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## Leadership in a Benguet Village

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# Leadership in a Benguet Village\*

VICENTE ENCARNACION, JR.

**I**N the summer of 1957, a social anthropologist and I had the opportunity to stay in a village in the Mountain Province to study certain aspects of culture change. There were a few propositions developed in the fields of Sociology and Anthropology which we carried in our heads as we went to the village and which guided the study. I was interested, first, in a generalization which has come out of small-group research in the United States. "The higher the rank of a person within the group, the more nearly his activities conform to the norms of the group."<sup>1</sup> I wanted to apply this, on a community level, to a Philippine village.

Second, what would happen in a village in the process of change, in what has come to be called a peasant (as differentiated from a folk or primitive and from an urban) community where there is not only one but two sets of norms or patterns of expected behavior confronting the villagers?<sup>2</sup>

Faced with the dilemma presented by these first two "guide posts", I thought that a classification of authority and leadership which had been devised by the German sociologist,

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\* This is the revised version of a paper read at the Fourth Annual Baguio Religious Acculturation Conference, held at Baguio City, December 29-31, 1960.

<sup>1</sup>George Homans, *THE HUMAN GROUP*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1950), p. 141.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Redfield, *PEASANT SOCIETY AND CULTURE* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

Weber, might be useful. On the basis of their claims to legitimacy, there are *legal*, *traditional* and *charismatic* leaders.<sup>3</sup> Here we shall deal only with the first two types. Thus we would expect that the possessors of *legal* authority would conform to the new norms while the *traditional* leader would support and sustain the old ones.

Third, how is it possible for these two kinds of leadership and two sets of norms to co-exist? What mechanisms or adjustments are made so as to make this plurality of kinds of behavior in a single community possible?

Now all of these statements and problems could be viewed as related to the broader concept of *acculturation*, which "comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups."<sup>4</sup> We used this concept to relate and bring together the above-mentioned theoretical questions and propositions.

The village we went out to study in order to test these ideas is a small (population 439, according to the latest available official count), Kankanay-speaking, relatively isolated village (35 kilometers from the nearest means of transportation) in the subprovince of Benguet. It is located approximately a hundred kilometers northwest of Baguio and it is connected by a narrow trail to barrios of La Union and Ilocos Sur which are immediately below on its western side. The village, which we shall call Centro, is also the seat of local government of a newly classified regular Philippine municipality, called Wagangan.

The legal or formal leaders of Wagangan who reside in Centro are the Mayor, Treasurer, Councilor, Chief of Police, Sanitary Inspector, Head Teacher of the community's elemen-

<sup>3</sup> Max Weber, *THE THEORY OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION*, translated by A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947), p. 328.

<sup>4</sup> This definition by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits is found in Ralph Beals, "Acculturation", in A. L. Kroeber, ed. *ANTHROPOLOGY TODAY*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 626.

tary school, and a Barrio Lieutenant. These leaders are not hard to identify since they occupy an *office*, in the technical sense, and possess, to some degree, the attributes of the "ideal" bureaucratic official described by scholars in this field.<sup>5</sup>

Aside from these outwardly visible officials, there is a group of leaders who are thought to be the "most important" and influential by the formal leaders themselves. These are the people who help in the settlement of disputes in the community, give advice, and are consulted whenever free services are needed for community projects. These are the traditional leaders, using our conceptual scheme.

In order to get at the norms valued by the community and to compare the degree to which the leaders conformed to them, a third group of persons used in the original research design is presented here. These are heads of families who have children who had gone to the local school but whose children stopped before reaching the sixth grade. There are seven cases in this group which we shall use to represent those with low or ordinary rank in Centro. The seven legal officials, five influential traditional leaders, and these non-leaders constitute the sample for this report.

A comparison of the backgrounds of these three groups is provided in the table presented below:

	Group I (7 non- leaders)	Group II (7 legal officials)	Group III (5 tradition- al leaders)
Age (group average)	65	41	75
Last grade completed,			
years (group mean)	1	11	1
Ability to speak Ilocano	7	7	4
Ability to speak Tagalog	1	4	0
Ability to speak English	2	6	0
Have separate space for			
cooking, eating, sleeping	1	4	1
Wear G-string	6	1	5

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, Peter Blau's *BUREAUCRACY IN MODERN SOCIETY* (New York: Random House, 1956), pp. 28-31.

