

# The Roles of Legislators in the Philippine Political System

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## I

Like other parliaments of the Third World, the legislature of the Philippines has gone through traumatic vicissitudes. The first national lawmaking body, the Malolos Congress in 1898 of the Philippine Revolution, was shortlived. It was snuffed out of existence by the conquering American forces, whose superior arms overthrew the First Philippine Republic. In 1907, however, it reemerged as the Philippine Assembly.

From 1907, the Philippine legislature gradually evolved, adopting different names and taking on various structural forms. From 1916 to 1934, it was bicameral and known as the Philippine Legislature. In 1935-40, it assumed a unicameral structure and became known as the National Assembly. From 1940 to 1972, it became bicameral again, and this time it was called the Congress of the Philippines.

In the constitutional convention of 1971, the delegates approved a unicameral legislature, to be called once more as the National Assembly; but it was overtaken by the declaration of martial law on September 21, 1972. A transitional article, therefore, was adopted, providing for an *interim* National Assembly, which the proposed constitution said was to "exist immediately upon the ratification of this Constitution."<sup>1</sup> This constitution was ratified on January 17, 1973 by the people through Citizens' Assemblies. Although the *interim* National Assembly existed immediately upon the ratification of the Constitution, it never became an operating body because the President, who was authorized to "initially convene" it, did not call the body to convene. As a result, the regular National Assembly, which the new Constitution provided, also could not be established because the *interim* National Assembly, which was nonoperative,

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*ipso facto* could not call the election of the members of the regular body.

With the ratification of the new Constitution on January 17, 1973, the Congress of the Philippines, with a venerable history that goes back to the Malolos Congress of the Philippine Revolution, was abolished. Since the *interim* National Assembly and the regular National Assembly of the new Constitution have not been convened, an impasse in the Constitution has been created. This constitutional impasse was partially solved when President Ferdinand E. Marcos established the Batasáng Bayan (Legislative Advisory Council) on September 10, 1976.<sup>2</sup> The Batasáng Bayan since its establishment has met twice—the first on September 21-22, 1976 and the second on December 17-18, 1976.

Considering the ups and downs which the Philippine legislature has experienced since 1898, it is only natural that the roles of Philippine legislators since that date should also change drastically. A study of the changing roles of Philippine legislators should be very useful in shedding significant light on the nature and dynamics of Philippine politics.

In this paper, we cannot study fully this large subject. However, we can attempt to explore some of its aspects. Specifically, we propose to examine the roles of Philippine legislators during the 1960's and early 1970's before the declaration of martial law and during the martial law regime until December 1976. It is hoped that this exploratory study may be a useful addition to the meager literature so far available on the Philippine legislature.<sup>3</sup> It could also be used as a basis of a tentative explanatory interpretation of Philippine politics, which is presented in the concluding section of this paper.

To discuss and analyze the roles of Philippine legislators in the 1960's and early 1970's, we shall use as principal data base some aspects of a survey made on Philippine legislators in 1963.<sup>4</sup> At that time the House of Representatives of the Congress of the Philippines was composed of 104 Representatives, and the Senate, of 24 Senators. Representatives were elected by legislative district, and Senators were elected at-large in the entire nation. Although an attempt was made to interview all the legislators since they were not too many, only 77 Representatives and only 18 Senators were actually interviewed. Nevertheless, these constituted 74 per cent and 75 per cent of the House and Senate, respectively. However, the discussion and analysis of the roles of legislators in 1963 will be supplemented by other relevant data from other studies or sources. For the exposition on the roles of Philippine legislators during the

martial law regime, the data base will be the pertinent documentary materials on the Batasáng Bayan and personal observations on, as well as official and mass media accounts of, the proceedings of the Batasáng Bayan in September and December 1976.

## II

Four basic roles of Philippine legislators of the Congress of the Philippines appeared to be salient in the 1960's and early 1970's. These were the roles of lawmaker, patron, fiscalizer, and articulator of interests.

The role of lawmaker involved participation in the formulation and adoption of laws designed for general application or the promotion and protection of the national interest. This role was prescribed by the 1935 Constitution for the members of the Congress of the Philippines. The provision on this role in the 1935 fundamental law read as follows, "the legislative power shall be vested in a Congress of the Philippines, which shall consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives."<sup>5</sup> The role of lawmaker required members of the Congress to attend the legislative sessions, introduce bills, participate in deliberations on legislative measures in committee hearings and floor debates, and vote on the legislative proposals, if these measures were designed for general application or promotion and protection of the national interest.

The role of patron required the member of Congress to be defender, protector, or father of his constituency, district, province, or region. As such, he provided (1) patronage to his constituents, such as legal, medical, and other personal services; (2) contributions to barrio or town fiestas; (3) recommendations for jobs, promotions, transfers, and the like; (4) uniforms or trophies to athletic teams; and (5) other favors. He also took care that funds appropriated for a foot-bridge, a schoolhouse, and other public works in his district, province, or town were released by the appropriate agency.

