

Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Statement and Definition of the Problem

This is a study of the politics of one chartered city in the Philippines. The city is Marawi, the seat of the provincial capital of Lanao del Sur, a province located in the northwest portion of the island of Mindanao. It is situated at the northern tip of Lake Lanao, the largest fresh water lake in Mindanao. It is predominantly populated by the Maranao, a Philippine Moslem group.

The aim of this study is twofold. First, to investigate the nature and operation of politics in the city and second, to examine its political structure and to understand how power is exercised.

Politics, as used in this study, is taken to mean the contest or struggle among various participants to control the making of political decisions. Relevant to this definition, this study also examines and analyzes important political decisions, their outcomes, the participants and the methods they employ. Specifically, this study answers the following questions:

How are important political decisions actually made? Who participates in the making of decisions? What methods or strategies do people employ to change the outcome of decisions in their favor?

Who are the official decision-makers in the city? What are their social and political backgrounds? What is the role they play in making decisions? How do they interact with each other? How do they operate in relation to others in the city?

What is the role of political leaders and voluntary groups in the decision-making process? How influential are they in the making of decisions?

Who are the people who greatly influence decision-making? What are the goals they seek and how are these attained?

Significance of the Study

This study is important for comparative studies in Philippine politics. While this is confined to only one city, the observations derived from the data gathered may be compared to those drawn from studies in other areas. This may therefore serve to contribute to a broader source of comparative

analyses of local politics.¹

Also, this study is important for a broader and fuller understanding of Philippine national politics. The highly centralized administrative set-up in Philippine political parties explains the close relation between local and national politics. National actors and political events play a dominant role in local politics. Conversely, local political units exert tremendous influence on the national government. Thus, to understand the workings of the national government and the intricacies of national politics, one has to understand the behaviors of its parts.

This study is particularly significant because of the ethnic composition of Marawi. The study of a predominantly Muslim-populated city would explain how a minority group participates in politics. It identifies the forces which condition the nature, style of politics and administration in the city. It makes us understand deeply the transitional character of politics in the city's political system. Moreover, this study also provides the basis for generalizations about the role of minority groups in political life.

Finally, this study is significant in so far as it reveals the discrepancies between rules and actual performance of political officials. It points out the nature and character of the operations and administration of the city government and provides explanations for the behavioral patterns of political officials vis-à-vis their work and functions. It also identifies the political problems confronting Philippine local government and may be useful in the formulation of policies for instituting reforms in the administrative set-up of the government. They may also serve as guides in our search for effective solutions to some of our political problems.

Methodology

This study uses the community power approach. It focuses on the examination and analysis of important political decisions and on how power is used by various political participants in making these decisions. In identifying important political decisions, the following criteria are used:

- (1) Nature: the decision must involve political struggle among participants the outcome of which would enhance and increase their power.
- (2) Significance: the decision must have a significant effect on the community as a whole.
- (3) Scope: the decision must be one in which the outcome of the struggle affects a considerable number of persons.

Using the above criteria, certain specific political and administrative issues are examined. A study of these issues identifies the actual political influentials in the city.

This study is primarily concerned with the analysis of politics in Marawi. By concentrating on the political dynamics of the city, an attempt is made to examine its structure and to ascertain how power is exercised in the city. For

¹Among the few studies made on local politics and government are: Remigio Agpalo, *The Political Elite and the People, A Study of Politics in Occidental Mindoro* (Quezon City, University of the Philippines, 1960); Mary Hollnsteiner, *The Dynamics of Power in a Philippine Municipality* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines, 1963); Aprodicio A. Laquian, *The City in Nation-Building* (School of Public Administration, University of the Philippines, Manila, 1966).

this purpose, this study made use of some findings of community power studies.

Classificatory schemes were used to provide better understanding of variations in community power structures. One of these, as developed by Robert Dahl, distinguishes community power structures primarily on the basis of the rate at which resources are employed by contestants for purposes of political influence.² This classification is based on the extent to which potential power is actually realized. Dahl classifies power structures into "tight" and "slack" or "liberal" system. "Tight" system is one where "all contestants employ close to their maximum resources for purposes of political influence." Dahl argues that in such a community,

access to resources of influence is distributed in a highly unequal way, in addition, the individuals with the greatest access, the leaders, employ their resources fully and efficiently virtually to the limit of present knowledge, and even though most people have only limited access to resources of influence, they exploit these resources to the full. Thus the whole system is one with few untapped reservoirs of available influence, there is no slack in the system. And except for the effects of outside factors like war or death or long run structural changes that elude the control of the leaders, the system tends to settle on an "equilibrium" where one and only one distribution of influence is consistent with the distribution of access to resources. Significant short run changes in distribution of influence are thus extremely difficult.

An example of "tight" system is a community within a totalitarian society. An alternative to such an arrangement is a "slack" system. Dahl describes such a system in this way:⁴

Very few people seem to exploit their resources to the limit in order to influence political officials; and even political officials often have resources available to them which they do not fully use. But precisely because of the existence of these slack resources, a great significant, abrupt, short run changes in the distribution of influence can be brought about; for whenever someone in the community begins to exploit his available and hitherto unused resources more fully and efficiently than before he gains markedly in influence.