It can be seen from the table that the formally chosen legal officials (Column 2) are younger, have more formal education, and had acquired more lowland traits than the other two groups. The traditional leaders and the control group of non-leaders (Columns 1 and 3) are more like in terms of retaining the old norms regarding housing, clothing, and education. An exception is the ability to speak Ilocano, which has been acquired by all three groups.

Part of the norms of a group (a very important one as far as behavior in any culture is concerned) are the religious ones. The next table gives some data on the subject:

	Group I (7 non- leaders)	Group II (7 legal officials)	Group III (5 tradition- al leaders)
Number of pagans	5	3	4
Number of Catholics	0	4	0
Attended 2 or more <i>kanyaw</i> (past 2 years)	2	7	4
Never gave <i>kanyaw</i>	1	3	0

There are four religious groups in the village: the pagans, the Catholics, the members of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, and most recently the Pilgrims Holiness group. This is another indication that the culture is no longer homogeneous, that the community is in the process of change.

It will be observed that the traditional leaders and the non-leaders are again more alike: at least seventy percent in both groups have retained the pagan religion compared with less than half of the legal leaders. The remainder of the legal officials have become Catholics, the lone Christian traditional leader is a U.C.C.P. member (his son says that he joined in 1956 after a period of hospitalization in Baguio where members of this religious group helped to cure him), while the two Christian non-leaders are U.C.C.P. and Pilgrims Holiness Church members. The four old pagan traditional leaders are also native priests who officiate at the ritual-ceremonies; their

children have become baptized Catholics because "it is the oldest Christian group here."

All of the members of the three groups participate in the *pakde*, a neighborhood religious gathering lasting a whole day. Abstention from certain foods and acts, and the sacrificing of ritual animals like pigs and chickens which are contributed equally by the members of the neighborhood, characterize the *pakde*. On this day the neighborhood is closed to outsiders. According to an informant, the purpose of this ceremony is to pray to the native deities for good crops, good health, and prosperity in general. The more educated formal leaders say that they participate in this ceremony "to be good neighbors" by simply staying at home on the day of the *pakde*, thus conforming with the practice outwardly.

The findings on the participation in the *kanyaw* show that all the leaders, with the exception of one of the influential old men who was sickly at the time, attended at least two of these spirit feasts in the two years preceding the time of the study. This would show that the ceremony, like the *pakde*, performs other functions than the purely religious ones. The *kanyaw* confers prestige on the giver; it strengthens kinship and social group ties since relatives and friends are invited to the *kanyaw*; it preserves the existing social class structure in the village in the same way that the sponsorship of annual religious and social activities by the upper class in lowland Christian communities does;<sup>6</sup> and by participating in the *kanyaw* and the *pakde*, the community reaffirms certain traditional values.

All of the traditional leaders have given a *kanyaw* of 13 pigs (this is an index of wealth and prestige as one usually begins by giving a feast of three pigs and progressively adding two more plus a number of *carabaos* as one grows in age and in wealth). This group and the other group of leaders received more invitations to this feast in the two years preceding the time of the study.

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<sup>6</sup> Frank Lynch, S.J., *Social Class in a Bikol Town*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1959), pp. 128-29.

The formal leaders who are Christians say that they give a kanyaw to return previous invitations, to celebrate important events which mark changes in their status (such as birthdays, weddings, etc.), and to "please the old men"; some of them now want to do away with the pagan prayers that are connected with the kanyaw.

The foregoing table also shows that only one member of the non-leader group has never given a kanyaw. Three, or almost one-half of the formal leaders' group, belong to this category although most of them intend to give a modified kanyaw in the future. As has also been pointed out earlier, all of the traditional leaders have celebrated "big" kanyaw.

At this point, I would like to make some of the generalizations made so far more concrete by looking at the background and activities of a few of the leaders in the community.