The role of "Fiscalizer" was one which involved "fiscalization." These terms carrying the unique Filipino meanings are not found in any American or English dictionary of the English language, but they are standard Filipino English. These words are derived from the term *fiscal*, which refers to a prosecuting officer under the Department of Justice, whose office was introduced by Spain in the Philippines. A fiscalizer, therefore, is one who subjects a practice, person, or agency, especially governmental, to a militant official inquiry with a view to promoting or protecting the welfare, liberty, or interest of the

people. In the Congress of the Philippines, the usual vehicle for fiscalization was the privileged speech, a unique Filipino legislative institution. The rules of both the House of Representatives and the Senate provided for this institution. Under the rules of Congress on this matter, a legislator could avail himself of this speech of fiscalization for not more than one hour, which could be extended by unanimous consent, on any subject chosen by the lawmaker. The privileged speech was the first order of the day immediately after roll call and before the transaction of ordinary legislative business, except during the closing days of the legislative session, during which it was not allowed to be used. The role of fiscalizer, from one point of view, is similar to the role of tribune,<sup>6</sup> but considering that it was institutionalized and it carried connotations of militant, systematic, and official scrutiny of the practice person, or agency under fiscalization, it is justifiable to use the Filipino term rather than the term tribune.

Finally, there is the role of articulator of interests to be clarified. This role involved the articulation or promotion of sectoral or group interests or claims. Included among these were agricultural, business, industrial, professional, educational, mass media, religious, military, governmental, youth/student, peasant, or similar interests.

What was the order of importance of these roles to Philippine legislators in the 1960's and early 1970's? What were the proportions of the legislators who adopted these roles? What were the bases of support for these roles?

To answer these questions, we shall now present data from the 1963 survey of Philippine legislators, supplementing them with other relevant facts from other available sources.

Regarding the roles of lawmaker and patron, the survey questions on time spent in a typical day for strictly legislative functions and the number of hours in a typical day devoted to taking care of people coming to the legislator's office revealed magnitudes of the more or less kind insofar as Senators and Representatives of the Congress of the Philippines were concerned.

Concerning the role of lawmaker, the data show that more Senators tended to play the role of lawmaker than the Representatives. Whereas 61.11 per cent of Senators spent 50 per cent or more of their time on strictly legislative functions, only 46.76 per cent of Representatives spent 50 per cent or more of their time on strictly legislative work (see details in Table 1).

With regard to the role of patron, however, more Representatives tended to be oriented to this than the Senators.

Table 1. Time spent in a typical day for strictly legislative functions

Time Spent	Senators N = 18		Representatives N = 77		Senators and N = 95	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Less than 50%	5	27.77	36	46.75	41	43.15
50% or more	11	61.11	36	46.75	47	49.47
No information	2	11.11	5	6.49	7	7.37

Whereas 71.42 per cent of Representatives spent five or more hours in a typical day on attending to people coming to their offices, only 38.88 per cent of Senators did this (see details in Table 2).

Table 2. Number of hours in a typical day devoted to people coming to the legislative office

Number of Hours	Senators N = 18		Representatives N = 77		Senators and Representatives N = 95	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1-2	7	38.89	4	5.19	11	11.57
3-4	2	11.11	14	18.18	16	16.84
5-6	5	27.77	30	38.96	35	36.84
7-8	2	11.11	16	20.78	18	18.95
Over 8	0	0	9	11.68	9	9.48
No information	2	11.11	4	5.19	6	6.31

It should be noted that although Senators tended to be less oriented in taking the role of patron than Representatives, there were more than one-third (38.88 per cent) of Senators who spent at least 5 hours attending to people coming to their offices. This shows that a big number of Senators were still performing the role of patron.

The contrast between the Senators and Representatives is further delineated and confirmed by their responses to the question concerning the "pork barrel" system, which involves plain patronage (local or provincial public works). There were only 16.66 per cent of Senators who disapproved the abolition of the "pork barrel," but there were 63.63 per cent of the Representatives who responded likewise (see details in Table 3).

Table 3. Abolition or "pork barrel" system

Response	Senators N = 18		Representatives N = 77		Senators and Representatives N = 95	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Approve	13	72.22	20	25.97	33	34.73
Neither approve nor disapprove	2	11.11	8	10.39	10	10.52
Disapprove	3	16.16	49	63.63	52	54.73

Again, it should be observed that although there were less Senators who were patron-oriented, nevertheless there were about one-sixteenth of them who were so oriented.

Concerning the role of fiscalizer, what was the proportion of the legislators adopting this role?

The responses of the legislators to the question on the abolition of the privileged speech in Congress showed that Senators were definitely more oriented to the role of fiscalizer than the Representatives. One hundred per cent of the Senators disapproved the abolition of the privileged speech; on the other hand, 84.41 per cent of the Representatives likewise disapproved (see details in Table 4).

