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Assimilative integration: ethnic Chinese defending national security through the 'iron fist' in a Philippine frontier

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For decades from the Cold War (1950s–1980s) to the present time, a strand of scholarships concerning the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia has been persistently informed by the 'assimilation vs. integration' debate. At odds with this dualism, this article finds that in contemporary Philippine state-building reality, assimilation and integration of the ethnic Chinese could well co-exist, thus constitute a more nuanced and grounded, if not novel, analytical continuum-spectrum prism of 'assimilative integration' instead to better capture the complex dynamics in diverse Southeast Asian state formation processes. Through a historical-ethnographic study of the 'iron fist policy' of former Mayor of Tuguegarao City (1988–1998; 2007–2013) – the late Mr. Delfin Telan Ting (丁羅敏; 1938–2022) in a northern Philippine frontier's multi-ethnic society, this article aims to illustrate why and in what specific ways that indigenous political cultural conceptions of coercive authority and social order remain resilient in informing how the Chinese-Filipino political actors would participate in crucial national security and law enforcement matters, such as counter-insurgency and anti-gambling campaign. Assimilative integration policy position considers the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia as instruments, assets and resources for defending national security and law enforcement.

KEYWORDS

assimilative integration, Cagayan Valley (the Philippines), ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia, coercive authority, national security

1 Introduction

For decades from the Cold War (1950s–1980s) to the present time, a strand of scholarships concerning the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia has been persistently informed by the 'assimilation vs. integration' debate. On one hand, assimilationists argue for the Southeast Asian state policy to forcefully absorb the Chinese ethnic group into the mainstream national society, often at the expense of the Chinese's cultural distinctiveness and identity. Integration, on the other hand, proposes a more inclusive approach in which the ethnic Chinese are often recognized as a distinct cultural group within the hosting multicultural national society, wherein they can enjoy freedom to maintain their cultural heritage while also actively participating in the broader national society and regional community of Southeast Asia.

At odds with this persistent analytical and policy dualism, this article finds that in contemporary Philippine state-building reality, assimilation and integration of the ethnic Chinese could well co-exist, thus constitute a more nuanced and grounded, if not novel, analytical continuum-spectrum prism of 'assimilative integration' instead to better capture the complex dynamics in diverse Southeast Asian state formation processes. This article suggests that when the Chinese-Filipinos were elected to govern and participate in Philippine government and policy implementation as local government officials, they would also

be compliant with thus actively performing, if not passively absorbed by, the more deep-seated Filipino indigenous political culture that would enable and legitimate them to exercise such state authorities as coercion, surveillance and securitization.

Through a historical-ethnographic study of the controversial ‘iron fist policy’ (Filipino: *kamay na bakal*) of former Mayor of Tuguegarao City (1988–1998; 2007–2013) – the late Mr. Delfin Telan Ting (丁羅敏; 1938–2022) in a northern Philippine frontier’s multi-ethnic society, this article aims to illustrate why and in what specific ways that indigenous political cultural conceptions of coercive authority and social order remain resilient in informing how the Chinese-Filipino political actors would participate in crucial national security and law enforcement matters, such as counter-insurgency and anti-gambling campaign. Assimilative integration policy position considers the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia as instruments, assets and resources for defending national security and law enforcement.

2 Literature review

2.1 Conceptual gap

Since the Cold War, scholarships concerning the ethnic Chinese populations in such United States (U. S.) allied Southeast Asian countries as Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand have been consistently informed by the ‘assimilation vs. integration’ dualistic debate (Chan and Tong, 1993; Chu, 2021; Omanovic and Langley, 2023; Poerwanto, 1976; Purdey, 2010; Skinner, 1957a; Tan, 2018; Tan, 2007; Tan, 2007–2013; Widiyanto et al., 2024). On one hand, the assimilationists argue for the state policy to forcefully absorb the Chinese ethnic group into the mainstream national society, often at the expense of the Chinese’s cultural identity and distinctiveness. The integrationists, on the other hand, take a more inclusive approach which the ethnic Chinese are often recognized as a distinct cultural group within the hosting national society, where they can enjoy freedom to maintain their cultural heritage while also actively participating in the broader nation-building project.

Nonetheless, each Southeast Asian country’s contextual and policy manifestations of the ‘assimilation vs. integration’ debate could be different from each other. In Thailand, for example, it was consented among generations of scholars that thanks to favorable national economic security policies implemented by the Thai monarchy and successive governments since the establishment of Thonburi Kingdom of Siam in the 18th century, the Chinese immigrants and their Sino-Thai descendants have largely been assimilated into the Thai state and society up to the present time (Skinner, 1957a; Skinner, 1957b; Chan and Tong, 1993; Chan and Tong, 2001; Chantavanich, 1997; Wong, 2018: p. 128–137).

Assimilation involves the Sino-Thai minority group adopting Thailand’s state religion (i.e., Buddhism), cultural values, language and customs of the dominant Thai/Tai cultural group, while integration allows for the retention of unique Chinese cultural identities and practices within the larger national society. Thailand’s history of intermarriage, shared cultural-religious celebrations, and the acceptance of Chinese into the Thai nobility, political economy and governance system contributed to one of the highest degree of assimilation among the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia.

In the context of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia, however, assimilation and integration represent distinct approaches to manage cultural diversity and minority integration within a larger society of many cultural groups inhabiting in the world’s largest archipelago of more than 10,000 islands. Assimilation was often meant for the complete absorption of the Chinese minority culture into the dominant Indonesian culture that is often characterized by the dominant Malayo-Polynesian ethno-linguistic groups (e.g., Javanese and Sumatrans) and the majority religion of Islam. Under General Suharto’s authoritarian rule (1966–1998), Indonesian state policy toward the Chinese-Indonesians often involved the suppression of the Chinese cultural identity, which can be known as the ‘forced assimilation’ thesis (Sidjaya, 2014; Soedirgo, 2024).