The Mayor, who is 45 years old, speaks Ilocano, English, some Tagalog, and can understand other native dialects besides Kankanay. He finished high school in the agricultural school near Baguio. Since graduation he has worked in the mines, served with the guerrillas during the second world war, taught schools for a few years in the neighboring towns, and held minor government jobs. He is a pagan, while his three children are baptized Catholics. He participates in the pakde and practices the kanyaw. He has given a kanyaw of seven pigs. He is related by blood and by marriage ties to three of the influential old men.

From the Mayor we learned that there are certain traditional qualifications for mayor of the municipality, all of which he possesses: he "should not be a widower", he "should not be divorced", and he "should not buy this own food". Once chosen mayor, he should undergo a cane ritual, characterized by sacrificing animals, carrying the cane to certain designated places, and abstaining from certain acts and foods. After a period of hesitation he was prevailed upon by the old people to give a kanyaw for the "good of the community."

The Mayor was our source of information on traditional beliefs and practices such as folk medicine and the causes of

sickness, origin stories, pagan rituals, and courtships and marriage customs. He is opposed to the destruction of the *pakedlan* (a crosslike wooden structure placed in a sacred mound where ritual animals are butchered and sacrificed to the pagan deities) and to the practice of public confession which was being introduced by a new religious group. He says that the *pakedlan* is a "remembrance of their ancestors' beliefs", and is afraid that public confessions may lead to revenge and the taking of the law in one's own hands.

There is a Justice of the Peace in the next town who has jurisdiction over Wagangan, but so far only one case had been brought to him in the two years that he was assigned there. This was a case of armed robbery committed by four lowlanders posing as Philippine Constabulary authorities against the residents of a barrio which is part of Wagangan municipality.

Disputes in the community are heard and settled by the Mayor, the Treasurer (also a high-school graduate, a devout Catholic, a well-to-do relative of three of the native leaders and probably the best informed person in Centro), and the traditional officials made up of wealthy and influential old men. In land disputes, the old men narrate what they know about the history of the land in question, listen to the witnesses, and on these bases render a decision. They now want to put the decision in writing.

In theft and criminal cases, when there are no witnesses, the old men invoke traditional sanctions (they ask the accused to swear and they recount the misfortunes that befell those who swore falsely in the past). The old leaders use similar sanctions to see to it that traditionally prescribed acts, like the *kanyaw* and taboos, are followed. Their knowledge of the sacred elements of their culture appears to be the main source of the influence of the traditional leaders.

There is one more set of norms included in the original study which may be used as a measure of acculturation in Centro. We can also use it to test our hypothesis regarding leadership conformity. The items are reported in the next table.

	Group I (7 non- leaders)	Group II (7 legal officials)	Group III (5 traditio- nal leaders)
Want professional job for child	4	7	3
Want professional job for self as alternative	0	4	0
Don't care where children will settle	1	5	1
Choose 2 or more friends from outside neighborhood	2	7	2
Visits to Baguio, past two years (group average)	1	5	3
Held 3 or more jobs in past	2	7	3

The items on occupational aspiration for their children shows that all three groups have accepted professional jobs as a goal for their children. A difference which is not shown in the table is that while the traditional leaders and the ordinary villagers mention the more conventional kinds of occupation (teaching and government), the legal or formal leaders choose the newer and less crowded vocations (engineering, dentistry, nursing, religious life, etc.) for their children.

The choice of an alternative occupation for the respondents themselves is more revealing. Only among the legal officials do we find people who would be willing to take a professional job instead of their present one, if it were possible.

Another indication of how the people of Centro are oriented is their attitude toward where their children will settle. While the non-leaders and the traditional officials would rather have their children settle in the village for different reasons, all but two of the formal leaders did not care where their offspring would stay later.

Each respondent was asked to name his three best friends. The data show that the legal officials, unlike the other two groups, were less bound by neighborhood or territorial restric-

tions in their friendship choices. All three groups tended to select people like themselves.

The last two items indicate that the legal officials have been more mobile, geographically as well as occupationally, than the other two groups.

Going back to where we started, we see that there are two main types of leadership existing side by side in the village under study. One is formal or legal, required and, in a sense, imposed from the outside, and facing outward. The other is an older, traditional, inward-looking kind.