Table 4. Abolition of the privileged speech

Number	Senators N = 18		Representatives N = 77		Senators and Representatives N = 95	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Approve	0	0	9	11.68	9	9.48
Neither approve nor disapprove	0	0	3	3.9	3	3.16
Disapprove	18	100	65	84.41	83	87.36

The role of fiscalizer, it should be observed, is also very popular with the Representatives, for more than four-fifths of the Representatives disapproved the abolition of the privileged speech.

We can have another perspective on the role of fiscalizer by comparing the proportion of Senators who delivered more privileged speeches than the Representatives. In terms of this consideration, a

very much larger proportion of Senators was found to have delivered seven or more privileged speeches than Representatives. This fact strengthens the generalization that Senators were more oriented to play the role of fiscalizer (see details in Table 5).

Table 5. Number of "privileged speeches" delivered in the Congress

Number	Senators N = 18		Representatives N = 77		Senators and Representatives N = 95	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0	4	22.22	12	15.58	16	16.84
1-2	2	11.11	16	20.77	18	18.95
3-4	3	16.66	11	14.28	14	14.73
5-6	0	0.00	3	3.9	3	3.16
7 or more	9	50.00	25	32.46	34	35.79
No information	0	0.00	10	12.98	10	10.52

Finally, we consider the role of articulator of interests. How many among the Philippine legislators were oriented to the role of articulator of interests, especially group interests? While the data in the survey cannot provide definite answers (for the question used to tap this role is too indirect in relation to this role), they nevertheless suggest that a significant proportion were already oriented to this role (22.22 per cent of the Senators and 24.67 per cent of the Representatives). (See details in Table 6.)

Table 6. Prohibition of attempt by pressure groups or private individuals to influence decisions of Congress

Response	Senators N = 18		Representatives N = 77		Senators and Representatives N = 95	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Approve	9	50.00	53	68.83	62	65.26
Neither approve nor disapprove	5	27.77	5	6.49	10	10.52
Disapprove	4	22.22	19	24.67	23	24.21

How do we explain the saliency of the roles of patron, fiscalizer, lawmaker, and articulator of interests in the Philippines during the 1960's and early 1970's?

The role of patron has strong historical, cultural, and social bases in the Philippines. The pre-martial law role of patron was the role of the *barangay* head during pre-Spanish times. The ancient *barangay* was a communal polity composed of the head (usually called *datu*, *puno*, *pangulo*), the nobility (the *maharlika*), the freemen (*timawa*), and the servile class (*alipin*). It was a hierarchical and organic polity because it was composed of superordinate and subordinate social strata, but at the same time it acted as a single body whose head represented or embodied the entire community. The *barangay* chief was responsible for the security, welfare, and happiness of the polity, acting as the protector, provider, father, guardian of the law, military leader, and counselor of the people. When during the Spanish regime the *barangay* head lost his autonomy and independence in being reduced to tax collector and local arm of the centralized and unitary government of the colonial administration, he also assumed the new role of intermediary of the people *vis-à-vis* the Spanish religious or governmental officials. As *cabeza de barangay*, he was a member of the municipal *principalia*, the leading men or elite of the town, who were empowered to elect the municipal captain or head of the municipality. Under the American regime and the period of the Republic after Philippine independence in 1946, he continued to be the political leader of his locality; and together with the other local chiefs, he became a constituent part of a national *principalia*, the recruiting ground of the social, economic and political elites of the nation. Throughout the history of the Philippines since the pre-Spanish era, he has adopted a symbiotic relationship with the people, producing the cultural value of organic hierarchy rampant all over the Philippines even today.

The role of patron by Filipino legislators was not only based on the historic *barangay* and the organic-hierarchical culture which developed from it since the pre-Spanish era; it was also supported by social circumstances. The social facts impinging upon Philippine legislators in 1963 were too many people going to the Senators and Representatives asking for various kinds of aid, services, and favors. The people from the legislators' barrios, towns, schools, districts, provinces, extended families, churches, ethnic associations, and the like, asked for jobs, recommendations, trophies, prizes, medical aid, legal services, funeral expenses, basketball uniforms, feeder roads, school houses, bridges, and so forth.



The senior students taking my course on research in political science who interviewed the Philippine legislators in 1963 noted in their diaries of their interviews that the Congress of the Philippines and the offices of the Senators and Representatives were always filled by all kinds of people. The students who went to the houses of the legislators for the interviews after failing to interview them at their offices, observed that plenty of people were there either looking or waiting for the lawmakers.

Former Senator Francisco "Soc" Rodrigo, recalling the time when he was campaigning in the elections, said:

We were in Leyte . . . early one morning, we were told that there was a group of school teachers who were waiting for us . . . . The school teachers were asking us for contributions for the fence of their school house . . . . I hate to tell you that we were pestered for contributions . . . even by priests and nuns. I can show you a letter to me from a priest. He says he is building his chapel, and if I contribute one thousand pesos he will ask his parishioners to vote for us.<sup>7</sup>

Asked in 1963 what were the "headaches" or problems they had to put up with as legislators, the Senators and Representatives answered that they had to take care of too many jobseekers. It is significant to state that 55.55 per cent of the Senators and 79.22 per cent of the Representatives gave this response to the open-ended question. This fact is consistent with the replies given by the legislators on the number of hours in a typical day which they devoted to people coming to the legislative office, which are tabulated in Table 2.