The May 1998 riots against the ethnic Chinese and downfall of the Suharto regime however triggered renewal of Indonesian public discussions in favor of integration policy. Integrationist policies adopted during the Sukarno government (1949–1966) and implemented by the post-Suharto democratically elected governments (1998–present), on the other hand, seek to incorporate the Chinese-Indonesian group into the larger pluralistic national society while preserving the Chinese’s unique cultural heritage and identity when building a multicultural Indonesia (Fikri and Hasudungan, 2022; Liem and Taga-Tan, 2017; Purdey, 2010; Siau, 2018).

In the Philippines wherein the multi-ethnic Malayo-Polynesian majority (e.g., Tagalogs and Ilocanos) are Roman Catholics, Catholic conversion of the ethnic Chinese since the Spanish colonial period (1565–1898) has already played a significant role in assimilating and integrating the ethnic Chinese [including the ‘Chinese mestizos’ (i.e., mixed-blood between ethnic Chinese and indigenous Filipino or Spaniard)] into the post-colonial Philippine society as the ‘Chinese-Filipinos’ (Ang See, 2004; Wickberg, 2000; Wickberg, 2001).

In the present-day context, assimilation would often refer to the process where the ethnic Chinese gradually adopt Filipino culture and language, leading to a potential and gradual loss of their distinct Chinese identity. Integration, on the other hand, involves the Chinese-Filipinos maintaining their Chinese cultural identity while actively participating in and contributing to Philippine state and society. Integration emphasizes a more balanced approach where cultural exchange and mutual understanding are fostered. Nonetheless, in relative absence of a consistent Philippine state policy toward the Chinese, both assimilation and integration have occurred among Chinese-Filipinos, with the degree of each varying based on individual choices, family history, and social, economic and political as well as religious circumstances. While some Chinese-Filipinos have fully assimilated into the Filipino society, many others have successfully integrated, maintaining their Chinese heritage while contributing to the cultural, economic, religious and political landscapes as well as state-building of the Philippines. It is safe to suggest that in the Philippines, the Chinese can choose to adopt either assimilation or integration among themselves, but they can also adopt both approaches when the circumstances necessitate (Ang See, 2025; Wong, 2009; Wong, 2024; Yap, 2018).

Based on the above literature review, three points are drawn out to identify the research gap. First, it is obvious that although the ‘assimilation vs. integration’ dualism has contributed to the public debate and (re)-making of state policy toward the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia, the actual policy boundary and conceptual demarcation between assimilation and integration varies from

country to country, and shifts from historical period to political context.

Second, in contemporary Philippine reality, because the post-colonial state did not recognize an urgent need to pursue a clear-cut policy agenda toward the ethnic Chinese, the Chinese-Filipinos have enjoyed the relative freedom to debate and adopt assimilation and/or integration among themselves. Despite there have been tensions between the Chinese-Filipinos and the new Chinese immigrants, general public perceptions of the Filipino public toward the Chinese community remains largely positive (Ang See, 2025; Masucol et al., 2022). In other words, the Philippines would stand as an exceptional case in Southeast Asia, wherein the Chinese-Filipinos are able to concomitantly adopt assimilation and integration, thus constitute an assimilation-integration continuum-spectrum (Figure 1). This assimilative integration cultural continuum refers to the entire cultures-in-reserve spectrum connecting the two political and policy poles of assimilation position and integrationist position since the U. S.-China Cold War and strategic competition impacted Southeast Asia from the 1950s to the present. It is a multi-ethnic and multi-language pool of juxtaposing cultural and linguistic symbols for an individual actor (of Chinese ethnicity or non-Chinese ethnicity) to generate cultural meanings, purposefully retrieve these meanings, and to make practical use of them in actual interactional situations in social, cultural economic, political and religious domains. This article also adds that such assimilative integration cultural continuum-spectrum also enables the ethnic Chinese to participate in national security affairs such as law enforcement, counter-insurgency and anti-separatism.

Third, the dichotomous 'assimilation vs. integration' debate regards the ethnic Chinese group as the minority 'other' alien-strangers to be either assimilated or integrated into the mainstream host-society as 'us', which implies incompatibility, exclusion and political mistrust with suspicion. Public policy debate itself has therefore mainly been applied to such public policy issues as economy, culture, education and society. Though there have been emerging scholarships concerning the ethnic Chinese's political and policy participation in Southeast Asia (Jiang, 1974; Rivera, 1994; Rivera and Koike, 1995; Rivera, 1997; Wong, 2006b; Wong, 2009; Wong, 2010; Wong, 2011; Wong, 2024), very little knowledge was attained concerning the ethnic Chinese's participation in salient state-building domains of national security related matters. The key research gap identified in this article is therefore: How could the 'assimilation-integration continuum-spectrum prism' help us to conceptualize the ethnic Chinese's participation and contribution in the national security of the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries?

This identified research gap is also of national security policy significance amidst of China's rise and growing influences in the Chinese diaspora and in the Southeast Asian region.

2.2 Policy gap

During the Cold War, Mao Zedong's policy toward the overseas Chinese was closely driven by the international communism's ideological cause of the Chinese Communist Party. In Southeast Asia, Maoist China covertly and overtly supported the communist insurgencies and related political movements under the banner of 'Communist international'. Major neighbor-states' Communist parties were complexly connected with China, e.g., Communist Party of the Philippines, Communist Party of Thailand, Communist Party of Indonesia, Malayan Communist Party, and the Communist Party of Burma. Mao's overseas Chinese policy therefore regarded the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia as both an instrument and resources to further Beijing's communist cause internationally.

However, after Mao died in 1976 and soon after Deng Xiaoping took over Chinese state power in 1978, Beijing took a very different tack in her policy formulation toward the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia, which was aimed to attract the overseas Chinese capitals for rejuvenating China's own domestic economic development in line with the market economy reform program. In other words, from 1978 to the present time, Deng and his successors appeared to have abandoned Mao's policy in supporting the communist cause and associated movements in Southeast Asia which some ethnic Chinese had once played a part in (Wong, 2018: Chapters 1–2; Wong, 2019).