We have shown that the two kinds of leaders conform more closely than others to the norms, or activities deemed desirable, by the group. Some of these norms are attending or giving a kanyaw, participating in the pakde, possessing the traditional qualifications for office, venerating the pakedlan, respect for wealth and old age, and in the case of the Mayor, undergoing the cane ritual.

In addition to these traditional norms, new ones have come to be accepted. Some of these are education (the ability to read and write), a desire for professional jobs or occupations, new material symbols such as clothing and house style, and a preference for the Christian religion. The legal officials are more influenced by these new norms than the traditional leaders.

To make it possible for the two kinds of norms to co-exist, some mechanisms or solutions are visible.

The legal and traditional leaders are linked with each other by the ties of a bilateral kinship system. The formal leaders are related to the group of influential old men and to each other by blood and through marriage. Some of the legal officials are connected to the traditional leaders by other ties: some of them were helped in their schooling by the wealthy old men.

One other way to bridge the old and the new norms is what anthropologists call *reinterpretation*, which is the assignment of new meanings to an old or borrowed item so that the

old and the new come into harmony. Thus, we saw how the legal and more educated leaders showed conformity with the old norms by outwardly complying with them. The young Sanitary Inspector of the village told us how he was able to get the people to accept his medicine by combining it with the pagan prayers for the sick. We have also seen that the traditional leaders, as well as the legal officials, perform diffused functions which make use of the two systems, as shown by the method of settling disputes in the village.

Two related implications are suggested by the foregoing discussion.

The innovator will be more successful in his task if he works through existing social relationships in the community where he works. These ties, or channels of influence, are not always readily apparent but can be discovered after some preliminary research effort.

The bearer of change should also consider the prevailing attitudes of the people whom he is trying to change. Again, the chances of succeeding are greater if he works on the basis of these attitudes.



#### COMMENT ON

#### LEADERSHIP IN A BENGUET VILLAGE

The preceding article has brought out significant points pertaining to the authority existing in a small village which is actually the seat of the government of the municipality. In this case the *centro* or *poblacion* is the home of the formally elected officials and incidentally also the home of the traditional leaders. The table illustrates the kind of leadership that is emerging as the second group accepts nine innovations in line with their new aspirations for themselves as leaders as well as for the future of their children. Their education is higher. They have ideas of sending their children away for higher education. They are aware of the powers of government outside the municipality. They have traveled to communities outside their own province. Yet they know how to keep the "old guard" satisfied by celebrating the ceremonies of prestige.

Kinship plays an important part in the election of formal leaders in this case. It seems that the leaders are related to past leaders and

thus were chosen because they had leadership in their families and are expected to continue the line of leadership. This expectation is strengthened by the fact that the traditional leaders control to a large extent the voting power of the people.

Celebration of ceremonies is one of the badges of prestige and status. I would like to use the term, ceremony, in this comment for the reason that the term *kanyaw* is quite a misleading term for it is too inclusive and creates a misconception of the different ceremonies and rituals. It may be used to designate all kinds of rituals and ceremonies, for it is the people's usual term for identifying their ritual peculiarities to people coming from outside the Mountain Province. The usage actually is a device to conceal or gloss over the details; they prefer to speak in generalities.

Kankanay or Ibaloy definition of status and prestige depends upon the situation of the economic standards of the specific area, for example, whether it is a mining or an agricultural area. Group definition of the ceremonial performance of the status ceremony is basically the same whether for the Kankanay or the Ibaloy. However, differences arise in details and methods as well as in the sex of the mediums; for the Kankanay medium is a man and the Ibaloy medium a woman. Celebration of ceremonies for status and prestige is at least partly a "show-off" affair. It is elevated to a high position because of the prayers that are invoked for the well-being of the celebrants and their spirit-relatives.

The gathering of relatives as well as non-relatives at one time in one place provides a good stage for a gossip-campaign for or against the election of formal leaders. Argumentation and debate start during the drinking feasts of the days of merry-making; the disputation occurs between the traditional and the potentially formal leaders and also among the traditional leaders themselves. The most common form is singing (*ba diw*).