Considering these circumstances, even if the legislators would like to put more time to strictly legislative functions, they could not afford to do so unless they were willing to lose the inevitable elections. Hence, Philippine legislators were compelled to adopt the role of patron.

The role of fiscalizer is partly based on historical experience. The grounds I suggested in my study of the nationalization of the retail trade that could explain the action of the Durano Committee which repudiated dramatically the recommendation of a joint executive-legislative caucus on what trade bill ought to be taken up in the House of Representatives in 1954 perhaps likewise could explain partially the viability of the role of fiscalizer taken by Philippine legislators. I wrote in 1962:

There is a tendency among us to admire those who defy political authority. This attitude is a product of the long history of alien rule in our

country. During the Spanish times, it was a virtue to defy the political authority of the Spaniards. During the American regime, defiance against American rule was also admired. During the Japanese Occupation, we respected those who refused to bow to the Japanese. Thus, we have made heroes out of Rizal, Quezon, and Abad Santos. After Philippine independence, our own countrymen inherited the political authority of the foreign rulers. At the same time, however, they also inherited the traditional negative attitude of the people towards foreign rulers. To criticize and defy our government officials, therefore, is quite a favorite pastime among many of us, as manifested in radio commentaries, newspaper columns, tirades in Congress or in Malacañang, and occasional rebellion within Congress and Malacañang against leaders of Congress and Malacañang.<sup>8</sup>

However, there appears to be also a cultural base to the role of fiscalizer. This is the cultural value with which Filipino political elites are imbued — the orientation towards power.

In my study of the politics of Occidental Mindoro, I found that the political elites of the province were motivated by an orientation towards power.<sup>9</sup> I believe that this cultural trait is not confined to Occidental Mindoro; I think it is found generally among Filipino political elites. In any case, this orientation towards power is reflected in the great numbers of people who ran for political positions, the bitterness and intensity of political campaigns, the arrogance of the political victors, the inability of the losers in politics to accept their defeat gracefully, the enormous amounts of electoral expenses, the so-called black propaganda, and the intense identification of the weak with the powerful.

If the orientation towards power is generally found among Filipino political elites—and legislators are political elites—then it must be very frustrating for some of them who were already top legislative leaders to find that they could not become President because someone was already there ahead of them. How could they become President? The plain answer is to topple the President down. He could be toppled down through fiscalization. The minute a legislator embarks on this enterprise, a fiscalizer is born.

The techniques of winning power, as well as the obstacles to one's power, however, are multifarious. One could march to power by championing the rights of the poor and fiscalizing through an indictment of poverty. Or one could ride to power by taking the cudgels for the imprisoned, the regulated, or the oppressed. One, then, could through a diatribe against the dictators and the tyrants. One's power could be obstructed by the mass media, labor unions, students, foreign powers, or any social force, economic system, or

political ideology. The thing to do then was to fiscalize by hurling anathemas against such forces. The minute any of these options is adopted, again a fiscalizer appears.

With regard to the role of lawmaker, this is actually a modern role. It was adopted by Filipino legislators in 1898 in the Malolos Congress, but it never became institutionalized. The American colonizers, however, took care of its institutionalization in the country. The role of lawmaker was inherent in the legislatures of the American regime—the Philippine Assembly, the Philippine Legislature, the National Assembly, and the Congress of the Philippines, together with their committee systems, stages of lawmaking (first reading, second reading, third reading, and the like), rules of legislative procedure, and so on. All of these institutions and practices were also based on American models. Hence, it can be said that the Americans institutionalized this role in the Philippines.

As regards the role of articulator of interests, its basis is primarily social. It developed as interest groups and socioeconomic sectors emerged, differentiated, and proliferated. Because interest groups and differentiated socioeconomic sectors are recent phenomena in the Philippines, the legislators taking the role of articulator of interests were not yet many, but their numbers had been increasing.

### III

We can now examine the roles of Philippine legislators under the martial law regime. Considering that the Batasáng Bayan has had so far only a very brief career—it was created only last September 10—we cannot present here the same kind of details as those used in the analysis of the roles of the pre-martial law legislators. At best, our exposition here, therefore, will be very tentative, relying heavily on a few documents available, personal impressions of the Batasáng Bayan proceedings on September 21-22 and December 17-18, 1976, and some accounts of the proceedings of the Batasáng Bayan by the mass media and the official secretariat of the Legislative Advisory Council.