After Beijing embarked upon the market economy reform in the 1980s, there could be at least three different historical periods for patterning the interactions between China and the Chinese overseas. The first period suggested that China's state policy toward the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia from the 1980s to the 1990s was mainly to construct a 'China Circle' or 'Greater China' of economic and trade networks transnationally. Although such policy and project ignited public debates within some Southeast Asian countries concerning the loyalty of their ethnic Chinese populations toward the hosting Southeast Asian nations, China was able to use favorable policy measures (e.g., tax concessions and low land rent) to attract the overseas Chinese investments for China's domestic economic development purposes (Lever-Tracy et al., 1996; Shambaugh, 1995; Shambaugh, 2005; Wong, 2019).

In the overlapping second period (1980s-2000s), the ethnic Chinese business networks in Southeast Asia continue to be informed by the academic and policy debate between the integration-inclined 'cultural economy' approach and the assimilation-friendly 'political economy' approach. In brief, the cultural economists argued that ethnic Chinese business success was largely attributed to the Chinese cultural distinctiveness (Tan, 2007; Weidenbaum and Hughes, 1996; Yeung, 2000; Yeung and Olds, 2000), whereas the political economists argued that ethnic Chinese economic successes were mainly explained by assimilative connections with non-Chinese political actors (Cheng et al., 2004; Gomez, 1999; Gomez, 2000; Gomez and Benton, 2004; Gomez and Hsiao, 2001). Nonetheless, the two

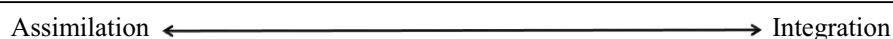


FIGURE 1
The assimilation-integration continuum-spectrum. Source: author.

approaches continued to be relevant in this period. Despite that Southeast Asia was once hit by communist insurgencies and right-wing counter-insurgencies during the Cold War period, the ethnic Chinese capitalists remained to be resilient in accumulating economic power in Southeast Asia, and gradually increasingly involved in the hosting state's political power dynamics and state formation process. This became evident when region-wide democratization was introduced in Southeast Asia from the 1980s where the ethnic Chinese businesses and networked capitalists were absorbed into the body politics of the hosting nation-states as electable politicians (Gomez, 2002; Wong, 2011; Wong, 2024).

The third period (2000s-present) suggests that since the 'rise of China' phenomenon has emerged in the early 2000s, there has been increasing concerns in Southeast Asian countries regarding the political loyalty and economic allegiance of the ethnic Chinese. After the Cold War ended, on one hand, the U. S. promotion of democratization in Southeast Asia enabled the ethnic Chinese voters to express their political allegiance and having gained gradual footholds in both national democratic politics and neoliberal economics of the region. On the other hand, the post-Mao China re-engaged with the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia as a main source of foreign investment and needed capitals for China's economic development. The U. S.-China neoliberal globalization initiative was then formalized by China's accession into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, which the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) then also became the regional center of free trade agreements signed with not just China, but also with Japan, South Korea, India, Australia and New Zealand.

The further 'rise of China' from the 2010s characterized by the Xi Jinping government's 'Belt and Road Initiative' (2013-present) has pointed to the emergence of the 'Global China' phenomena in different parts of the world, in which China does not only import capitals for her own domestic economic development, but she has started to export capitals to foreign countries for investments, garnering natural resources and extending markets for her own commodities. The emergence of the 'Global China' phenomena has therefore perceived by Southeast Asian policy circles to have significant political and security ramifications. The looming fear has still to do with the question whether the ethnic Chinese are being absorbed into the 'transnational Chinese state capitalism' that the Chinese Communist Party has been building through the techno-geo-economic projects across the world (Wong, 2015; Wong, 2018, p. 4–11; Wong, 2022).

These larger geo-political-economic changes therefore warrant an updated ASEAN collective thinking and policy response to appropriately address the new ethnic Chinese question in Southeast Asia: How to ensure the ethnic Chinese political allegiance to their respective hosting Southeast Asian governments? How to ensure the ethnic Chinese are protecting and defending Southeast Asian national and regional security?

3 Analytical framework

3.1 Contextualizing assimilative integration in Cagayan Valley, the Philippines

What would be contextual manifestation of an assimilative integration framework in the Cagayan Valley of northern Philippines?

It is held that the modern state-building project represents a form of 'internal colonization' in both the Global North and Global South contexts. For example, while Habermas (1987) identifies the 'colonization of the life world' for which the state imperatives penetrate and distort everyday life in the Global North societies, Scott (2009) finds 'internal colonialism' in the relatively stateless highland Southeast Asia where frontier inhabitants developed astute ways to evade the states' subjugating mechanisms. The 'internal colonization' argument is useful in explaining the persistent recurrence of sufferings such as war, conflict and displacement. Nonetheless, there are innovative ways for the Global South post-colonial state to include the frontier populations without creating a zero-sum state-frontier dichotomy. A way is to conceive the state-frontier relations in terms of inclusive zones where the nationalizing state and the frontier society imbricate and synergize with each other.

The frontier has two meanings. First, contrary to the international juridical norms which assume clear-cut boundaries and separate human communities, it refers to the liminal zone where the sovereign state meets its challengers and juxtaposes with other local authorities, such as insurgents and frontier strongmen. The Cagayan Valley is qualified to be so. In the late 1960s, the communist ideologues of the Huk rebellion (1940s to 1960s) had decided to go beyond the 'Huklandia' of the central Luzon plain to reach the southern and northern Philippine frontiers due to a strategic consideration (Kerkvliet, 1986; Kerkvliet, 1990). Identified as a state granary, caving country and a base for peasant mobilization, the Cagayan Valley was selected for the revolutionary cause, which fitted into the site selection criteria and the 'encircling cities from the countryside' tactic that Mao (2002, p. 12–24) originally proposed. The 1970s and 1980s marked the hype of communist insurgency. Although the movement faltered in the 1990s, low intensity conflicts were revived in the 2000s (Armed Forces of the Philippines, 2008).