The "slack" system is divided into monolithic, polyolithic and anonymous

² Robert Dahl in his studies of decision-making in New Haven, Connecticut classified the most important resources used in American urban communities to influence governmental officials. This includes money and credit; control over jobs; control over information of others; social standing; knowledge and experience, popularity; esteem; legality; constitutionality; officiality; ethnic solidarity and the right to vote. See Frank Munger, "Power Structure and Its Study" in Roscoe Martin, *et al.*, *Decisions in Syracuse* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), p. 5.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

systems. The monolithic system is one where an inner circle of individuals exercises dominance over public affairs.⁵ Variations, however, are found within the monolithic system. Peter Rossi draws distinction between a pyramidal type of monolith in which a single individual or a very small group of men stands at the head of affairs and a caucus type of monolith where a larger number shares power. Opposite to the monolithic system is the polyolithic system where power is shared by competing groups. There are distinctive ways by which power may be shared. Where a number of leading cliques is present, the system is called "poly-nucleated elites". The alternative to such a system is what may be called a system of "counteracting elites" where there is a regularized conflict between two groups over public issues. The system is "anonymous" if there is no identifiable group that regularly controls policy-making.⁶

In addition to these types and systems of power structure, this study also uses certain fundamental assumptions of stratification and pluralist theories. Advocates of stratification theory concluded in their studies of several American urban communities that the totality of their basic assertions constitute the elitist theory.⁷ One assertion of this theory is that an "upper class" of individuals either consisting of social, economic or family elites rules in the community. Political and civic leaders are subordinate to this class. The elitist theory further asserts that a single "power elite" rules over the community. This upper-class power elite rules in its own interest. Finally, elitist theory asserts that social conflict takes place between the upper and lower classes.⁸

These basic assertions were found by researchers using the pluralist theory as inadequate in explaining how communities are governed. Based on their studies of American urban communities, the pluralists advanced their own propositions about community power.⁹ The first and most basic assumption of the pluralist theory is that nothing categorical can be assumed about power in any community. It rejects the assumption of the stratification theory that persons or groups of people necessarily dominate the community. Rather, it assumes that nobody dominates the community.¹⁰ Another assumption of the pluralist theory is that power distribution in the community is a less permanent

⁵ Peter Rossi, "Power and Community Structure" in Edward Banfield (ed.), *Urban Government, A Reader in Politics and Administration* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1961), p. 419.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

⁷ Among the community power studies made which subscribe to most of the basic assertions of the stratification theory are: Robert S. Lynd and Helen Lynd, *Middletown* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1929) and *Middletown in Transition* (New York, Harcourt Brace: 1937); Floyd Hunter, *Community Power* (New York: Community Press, 1953); Robert O. Schultze "The Bifurcation of Power in a Satellite Community," in Morris Janowitz (ed.), *Community Political Systems* (Glencoe, Free Press, 1961).

⁸ Nelson Polsby, *Community Power and Political Theory* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 8-11.

⁹ Among the community power studies discovering a pluralist distribution of power are: Robert Dahl, *Who Governs* (New Haven: Yale University, 1961); Edward Banfield, *Political Influence* (Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1961); Roscoe S. Martin, et al., *Decisions in Syracuse* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961); Norton Long, "The Local Community as an Ecology of Games," *American Journal of Sociology*, 64 (November 1959), pp. 251-261.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

thing. The pluralists assert that "power may be tied to issues," and that "issues can be fleeting or persistent provoking coalitions among interested groups and citizens ranging in their duration from momentary to semi-permanent."¹¹ Finally, the pluralist theory asserts that overt activity is a more valid indication of involvement in decision-making than reputation of leadership.¹² By concentrating on leadership roles and not on the actor's ranking within a system to operating hierarchically, pluralists are able to determine the extent to which power structure exists. These assumptions of the pluralist theory lead to the conclusion that no single group can have a monopoly of power in a community. Power is shared by groups with widely differing political resources. What prevails is a more dynamic system of interrelationships between groups which alternately governs the community.

The basic assumptions of both stratification and pluralist theories provide knowledge and understanding of the nature, locus and operation of power in the community. It should be noted, however, that this study as it is focused on a city in the Philippines could not accept the entire assumptions of the stratification theory because of variations in cultural orientation and conditions in Philippine cities as compared to those in the United States. For this reason, theoretical changes are indeed necessary.

This study rests on the hypothesis that the political system in the city is characterized by the dominance of a political elite in making political decisions. It should be noted, however, that this group is not an all-purpose, all-powerful, permanent and impenetrable entity as assumed by the elitist theory. To maintain power, the political elite has to obtain support from the electorate. The elite theory as modified is relevant in the analysis of Marawi politics.

Data-gathering for this study was done mostly through interviews. They were conducted primarily with the following people:

- (1) A number of past official decision-makers in the city: former mayors, vice-mayors and councilors.
- (2) All present official decision-makers.
- (3) The newly elected official decision-makers of the city in the 1967 elections.
- (4) A number of political leaders: past officials, political appointees, *sultan*, *datu* and some citizens of the city.
- (5) Some government employees: the executive assistant of the City Mayor, the City Treasurer, Judge and Engineer.
- (6) Officers and members of civic, social and political groups in the city.
- (7) Electorates in the city.
- (8) Other key informants and respondents.

In addition to interviews, other methods used in gathering data were made through participant and non-participant observations. In this regard, council meetings were attended to see at close range how public policies are made. Other social and political gatherings were also attended to obtain empirical evidence on the actual activities and performance of participants as they are involved in the decision-making process.

To obtain additional information, a few available published and unpublished materials relevant to the study were examined. Public documents like ordinances, public records, maps and court decisions were also used to enrich

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 113-116.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 116-117.

the materials used in this study.

All the above were employed to obtain a relatively comprehensive and complete study. However, there are certain limitations in this study. One limitation is the difficulty of communication due to language. Another limitation is the uncooperative, indifferent and unwilling attitude of some interviewees to answer questions. To make up for these shortcomings, however, intensive and lengthy personal interviews were resorted to with other persons whose opinions are relevant to this study.