Strictly speaking, all the members of the Batasáng Bayan, except the President of the Philippines, are not legislators at all, for in fact and in law the President is the sole legislator of the country during the period of martial law.<sup>10</sup> Even the decree creating the Batasáng Bayan is specific in stating that the powers of the Batasáng Bayan are only advisory and recommendatory.<sup>11</sup> However, since the President said that “as of today (September 10, 1976, I hereby share the

powers of legislation that have been recognized both by the Constitution and the Supreme Court as in my hands with a legislative council which shall now be given legislative powers,"<sup>12</sup> we may regard the members of the Batasáng Bayan as legislators. At least for this paper, we consider them as legislators, even as we fully realize their lack of authority as lawmakers.

Having qualified our usage of legislators in this manner, we may now inquire: what are the roles of Philippine legislators under the martial law regime?

It seems that five specific roles are discernible, although other roles could still be identified after sufficient data have been accumulated and more time has unfolded to allow present on-going processes to crystallize into definite trends. These are: (a) as symbol of the New Society, (b) harbinger of the normalization of the politics of constitutional democracy, (c) legislative assistant and adviser of the sole legislator, (d) articulator of interests, and (e) explicator of the policies of the government and the state of affairs of the polity, economy, and the society.

The role of symbol of the New Society was specified by President Marcos during the closing meeting of the Second Session of the Batasáng Bayan on December 18, 1976. Addressing the members of the Batasáng Bayan, the President said: "You are the symbol of the New Society of the Philippines."<sup>13</sup> He also said that they had demonstrated high standards of proficiency, patriotism, and self-abnegation. The President added: "By your initiative in refusing to receive any emoluments in the performance of your tasks, you have set indeed higher standards which other bodies may fail to attain. It places on the defensive the future *interim* Batasáng Pambansa."<sup>14</sup>

The role of harbinger of the normalization of the politics of constitutional democracy is a role that can be implied from the statement by the President that the Batasáng Bayan would pave the way for the normalization of the political life of the country. Cabinet officials and the mass media have been articulating also the President's idea; therefore, we may conclude that this role is officially prescribed and mass-media supported.

The role of legislative assistant and adviser is prescribed in the decree that created the Batasáng Bayan. The pertinent provision states that "the Batasáng Bayan shall function as an advisory body to the President on legislative matters."<sup>15</sup> The same provision continues: "As such, its powers and functions shall consist of but not [be] limited to (a) assisting and advising the President on lawmaking functions."<sup>16</sup> During the Batasáng Bayan sessions on September 21-

22 and December 17-18, 1976, the legislators carried out this role by participating in the caucuses on various legislative proposals; in the deliberations on legislative measures in both the committee and plenary sessions of the *Batasáng Bayan*; and in the voting on the resolutions recommended for legislative enactment by the President.

The role of articulator of interests is also salient under the martial law regime. In fact, this role has become more salient during the martial law period than in the pre-martial law era. Consider, for example, the composition of the main body constituting the *Batasáng Bayan*, the 91-member Executive Committee of the *Katipunan ng mga Sanggunian*. Of the total membership of this body, 45 or 49.45 per cent are representatives of sectors or groups.<sup>17</sup> The 45 sectoral or group representatives are distributed as follows: 12, the capital sector; 2, industrial labor; 2, agricultural labor; 16, the professionals; and 13, the youth. Moreover, the 27 cabinet officials, including officials with cabinet rank, who are also members of the *Batasáng Bayan*, have several members who can be regarded as articulators of group or sectoral interests. For instance, the Secretaries of National Defense, Labor, and Agrarian Reform are articulators of military, labor, and agrarian interests, respectively. Besides, the President appointed to the original *Batasáng Bayan* as created on September 10, 1976 additional members to represent the thirteen regions of the country.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, there is the role of explicator of the policies of the government and the state of affairs of the polity, economy, and society. This role was carried out in a cooperative way by the cabinet officials and the noncabinet members of the *Batasáng Bayan*. The cabinet members, from whom the chairmen of the various committees of the *Batasáng Bayan* were recruited, would submit a report or a resolution they were recommending for approval by the body; and the non-cabinet members would ask questions of clarification or elaboration on some aspects of the report or resolution. Thereafter, the cabinet member sponsoring the report or resolution would reply, explaining in terms understandable to the layman the matter under inquiry, citing statistical data, justifying the governmental action on the matter, and attempting to remove all the doubts and fears on the part of the inquiring member. If the cabinet member sponsoring the report or resolution could not give adequate answers to the question, he would ask another cabinet member to provide the needed information. In this way, for example, the referendum-plebiscite on October 16, 1976, the national budget, various socioeconomic plans of the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA), the

state of affairs in industry and energy needs, the proposed electoral code, and the state of affairs in national security, peace, and order were discussed and explained during the Batasáng Bayan sessions before the thousands of people who watched the sessions from television sets or from the galleries, or who listened to the radio all over the nation.

What roles were discouraged during the Batasáng Bayan sessions? Considering the prominent roles of legislators before the proclamation of martial law, one will easily see that the roles which were discouraged were those of the fiscalizer and patron.

During the two sessions of the Batasáng Bayan, no speeches of fiscalization were delivered. Instead, the speeches of information on the state of the nation dominated the sessions. However, there were some remarks of fiscalization from the floor elicited by the speeches of information. Those fiscalization remarks significantly were hurled against the members of the abolished Congress of the Philippines, the 1971 constitutional convention, and the politics of the so-called Old Society.