Second, it refers to the frontier life-world's multi-ethnic inter-subjective landscape where the state strives to assert its supremacy and institutionalize sovereignty. In state-building, one's subjectivity becomes the state's most wanted frontiers where it strives to lodge its imprints. Through mass education and evangelization, the Manila state and the Catholic Church resonate with the frontier populations by matching and hybridizing as well as juxtaposing with their local cultural codes and practices (Gatan, 1981; Liban, 1973). It is prevalent that within daily language, bits and pieces of the Ibanag, Ilocano, Itawes, English, Chinese, Spanish and Tagalog languages coexist to form an intelligible sentence. Since Spanish times, Christianization has taken place in the Cagayan Valley (De La Costa, 1967, p. 59). Social relationships are largely mediated through 'folklore Catholicism' in which the practice of ritual kinship (*compadrazgo*) and patronage play an indispensable role to formalize allegiance and affirm bonding (Lynch, 2004).

Due to this multi-ethnic and religious context, actors are living within a 'cultural continuum' where different cultures intermingle and creolize (Drummond, 1980; Skinner, 2001) (Figure 2). Therefore, despite that a homogenizing Filipino national culture had been institutionalized for years through mass education, the local government and electoral politics, the Ibanag, Ilocano and Itawes cultural groups in the Cagayan Valley still retain their indigenous cultures. Often, this cultural continuum-spectrum serves as the cultures-in-reserve; a pool of symbols for an individual actor to purposefully retrieve and make practical use in actual situations. An

Ibanag Ilocano Itawes Tagalog English Chinese Spanish Isneg Kalinga Malaueg Indian

FIGURE 2

Assimilative integration: cultural continuum-spectrum in the Cagayan Valley, the Philippines. Source: author.

assimilative integration cultural continuum-spectrum is an intersystem where different cultural manifestations are acquired by a person through learning and socialization. Although there are boundaries between these seemingly independent cultural systems, they also overlap into aspects of social life, e.g., religious syncretism and linguistic creolization.

The Philippine state has been unfailingly encroaching into the territorial frontiers and subjectivities of its inhabitants. From the Spanish regime to American colonial rule, frontier strongmen, local chieftains and trading networks have been used for sovereignty-making (Abinales, 2000; Iletto, 1971). In the post-Marcos era, along with decentralizing and democratizing measures (Abueva, 1997; Brillantes, 1997), there were other sets of pre-existing governmental rationalities and local practices that the state recycled. This meant that the state admitted the local strongman such as the tribal chieftains (Tagalog: *datus*) and the trans-local Chinese business rings into its hierarchy. An objective was to subdue them as state-building instruments to collect taxes and conduct counter-insurgency programs. Although the American colonial regime used a similar strategy, the post-Marcos Local Government Code (Philippines, 1991) entails clearer political agendas and systematic policies to Filipinize the national populations. In return, this translated into more cost-effective economic production, resources reallocation and efficient social mobilization, with the aim to turn the inhabitants into Filipino citizens.

To the indigenous Ibanag, Ilocano and Itawes ethnic groups of Cagayan Province's provincial capital and the Cagayan Valley Region II's (consists of five provinces of Batanes, Cagayan, Isabela, Nueva Vizcaya, and Quirino) administrative center – Tuguegarao City (Figure 3), the Chinese-Ibanag mestizo late Delfin Ting was known as *Lakay Ting* (meaning 'old man Ting') (Figure 4). Married to Chinese-Ilocana mestiza – Teresita Sera – a devoted Roman Catholic, *Lakay Ting* is the late father of several Roman Catholic Chinese-Filipino businessmen-cum-politicians, including incumbent Tuguegarao City Mayor (2022–2025; 2025-present) Maila Rosario Sera Ting-Que, and former city mayor (1998–2007) and congressman (2010–2019) Randolph Sera Ting. Being a trans-local business conglomerate which effectively connects the Luzon-wide ethnic Chinese business networks, the Tings' linguistic dexterity, local knowledge, wealth and extensive connections qualify them immediately as a local power to be co-opted by the centralizing Philippine state.¹

As an indigenous governmental and legal institution which traces its roots to the pre-Hispanic era (De Pelmoka, 1996: Chapter 3, Scott,

1992, p. 1–14), the *lakay* political control mechanism is found among the tribes in northern Luzon, e.g., the Ilongot (Rosaldo, 1980a), and Tinguian (Eggan, 1941). Around 1900, *lakay* was used by the neighboring head-hunting groups such as the Kalinga and the Isneg as a term to refer to the chieftain, who 'was typically elected by group of prominent men who were themselves *maingel* (braves)' – 'men who have won a reputation for ferocity in battle – or, more accurately, for the number of lives they have taken in battle or elsewhere' (Scott, 1979, p. 143). In northern Luzon, other tribal societies had the same political institution of *lakay* (chieftainship). Among the Ibanag, the council of the braves (*maengel*) elect *patul*, a type of 'king' or ultimate ruler, as *lakay* (Scott, 1994, p. 268).

In a nutshell, being elected by the Ibanag, Ilocano and Itawes groups to lead and govern as the supreme *lakay*, the late Lakay Delfin Ting of Cagayan Valley provided an instructive historical-ethnographic case to demonstrate how everyday Cagayano assimilative integration had enabled the ethnic Chinese to defend Philippine national security through exercising coercive authority which was deemed legitimate and acceptable by the indigenous Filipino constituents.

