cited hereafter as *Smith Reports*.

⁴³ “This religious fanaticism might be harmless if it did lead its ignorant followers to the adoption of harmful views concerning rights of property and other material things.” *Bell Reports*, 333.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 334.

consumed confiscated provisions from Cabaruan's communal *bodegas* and bamboo corrals. Mounting pressure to meet the imminent crisis produced two equilibrium-shattering results. On the one hand, disputes over the acquisition and distribution of food shook the doctrinal unity of the leaders. A disgruntled lesser prophet led a minor *hegira* to Santa Ana, a barrio of Asingan town.⁴⁵ There, he established a new spiritual refuge. Ilocanos fleeing personal wildernesses could now choose between rival lands of milk and honey. Santa Ana quickly became a full-blown reflection of Cabaruan. By March 1, 1901, ten thousand people had collected in the "New Jerusalem." On the other hand, Cabaruan passed the economic point of no return. Still absorbing droves of ecstatic pilgrims, it achieved a peak population of twenty-five thousand early in 1901. The resulting frantic quest for food led terroristic bands to modify their tactics. Specific attacks on selected *principales* were supplemented with an ever-increasing number of random assaults on humble outsiders. Small farmers who had tacitly supported and secretly enjoyed *Guardia* activities directed at the rich, turned against the movement when it unleashed its righteous fury on the poor.⁴⁶

With mounting waves of terror sweeping Pangasinan's sectarian sea, aroused officers in Dagupan moved to still the turbulence. Judgment Day came, but not in the vague fraternal form envisioned by members of the *Guardia*. It materialized suddenly and overpoweringly in blue uniforms, bristling bayonets, and a provost marshal. On March 3, 1901, Cabaruan and Santa Ana were occupied by infantry battalions. Ruthlessly efficient platoons sought out the "Trinity" and the "Virgin." The omnipotent trio and their charismatic handmaiden were arrested, shackled, and blasphemously marched off to an army stockade in Urdaneta. Shortly thereafter, they were unceremoniously joined by twelve dispirited apostles.⁴⁷ With their redeemers in chains, the budding self-confidence of Cabaruan's inhabitants withered to traditional subservience. By nightfall, the first crestfallen *tao* were preparing for humiliating returns to their old communities.

The dreary diaspora took several months. March and April saw the counter-migration reach its depressing peak under the persistent prodding of American soldiers. A hard core of faithful remained in the dusty ruins of Cabaruan to await the military tribunal's decision. The Court declared Antonio Valdez and Gregorio Claveria guilty on multiple counts of murder and terrorism. It sentenced them to death. Other leaders, found guilty of aiding and abetting the activities of the headmen, received long prison terms. On June 1, 1901, in Urdaneta, Pangasinan, Valdez and Claveria were publicly hanged.⁴⁸ "Jesus" and the "Holy Ghost" were dead. So, apparently, was the *Guardia de Honor*.

It all seemed over. Cabaruan and Santa Ana dwindled back to sleeping settlements, dreaming fitfully of bygone notoriety. Ilocanos went home or—if that grim alternative seemed too unbearable—joined their ubiquitous broth-

⁴⁵ Silent villagers became extremely vocal early in 1901 providing clear proof of widespread murder and terrorism to American authorities in Dagupan. Mayo, *op. cit.*, 182-83.

⁴⁶ *Smith Reports*, 114.

⁴⁷ *Smith Reports*, 118.

⁴⁸ Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels*. 91.

ers in other parts of the Philippines. Except for those who had painfully felt its wrath, or those who had been temporarily transformed by its delirious aspirations, the contagion was forgotten almost as quickly as it had appeared. The patterns followed the classic model of shattered peasant movements throughout the world. Defeat breeds despair. When the frenzy subsides, observed a compassionate student of European protests, nothing is left "but the small group of . . . true believers, and a dispirited mass waiting for the next great moment. And if that small group should be dispersed—by death, or emigration, or the systematic attention of the police, nothing at all remains except a bitter consciousness of defeat."⁴⁹

Filipino farmers, however, have a tenacious hold on hope. The spark of revitalization survived. Remnants of the old organization formed a secret society which kept the spectre of Cabaruan alive. When the army withdrew from Pangasinan, neophyte provincial officials and green constabularymen had to deal with a treacherous undercurrent of peasant anarchism which surfaced from time to time in small, violent upheavals. A minor uprising occurred in Natividad in 1903.⁵⁰ Similar incidents of diminishing intensity continued for another seven years. After 1919, the records of the Argus-eyed Constabulary no longer mention the *Guardia de Honor*. Anonymity, however, did not necessarily mean extinction. The 1920's witnessed the appearance of a new generation of religious rebels. *Colorum* agonies reminiscent of the *Guardia's* birthpangs plagued Central and Northern Luzon. In January 1931, they reached climax in the uprising at Tayug, Pangasinan. Thirty years stand between the two expressions. But less than twenty miles divided the *Guardia's* Cabaruan, and the *Colorum's* Tayug.

Both manifestations—together with a score of other obscure rural protests—deserve the respectful attention of scholars. Within them lie the outlines of the Little Tradition in the Philippines. Had such a widespread and persistent movement as the *Guardia* appeared at another juncture, it would have received undivided post-mortem concentration from the historical fraternity. Occurring in 1880, it would probably have been classified as embryonic popular nationalism. Flaring in 1920, it would very likely have been interpreted as an unsophisticated but heroic gesture to achieve social justice. It rose and fell, however, at the century's turn. As a consequence, it disappeared in the violent cross currents of the Revolution and the Filipino-American War. By ignoring it, historians have consigned the mysterious town and its wonderfully-defiant resident to the limbo of lunatics and lost causes. They deserved a better fate.

⁴⁹ See "Report of the Governor of the Province of Pangasinan," in *Report of the Philippine Commission, 1904*, Part I, 583

⁵⁰ *Annual Report of the Director of Constabulary, 1909* (Manila, 1910), 6.