As regards the role of patron, it was evident that the old Adam refused to die. Sporadically, it surfaced during the deliberations of the Batasáng Bayan, especially on the budget sponsored by the Acting Budget Commissioner and the socioeconomic development plan expounded by the Director-General of the National Economic and Development Authority. However, the President, who was the presiding officer of the Batasáng Bayan, attempted to steer the deliberations to general legislation by stressing the lawmaker role of the Batasáng Bayan members. For instance, when one delegate, a governor from a Northern Luzon province, followed up a question on inflation in the country raised by a youth delegate from the Bicol region in the course of the speech of information by the Director-General of the NEDA, asking whether the 13th-month salary given to private employees by their employers was also to be granted to government employees; and when the NEDA Director-General hesitated, prefacing his reply that various factors had to be considered, such as the state of government finances, problems of government employees, and the like; and when the audience in the galleries applauded the inquiring governor, the President commented from the Chair that the focus of discussion should be on national planning and not on pork-barrel issues of the Old Congress to attract attention. After this observation from the Chair, the inquiring governor said he had no more questions to ask.

## IV

To conclude this paper, we shall now relate the roles of Philippine legislators to the nature and dynamics of Philippine politics. The question for analysis is: Do the roles of Philippine legislators provide clues to the nature and dynamics of Philippine politics? I think they do; but the question cannot be answered conclusively, for nothing less than a comprehensive analysis of the roles in the Philippine political system of all the significant political actors, such as the President; the Supreme Court; the military; the bureaucracy; the church; educational institutions; agricultural, business, professional, labor, peasant and other interest groups; the counter-elite, and the people, as well as the legislators, will reveal the full nature and dynamics of Philippine politics. Since this paper discussed only the roles of one set of the numerous participants of the Philippine political process, at best we can present only a tentative explanatory interpretation of Philippine politics. In fact, the explanatory interpretation here will be confined to the politics of the Philippines before the proclamation of martial law because one can explain only the past, or the present, if sufficient time has run to make the present practices crystallized patterns of behavior. Since the martial law regime is still an on-going process characterized by fluidity of political practices, it is not required of us to provide an explanation of the nature and dynamics of its politics. However, the explanatory interpretation of Philippine politics before the proclamation of martial law here may be used later as a starting point for analyzing and evaluating whether martial law had been able to transform or change the old patterns of politics.

The politics of the Philippines before the declaration of martial law was a politics of *pandanggo sa ilaw*.<sup>19</sup> The term is derived from a Filipino dance, the *pandanggo sa ilaw*, the folk version of which involves skillful, agile, and nimble dancers, who carry and balance oil lamps on their heads and the backs of their hands. These dancers are surrounded by many persons, some of whom are close to and some who are far from the dancers. Those people who are close to the dancers are evidently happy, applauding with enthusiasm. Those who are not close are either lukewarm or even indifferent. The *Pandanggo* dancers get the brightest lights because they are the holders of the lamps; and those persons who manage to get close to the dancers are also able to have some light. Those who are far naturally hardly get even a glimmer of light.

*Pandanggo sa ilaw* politics, therefore, involves accomplished

political actors who are adept in expert balancing acts involving maneuvering (with a view of occupying central or strategic positions) and skillful manipulation of political and social forces (with a view to succeeding in the maneuver to win political power). In all these, patronage serves usually as the principal means of leverage. The political *pandanggo sa ilaw* dancers enjoy the greatest political power and those who manage to get close to them naturally are able to obtain some significant amounts of power. Those who are far away from the political *pandanggo sa ilaw* dancers are deprived of political spoils.

This kind of politics, however, does not only involve skills in balancing and manipulation; it also involves show, drama, and bravura. In the felicitous words of Filipinos, it involves *palabas* (show) and *pasikat* (from *sikat*, meaning to become bright, as when the sun or the moon rises).

The *pandanggo sa ilaw* politics of the Philippines before the proclamation of martial law must be related to two basic values before it can be fully appreciated. The first is the value of organic hierarchy, and the second is the value of power. The significance of these values to the appreciation of the politics of *pandanggo sa ilaw* is that they provide it with a structure and a motive force for its dynamics.