3.2 Coercive authority and social order: anthropological perspective

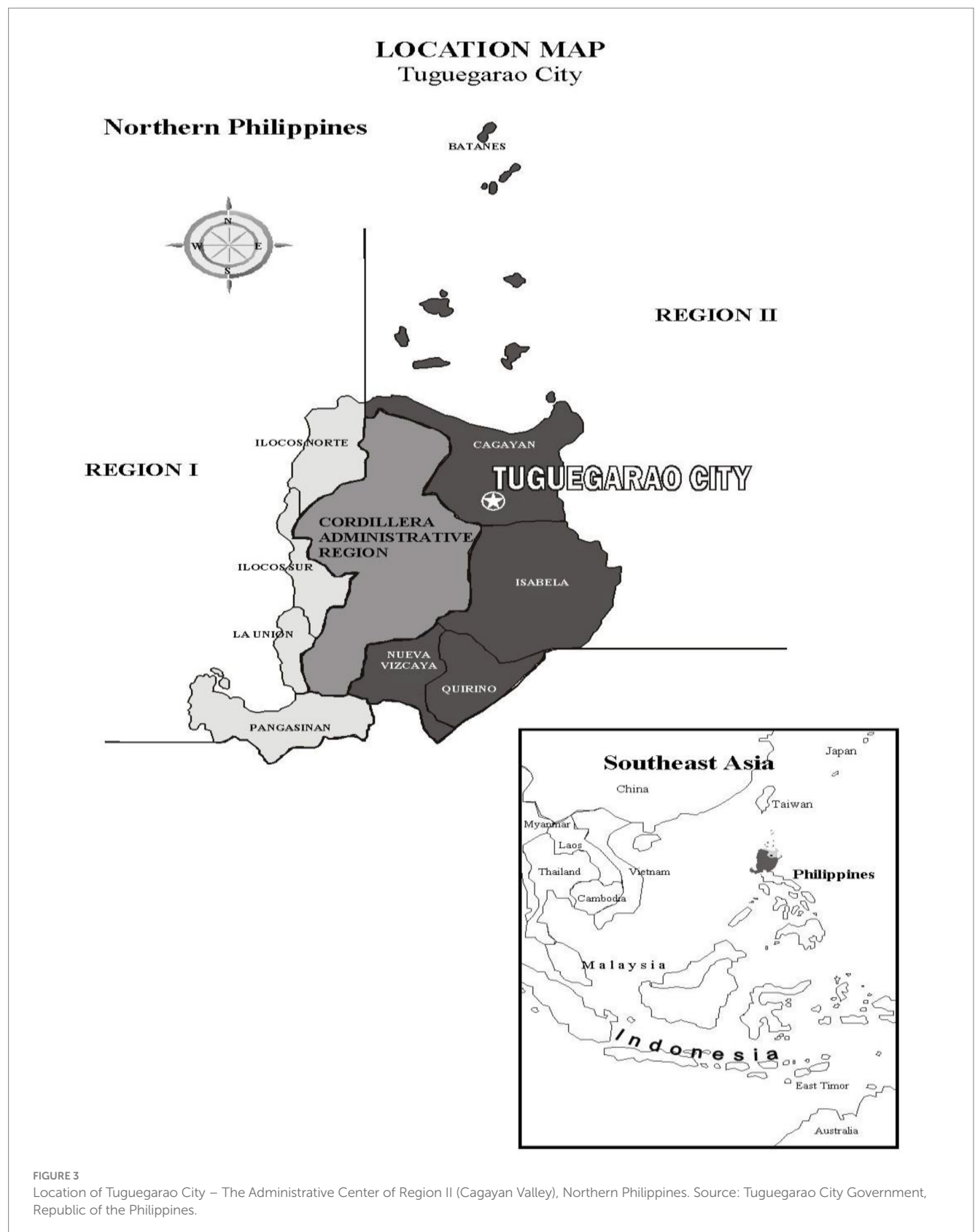
Modern Global North state-building process involves the use of force and surveillance measures (Giddens, 1987; Weber, 1948). In a similar manner, in *African Political Systems*, Radcliffe-Brown (1940) offered an anthropological perspective for understanding the relationship between coercion and social order in 'pre-modern' societies of the Global South:

'[I]n studying political organization, we have to deal with the maintenance or establishment of social order, within a territorial framework, by the organized exercise of coercive authority through the use, or the possibility of use, of physical force.' (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940, p. xiv).

This insight is significant in two ways. Firstly, whether it is a pre-modern or modern polity in the Global North/South, social order requires maintenance through 'coercive authority'. Note that coercion can be privately deployed without resorting to any backing of legal authority. But Radcliffe-Brown was apparently stressing a different type of coercion, which is a specific form of coercion subtly but constantly supported by a recognized authority that culturally endorses the legitimacy to use, and reserves the option of the use of physical force.

Secondly, to these stateless African tribal societies, this recognized authority seems not necessarily to be a government, but a cultural abstraction of authority symbolically shared by the African tribesmen.

1 Sources: (1) Rosalinda M. Landicho (1993). 'Tuguegarao: A Special Report.' *The Sunday Times*. 15 August 1993. (2) Zaldy Dandan (1993). 'Delfin Ting: The Mayor as Manager.' *The Sunday Times*. 15 August 1993. (3) Zaldy Dandan (1993). 'Tuguegarao: Boom Town of the North.' *The Sunday Times*. 15 August 1993.



Coercion entails a negotiation process on the part of the coerced and the coerced seeking for a plausible social order. Similarly, in the

Philippines, the use of force is intertwined with persuasion, in which the local politicians are able to transcend Pareto's 'lion' and 'fox'



FIGURE 4

Mr. Delfin Telan Ting in the Mayoral inauguration ceremony, Tuguegarao, Cagayan Province, 2 February 1988. Source: Hotel Delfino, Tuguegarao City, the Philippines.

dichotomy (Pareto, 1966).² Radcliffe-Brown's remark could correct the view that the Global South nation-states are 'weak states,' which fail to use subtle persuasion and surveillance as well as unable to monopolize the legitimate use of physical use (Gledhill, 2000).

Thus, I propose two sets of strategies to approach the Cagayano *lakay's* hegemonic practices in maintaining social order: non-discursive and discursive strategies. Non-discursive strategies entail the manipulation of the reciprocal exchanges and deployment of necessary force proper to the state. Discursive strategies involve the symbolic production and reproduction of discourses proper to the state, e.g., electoral campaigning, media programmes, court hearings and public meetings. Strategies proper to the state denote the conditions that a political actor consciously deploys in a specific strategy in order to defend the collective interests of his/her nation-state and subjects. The word 'strategy' subsequently entails three meanings:

'First, to designate the means employed to attain a certain end; it is a question of rationality functioning to arrive at an objective.