Most of the ceremonies and rituals are celebrated for the well-being of both humans and animals as well as plants. They are usually performed to appease spirit-relatives and malevolent earthly spirits who cause illness, which range from simple cuts to serious diseases. Illness of domesticated animals, especially of pigs, is said to be an indirect way of informing the family that they should hold a celebration.

While the leaders of the community, both traditional and formal, know that rituals and ceremonies cost a lot, all of them have a traditional feeling of compulsion to celebrate in order to appease the unseen. Each one of them believes in the existence of an unseen being who has powers over them although this unseen being may not represent the Christian supreme being. The elimination of the prayers said during ceremonies of any kind is favored by many of the leaders of the younger generation,

but the omission of prayers strengthens the likelihood that one will be called a "show-off". The prayers and the ceremonial requirements of taboo and abstinence elevate the celebration to a religious status and make it more important and sacred, less open to criticism.

The two terms mentioned by the previous writer, the *pakde* and *pakedlan*, make up the ceremony and the site of the ceremony respectively. The purpose of the *pakde* is to insure the abundance of crops and the health of human beings and animals in the community. The *pakedlan* (site of the *pakde* ceremony) is the symbol that reminds the community in-group of their obligation to their spirit-relatives as well as to other, malevolent spirits. It also serves to preserve the unity of the close neighborhood as well as the unity of the family. The yearly celebration of the *pakde* and the upkeep of the *pakedlan* is indicative of the traditional fear of harm from spirit-relatives as well as from malevolent earthly spirits. The tendency to conform faithfully to the tradition of celebrating the *pakde* and thus to keep warm the close neighborhood in-group feeling of unity and responsibility is worth sociological note. Strict conformity to the traditional requirements of taboo is displayed in the abstinence from food and from sexual relations. The abstinence imposed after the celebration of ceremonies is done away with by washing of knees, elbows and face in a clear, non-drying spring.

As mentioned earlier, the status of leader is gained in several ways, but it is more easily gained through heredity, by having a relative (usually a direct ancestor) who was once a leader. Heredity also includes the inheritance of friendships gained at an earlier time by the leader-predecessor, since it remains for the young leader only to renew and reaffirm those friendships. He also increases his status by attaching himself to well-known traditional leaders and respecting their opinions and suggestions. He adds further to his status by his own achievements, such as education and his potential ability to represent the people to the outside government. Representation to the outside government body does require some education and this the traditional leaders recognize as lacking in their experience.

Education through formal schooling entails great expense and family sacrifice just as celebrating ceremonies does. But the tradition-oriented parent prefers to spend his money on ceremonies rather than on the education of his children. Education brings a slow return in terms of social status, prestige and power, while the return from ceremonial practice is near, immediate and definite.

Ceremonies for the most part are done for the curing of sickness, though there are other ends. The social status acquired by celebrating the biggest ceremony, the *peshit*, also introduces the celebrant to leadership if he is not already a leader. As the preceding article has pointed out, most of those who are the formal leaders have celebrated the prestige

ceremony even before election, so that it is proper for them to celebrate it after election. It even has added force. For being willing to celebrate ceremonies after having won an office emphasizes that the celebrant has not "changed his attitudes towards his responsibilities to his ancestor". Nor do the people think in terms of graft and corruption when the elected officials spend for the ceremony, for one reason because the people themselves and their spirit-relatives partake of the meat and drink. Again, the elected officials had originally belonged to the traditional group but now form a distinguished separate group since by attaining office they are proven to have other qualities besides. In any case ill-gotten wealth may show in the omens, which are strictly observed, and when there is need for the repetition of ceremonies in order to "correct" or "redirect" ill omens, it will be another expense for the family. In the final analysis, the "need" of spirit-relatives (which often calls forth a celebration) really depends upon the whims of the *mambunung* (medium) and upon the psychological stability of the persons involved—especially when it is a sick person or a person desirous of pleasing his spirit-relatives.

The success of the formal leaders depends at present entirely on the support of the traditional leaders and of the non-leaders. No member of these last two groups makes outrageous political promises in long speeches, but everyone of them wages a silent yet effective campaign in every social gathering. The traditional leaders and the non-leaders are still respected and looked to for guidance.

ISABEL LEAÑO