The value of organic hierarchy, which grew out of the *barangay* culture of the Philippines mentioned earlier, prescribes that a society or a polity should be an organic body, with a head (*pangulo*), which is the superior organ, and other organs, which are subordinate to the head. The eyes and ears, the arms and legs, the hands and fingers are all instrumentalities or organs under the control and direction of the head. All the parts of the organic body are interdependent, and each is enjoined that "*Ang sakit ng kalingkingan ay damdam ng buong katawan.*" ("The pain suffered by the little finger is felt by the whole body.")<sup>20</sup> The significance of this value is that, owing to its vigor and persistence in Philippine culture, it brought about the triumph of the *pangulo* system of polity in the country in spite of the paradigm of separation of coordinate powers of the government transplanted by the United States in the Philippines during the American regime (1898-1946). By the Commonwealth period (1935-46), the presidential system of separation of powers and check and balances introduced by the United States was already transformed into a *pangulo* system. President Manuel L. Quezon was the Filipino leader who effected this transformation.<sup>21</sup>

The second value of power is a motive force. This value was avidly sought and highly prized by the political elite and the counter-



elite of the Philippines before the proclamation of martial law. This was pointed out also in an earlier section. President Manuel L. Quezon's classic statements on power are included here in order to clinch the generalization, although it must be noted that these are extreme manifestations of the orientation towards such value. President Quezon said:

To tell the truth gentlemen, I should like to continue being President of the Philippines if I were sure I would live one hundred years. Have you ever known of anyone who has voluntarily renounced power? . . . Everybody likes power. It is the greatest urge of human nature—power. I like to exercise power.<sup>22</sup>

It is in this *pangulo* system of polity in which power is avidly sought and highly prized that Philippine legislators had to accommodate themselves. The central question for them was what role or roles they must adopt in order to realize their basic desideratum. Their principal desideratum, after they had won political power, was to maintain themselves in power or to advance their political power. Their strategy, considering the nature of the political system, however, necessarily had to reckon with the *Pangulo*, the President. Ultimately, therefore, the problem of strategy was how they would relate themselves to the President.

*Vis-à-vis* the President, there were only three basic strategies—first, dominate the President; second, join the President; and third, fight the President with a view to toppling him down and eventually taking his position.

The President, however, must maintain himself in power; and in order to maintain himself in power, he must get the support of the legislators in order that his legislative program would be enacted and of the people in order that his legitimacy, credibility, and authority would be maintained or strengthened. He must also see to it that his political enemies were either coopted, destroyed, or neutralized.

On the part of the people, their basic desiderata were higher wages, better education, peace and order, a job, a road, a chapel, a franchise, a license, a pardon, a civil service appointment, and the like.

Since the people's desiderata in general could be granted by the government either directly or indirectly through its policies providing support for nongovernmental agencies which could grant them, the people's basic strategy was how to get close to the government. The strategic problem, however, was complicated by the fact that the government could be on the wane, and supporting it might tie them

to a group that, at the needed time, would no longer be the government. It was further complicated by the existence of numerous groups, coalitions, and aggregations that divided themselves into factions or combined into new coalitions, and the like, as a matter of expediency.

The strategy of dominating the President by the legislators was simply an impractical strategy, for the President was too powerful and well-armed with political resources to be dominated. The strategy, therefore, was not adopted by the legislators.

The strategy of fighting the President with a view to toppling him down and eventually taking his post could only be applied by legislators who were also well-armed with political resources and intense ambitions of becoming President. These legislators became the fiscalizers. To bolster their positions, these fiscalizers also adopted the role of lawmakers, expending their talents, efforts, and time to laws which had national impact. However, they also adopted the role of patron, but to them this role was of secondary importance. Their primary interests were on the role of the fiscalizer and the national lawmaker.

To these legislators adopting the role of fiscalizer and lawmaker, the Senate or the House was a stage. On this stage, they dazzled the people, fascinated the mass media, confounded their enemies, and inspired their followers, for their privileged speeches were great orations; their investigations of agencies, persons, and problems were dramatic; their proposed bills and resolutions were sensational; their political concerns were the great principles of liberty, justice, peace, equality, and democracy.

The great majority of legislators, however, were not as fortunate as the fiscalizers; they were less endowed with political resources, dramatic talents, and vast political ambitions. But they were also interested in maintaining themselves in power. Since they could adopt neither the strategy of dominating the President nor fighting him with a view to toppling him down and eventually taking his post, except for some legislators who somehow could get themselves elected without the help of the President, they adopted the strategy of: "If you can't beat him, join him." The classic examples of the legislators who adopted this flexible strategy were the Nacionalistas who joined Liberal President Diosdado Macapagal in 1962. By joining the party of the President, they assured themselves of being successful in providing patronage to their constituents, for most of the jobs were in the government and the release of funds for public works and other patronage projects was made by the President.

These legislators, therefore, adopted the role of patron.

However, since they must maintain their self-respect, they also played the role of a part-time lawmaker. Occasionally, to impress their constituents, they also exercised the role of fiscalizer.

The role of patron, from one point of view, does not appear to be as dramatic or full of bravura as the role of fiscalizer and national lawmaker. However, one must not think that it did not involve *palabas* and *pasikat*. If one gets the impression that the role of patron did not involve *pasikat*, this could be due to the fact that the conspicuous House or Senate was not his stage. But he did have a stage. His stage was his district, province, or region. Here he built roads, schools, and bridges, with huge signs, like "This school is a project of Congressman X." Or, his stage was the auditorium in some municipality during a town fiesta; the plaza during a Rizal Day; or simply a restaurant or a house where a banquet, a party, or a dance was being held. Here he delivered a speech, cut a ribbon, gave a trophy, or handed a check.