Second, to designate the manner in which a partner in a certain game acts with regard to what he thinks should be the action of others and what he considers the others think to be his own; it is the way in which one seeks to have the advantage over others. Third, to designate the procedures used in a situation of confrontation to deprive the opponent of his means of combat and to reduce him to giving up the struggle; it is a question, therefore, of the means destined to obtain victory. These three meanings come together in situations of confrontation – war or games – where the objective is to act upon an adversary in such a manner as to render the struggle impossible for him.' (Foucault, 1984, p. 431).

In practice, discursive and non-discursive strategies intertwined and reproduced the coercive authority of the '*lakay*-father' of this frontier society. Without this culture-specific political personalism, the use of force may lose its legitimacy; law and order could not be maintained.

A few research questions are being asked here: How is coercive authority discursively and non-discursively constructed? What symbolically constitutes a legitimate coercive authority? What moral symbols would the coercer observe and invoke when using physical force in order to gain social acceptance? These questions set the terrain of this chapter and spotlight the role of the '*lakay*' as the network of the non-discursive and discursive organization of coercion in Tuguegarao – the former mayor Delfin Ting. Equally important, the modern ideas of the rule of law and democratic accountability seemed to have a strong constraining effect on driving Ting's iron-fist policy during his 10-year administration in Tuguegarao.

² To the Italian political theorist, lion-type leadership uses violence to maintain social order proper to the establishment whereas fox-type leadership aims to adapt to regime-change through cunning, intelligence and persuasion. This insightful lion-fox typology is problematic because historically political leadership involves creative blending of the two in order to rule. As this article shows, although late Mayor Delfin Ting used physical force to maintain social order in Tuguegarao, he also communicated with different societal sector in order to discursively form a consensus on his iron-fist policy. Electoral campaigning, media programmes and daily face-to-face encounters are the democratic public arenas where he defended this iron-fist policy.

4 Chinese-Filipino defending Philippine national security: a historical-ethnography, 1988–2002

4.1 Fathering Tuguegarao

It has been reported that the former mayor Delfin Ting of Tuguegarao was ‘the “boxing mayor” of Cagayan Valley.’³ Accordingly, in response to legal charges of oppression, threat, terrorism, physical injuries, violation of domicile and abuse of authority for shooting and slapping people, former Mayor Delfin Ting counter-questioned the interviewer, ‘How can you implement the law if you do not use [an] iron hand?’ Mayor Ting won these legal suits.

In Tuguegarao from 1988 to 1998, there were three interconnected contested issues regarding late Mayor Delfin Ting’s iron-fist policy (Tagalog: *kamay na bakal*): an anti-illegal-gambling campaign, the *Hotel Delfino Uprising*, and disciplining market vendors and media practitioners. Drawing from these empirical materials, in the following pages, I argue that the pattern of legitimacy stems from the symbolic repertoire of the Ibanag *lakay* system – the elected mayor as the *father* of the constituents, who has to perform his duties to enforce law to protect and take care of his peoples *with his own hands*, signifying his fatherly concern, in which discipline (*disiplina*) and punishment are essential. It is therefore an indigenous governance technique ‘to structure the possible field of action of others’ – a discursive strategy to designate ‘the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed’ (Foucault, 1984, p. 428; Wolf, 1990, p. 586–587).

In other words, the ‘iron fist’ policy generally refers to two sets of strategies in the maintenance of social order: non-discursive and discursive strategies. Non-discursively, an iron-fist policy directly inflicted physical pain onto the inhabitants’ bodies so to correct wrongdoings, resembling a father, who uses his bare hands to discipline his children. Discursively, an iron-fist policy produces and circulates discourses of coercion/violence to construct an imaginary archetype about the *lakay* in order to instil fear and displaying political supremacy, in his own words, as ‘*the father of the town*’. Despite the presence of all the accusations and criticisms, he is also morally and legally justifiable, because he is the law-abiding *father*, who defended Philippine laws in this frontier society. The Ibanag father has to show his strong arms to correct wrongs and punish misbehaviours of his children. Otherwise, he cannot stand.

What does it mean to be the *father* of Tuguegarao? Tuguegarao local governance could be conceived as a form of sublimated Ibanag parenthood – the leading government officials are expected to give moral guidance and exercise subsequent disciplinary measures and punishments on the Tuguegarao constituents as their parents. Among the Ibanag people, the bilateral kinship system is headed by the father (*yama*), who is expected to be a ‘*mangiyegu* (protector)’:

‘[A] strong man, able to protect his family and his home against any aggression. In this sense, he is called *patul* – a king, in his own

domain. No one can question his sovereign power. In the absence of the father, the mother is expected to take over.’ (Gatan, 1981, p. 28, italics original).

To understand this Ibanag culture-specific parenting process, the following ethnographic description of Ibanag parenthood would be useful:

‘The Ibanag parents punish their children for a misdeed more than the[y] praise them for a good deed. [...] Children are forced to conform to parents’ expectation by intimidation. [...] The Ibanag parents are authoritarian. Their favourite tools are punishments and scoldings. [...] Although Ibanag parents may not be generous in showing their affection toward their children, deep down there is a soft spot in their hearts. Children, on the other hand, are expected to be grateful to their parents. The Ibanag children are to show their gratitude by being respectful and by supporting their parents in their old age. (Gatan, 1981, p. 29–30).

In illustration of this Ibanag political-cultural ethos, former mayor Lakay Delfin Ting shared his views on *disiplina* (discipline) as below:

‘The [good] thing I learn from my parents is [being] honest and the basis is to be happy is [to] work while you work and [to] play while you play. That is the basic thing I learn from my parents. But the best part is discipline. Well, as time passes by, when you make your observations, you will learn that discipline is the foundation of a community that would be peaceful. And if the community is peaceful, [the] economy will grow, [and] prosperity will follow. It is the number-one element in public order. You cannot attain prosperity without peace. And the only peace you can have is to use [an] iron hand to discipline people who are violating the laws of the country. This is the basic principle. I repeat – bad elements have to leave the town. There is no other way.’⁴

The above ethnographic depictions may explain why political leadership in the Philippines is highly personal and paternalistic – because it is ‘in line with the respect pattern of the family and with the deference pattern of the landlord-tenant relationship’ (Grossholtz, 1964, p. 98).