And what about the legislators who took the role of articulator of interest groups? As Table 6 suggests, these legislators were few, for interest groups were generally not approved of by the Senators and Representatives. These few legislators were generally those whom quite a number of organized groups either had managed in having elected or had succeeded in getting to promote or defend their respective interests inside the halls of Congress. But these were seldom revealed. Once exposed, they became prime targets of investigations by the fiscalizers. Accused of betraying the public interest, they became scapegoats or villains in the dramatic dance of politics.

Summarizing now our explanatory interpretation of the nature and dynamics of Philippine politics before the proclamation of martial law, we shall conclude that it was a politics of *pandanggo sa ilaw*, characterized by skillful use of manipulation of political and social forces, expert maneuvering for control of the political center, and adept application of patronage, bravura, and magnificent show. This type—or probably style—of politics could be glimpsed in the analysis of the roles of Philippine legislators, if one relates them to the totality of the Philippine political system. However, this explanatory interpretation, considering that it is based on limited data, must be considered tentative, to be refined, reformulated, and corrected as more data are accumulated.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Republic of the Philippines, *1973 Constitution*, Art. XVII, sec. 1.
- <sup>2</sup>Presidential Decree No. 995.
- <sup>3</sup>Some of the few studies on Philippine legislators or the Congress of the Philippines are:
- a. Remigio E. Agpalo. *The Political Process and the Nationalization of the Retail Trade in the Philippines* (Quezon City: Office of Coordinator of Research, University of the Philippines, 1962).
  - b. Juan F. Rivera. *The Congress of the Philippines* (Manila: Pedro B. Ayuda and Company, 1962).
  - c. Robert B. Stauffer, "Philippine Legislators and Their Changing Universe," *Journal of Politics*, 28 (August 1966): 556-97.
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_, "Congress in the Philippine Political System," in A Kornberg and D. Musolf, eds., *Legislatures in Development Perspective* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1970), pp. 334-65.
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_, *The Philippine Congress: Causes of Structural Change* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1975). Comparative Legislative Studies series, No. 90-024.
  - f. Richard A. Styskal, "Philippine Legislators' Perception of Individuals and Interest Groups in the Legislative Process," *Comparative Politics*, 1 (April 1969): 405-22.
- <sup>4</sup>This survey was a part of my larger study on Philippine political elites, which was laid aside when I concentrated my time and efforts on the political elite of Occidental Mindoro. The data of the survey have not yet been fully processed. The data tabulated in this paper constitute a part of the survey data.
- <sup>5</sup>Republic of the Philippines, *1935 Constitution*, Art. VI, sec. 1.
- <sup>6</sup>John C. Wahlke, Heinz Eulau, William Buchanan, and Le Roy C. Ferguson. *The Legislative System* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1962), pp. 252-54.
- <sup>7</sup>Francisco "Soc" Rodrigo, "The Structure of Philippine Domestic Politics," in *Youth's Positive Role in National Development* (Manila: American Embassy, 1969), pp. 103-4.
- <sup>8</sup>Agpalo, *The Political Process*, p. 122.
- <sup>9</sup>Remigio E. Agpalo. *The Political Elite and the People* (Manila: College of Public Administration, University of the Philippines, 1972), pp. 159-60.
- <sup>10</sup>*Aquino v. Comelec*. G.R. No. L-40004, promulgated January 31, 1975; and October 16, 1976 Plebiscite on Amendments to the 1973 Constitution, Amendment No. 5.
- <sup>11</sup>Presidential Decree No. 995, Sec. 4.
- <sup>12</sup>*Philippines Daily Express*, September 11, 1976, p. 1
- <sup>13</sup>This is taken from my notes on the proceedings of the Batasang Bayan on December 18, 1976.
- <sup>14</sup>*Philippines Sunday Express*, December 19, 1976, p. 11.
- <sup>15</sup>Presidential Decree No. 995, Sec. 4.
- <sup>16</sup>*ibid.*
- <sup>17</sup>Mimeographed materials on the National Executive Committee of the Katipunan ng mga Sanggunian, prepared by the Department of Local Government and Community Development.
- <sup>18</sup>*Bulletin Today*, September 22, 1976, p. 12.
- <sup>19</sup>The term *pandanggo-sa-ilaw* politics was first used by the author to describe the politics of Occidental Mindoro. See author's "*Pandanggo sa Ilaw: The Politics of Occidental Mindoro*," *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review*, XXVII (December

1963): 445-88 and *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, 8 (April 1964): 83-111. See also author's *The Political Elite*.

<sup>20</sup>Agpalo, *The Political Elite*, pp. 118-19.

<sup>21</sup>Joseph Ralston Hayden. *The Philippines: A Study in National Development* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1955), Chapter III.

<sup>22</sup>Quoted in Gerald E. Wheeler, "Manuel L. Quezon and the Philippine Constitution," *Historical Bulletin*, 8 (March 1964), p. 21.