In the 2000s when I carried out fieldwork, it was socially acceptable in Cagayan Province that school teachers could spank in order to discipline misbehaving students. It was also not unusual to hear that small-town mayors slapped in order to apprehended delinquents and petty criminals, e.g., thieves and cattle-rustlers. Apart from the ‘boxing mayor’, the people of Tuguegarao also call Lakay Delfin Ting the ‘slapping mayor’, the ‘kicking mayor’ and the ‘shooting mayor’ – he used to slap misplaced sidewalk vendors, media mal-practitioners, inattentive government employees, misbehaving foreign visitors; kick tricycles that violated traffic

3 Sources: (1) Raymund Catindig (1994). ‘Cagayan “Boxing Mayor” Strikes Again.’ *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. Thursday 20 October 1994. (2) Raymund Catindig (1994). ‘Tuguegarao Mayor Loses Cop Powers.’ *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. Monday 17 April 1995.

4 Source: Interview with Delfin Ting, Hotel Delfino, Tuguegarao City, the Philippines. 30 November 2003.

regulations; and use gunfire to warn and intimidate illegal gambling operators, etc.⁵

In the 1995 re-election campaign for Tuguegarao mayorship, Delfin Ting was publicly accused by his opponents of being ‘cruel’ and ‘violent’ in his law enforcement.⁶ Ting responded in the electoral campaign by speaking with fatherly compassion while addressing himself as ‘the father of the town,’ ‘Why do I have to slap? Is slapping painless? For those I slapped, I used my own bare hands. In every slap I could feel the pain as you feel!’⁷

Why did the elected local government officials use their bare hands as coercive measures in the maintenance of social order? We need to understand the symbolic meanings embodied by these fathering acts to correct wrong behaviors of the constituents as their ‘children’ – a social control measure of shaming, surveillance and instilling fear that should be deciphered in the ‘network of social relations’ which ‘goes right down into the depths of society’ (Foucault, 1995, p. 26–27). Thus, the iron-fist policy not only involved the physical acts of discipline and punishment, it also refers to the discursive effects of these physical acts – producing policing effects which were not just from outside/above, but are found inside the local subjects and their networks that constitute the panoptic image of the mayor as the *lakay*-father of Tuguegarao, who symbolized power and status, and gives the right to act as ‘the Law’ (Kiefer, 1972, p. 94).

To illustrate this, three selected ethnographic scenes may serve analytical purpose. Firstly, the political situation during the early-Ting administration in Tuguegarao account for the formation and motive of his iron-fist policy against *jueteng* (a kind of lottery or number game that is illegal in the Philippines). Then, selected scenes of Mayor Delfin Ting’s anti-*jueteng* campaign in Tuguegarao will be used to illustrate how legitimate use of force was challenged and defended through democracy and the rule of law.

5 In Tuao of Cagayan Province, when former congressman and provincial governor Dr. Manuel Mamba served as the mayor, he also slapped criminals with his own bare hands. When he shared this, he genuinely meant that he did it in a fatherly manner – he has to give moral guidance to his people. Elsewhere in Cagayan Province, there are similar examples of this law enforcement practice by the local government officials. Source: Interviews and fieldtrips with Manuel Mamba, Tuao, Cagayan Province, the Philippines. 16 March and 7 April 2004.

6 The opponents’ accusations were not unreasonable. According to my fieldwork with the vendor community, two illegal vendors died during operation of the iron-fist policy. The first was an old lady who sold vegetables in the *Calle Comercio*. Guarded by policemen, Tuguegarao local government officials were driving a dump truck while clearing illegal vendors. The old lady’s merchandise was thrown onto the truck. After she jumped onto the truck attempting to fetch her merchandise back, she fell down, hurt herself seriously and died. The second casualty was a young male vendor, who took a knife and was chasing the armed police aides of Mayor Delfin Ting when the operation was taking place. He died of gunshot wounds. These cases were settled outside court. Considerable financial compensation was paid to the victims’ families.

7 Source: Interview with Delfin Ting, Hotel Delfino, Tuguegarao City, the Philippines. 30 November 2003.

The second scene describes a coup, which was led by the ‘Robin Hood of Cagayan,’⁸ Governor Lieutenant Colonel Rodolfo ‘Agí’ E. Aguinaldo, an alleged operator of *jueteng* in Cagayan Valley. In the *Hotel Delfino Uprising*, Colonel Aguinaldo and his armed-men stormed the Hotel Delfino on 4 March 1990, causing casualties. This rebellion serves as a case for reconsidering the Cagayano notion of social banditry, which shows that the practical organization of discursive formation of an outlaw-heroic figure is largely patronage.

Thirdly, ethnographic snapshots of disciplining illegal market vendors and media practitioners will be presented to illustrate the everyday surveillance mechanism of the iron-fist policy – the prevalence of eyes and ears.

4.2 Warfront – Jueteng

In order to contextualize former Mayor Delfin Ting’s iron-fist policy, it is important to learn about *jueteng* and its contemporary operations in Tuguegarao and Cagayan Province. Like *pekyu* (poker game) and *mah-jong*, *jueteng* (lottery) is among many popular folklore gambling activities imported into the Philippines by Chinese traders and migrants since early times. It was consented by international and Philippine observers that *jueteng* was already outlawed since the American colonial rule. However, it has remained to be a resilient post-colonial governance problem mainly because corrupt politicians and officials continued to gain illicit financial benefits and electoral leverage from the illegal operations of *jueteng* at national, provincial and local levels (Kreuzer, 2009, p. 21–28).⁹ This Philippine historical-ethnography further considers *jueteng* as a national security threat because it was not only empirically linked with crime, corruption and electoral malpractices, but was also proven to have bred secessionist coup and separatist movement in the Cagayan Valley.

During the Martial Law (1972–1986) regime in Cagayan Province, the late Ben ‘Angchung’ De Guzman, a businessman in Tuguegarao, with his well-connected political networks, expanded the operation of *jueteng* in Tuguegarao and six other towns in the Third Congressional District of Cagayan Province, i.e., Amulung, Enrile, Iguig, Peñablanca, Solana and Tuao. De Guzman’s original business was small but his meteoric economic ascendancy started after he married a Chinese-Filipina in Tuguegarao.

Apart from running the Chinese-Filipino family’s legitimate businesses in grain trading and hardware, De Guzman continued the operation of *jueteng* after his Chinese-Filipino father-in-law, Ang Chung, died. Ben De Guzman then took over his father-in-law’s Chinese name to be his own nickname – viz. ‘Angchung’ – a trademark of *jueteng* in Cagayan Valley. Ben ‘Angchung’ De Guzman managed to

8 In Cagayan Province, former supporters remembered Colonel Aguinaldo as a *Robin Hood* because he identified with the poor.

9 The Chinese-Filipinos in Cagayan inform me that *jueteng* has its Hokkien root in the Chinese word *hue-deng* (花檔 *huadang*), which literally means ‘flower den’. In China, local racketeers organized secret dens of gambling. The prefix ‘flower’ sounds very similar to the word ‘getting rich’ in Chinese. Sources: (1) Romeo V. Pefianco (2010). ‘Lottery/jueteng since 1893.’ *Manila Bulletin*. 14 July 2010. (2) Stephanie Dychiu (2010). ‘To Real-life Kubrador, Life is Worth *Jueteng* for.’ *GMA News Online*. 10 December 2010.

operate *jueteng* on a province-wide scale, a fact attributed to his well-controlled connections with various state and society actors. Monthly dues were delivered to members of the local government officials, police force, the military and the New People's Army insurgents in exchange for their protection and permission to operate *jueteng*. In some cases, upon request of these benefactors, gambling lords had to provide tangible items and intangible services. In other words, the organizational gist of *jueteng* is not new – patronage. Illegal activities were more or less organized through a less durable network of actors who gather together mainly for monetary gain, instead of honour and long-term social and political commitment.

The De Guzman *jueteng* network was believed by local observers to have worked smoothly until 1986. During the Martial Law regime, former President Ferdinand Marcos practised the tactic of 'divide and rule' in Cagayan Province. The longest-reigning 16-year Governor of Cagayan Province, Teresa Dupaya and her husband, Congressman Tito Dupaya¹⁰ had enjoyed continuous support from Marcos to balance their bitter rival in Cagayan – National Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrile, who was also one of the closest men to Marcos.¹¹ After the downfall of Marcos, the political scene drastically changed in the 1987–1988 election. A core member of the right-wing Reformed the Armed Forces Movement (RAM)¹² – Lieutenant Colonel Rodolfo 'Agi' E. Aguinaldo

defied his patron – Juan Ponce Enrile, ran as an independent candidate and defeated Teresa Dupaya to become the governor of Cagayan Province (McCoy, 1999, p. 305).¹³ However, after Teresa Dupaya's husband, Congressman Tito Dupaya defeated Enrile's candidate – Leonardo Mamba in the 1987 congressional race, Tito Dupaya suddenly died in office in 1989. A new political wind blew to Cagayan.

Notably, the newly elected Governor Colonel Aguinaldo attempted to centralize *jueteng* through the *Small Town Lottery* scheme, which was solely operated under his *Blue Pearl Corporation* with lawyer Victor Padilla.¹⁴ Before that, certain local government officials (mainly mayors) and *jueteng* operators had already enjoyed benefits from operating *jueteng* on their own. There was resistance from these mayors and *jueteng* operators. But because of Colonel Aguinaldo's military background, many had given in. In the Third Congressional District, only the Tings of Tuguegarao and the Mambas of Tuao signaled opposition to the Small Town Lottery scheme. Although Colonel Aguinaldo, the Mambas and the Tings were political allies in 1987–1988, they split immediately on the matter of *jueteng* straight after they took their elected offices as Cagayan provincial governor and as mayors of Tuao and Tuguegarao, respectively. While Mayor Delfin Ting sought to contain De Guzman's *jueteng* operation in Tuguegarao¹⁵, he started

10 The Tuguegarao cockpit arena is named after late Congressman Tito Dupaya – Dupaya Cockpit Arena. Congressman Dupaya was a frequent figure in cockfight activities. Seen to be a powerful heroic figure by the masses, whenever he went to the cockpit, he went with ten armed bodyguards. Whenever he won, he immediately distributed money to people in the arena. Widely known as a 'rough' and powerful person in Cagayan, as recalled by a Chinese-Filipino businessman in Tuguegarao who was close to Tito Dupaya, there was once a handling mistake by the Manila China Bank causing Dupaya's cheque to be refused. Dupaya went with his armed men into the bank, strafed bullets and destroyed almost everything in the enterprise yet did not hurt anyone. President Ferdinand Marcos had to intervene by himself to deal with the incident.

11 Sources regarding the Enrile-Dupaya rivalry throughout the Martial Law period: (1) Manila Bulletin (1972). 'Cagayan Officials Deny Existence of "Warlords."' *Manila Bulletin*. 26 February 1972. (2) Manila Bulletin (1972). 'DND Chief Hits Back at 2 Cagayano Solons on Armies.' *Manila Bulletin*. 27 February 1972. (3) Benjamin Gamos (1972). 'Dupaya-Enrile War a Political Feud.' *The Manila Chronicle*. Saturday, 15 July 1972. (4) Ben Javier (1972). 'Cagayan Power Play.' *Examiner*. 22 July – 15 August 1972. (5) Enrique Dimacali (1972). 'What Private Armies is Secretary Enrile Talking About?' *Examiner*. 22 July – 15 August 1972. (6) Epifanio R. Galinato (1984). 'Enrile Country Contends with the Forces of Dupaya.' *Mr. & Mrs.* 10 February 1984. (7) Epifanio R. Galinato (1984). 'Enrile Country Sizzles with Family Feuds and Political Warlords.' *Mr. & Mrs.* 6 April 1984. (8) Jose J. Burgos Sr. (1984). 'Cagayan in Motion Part I.' *Malaya*. 12 June 1984. (9) Jose J. Burgos Sr. (1984). 'Cagayan in Motion Part II.' *Malaya*. 13 June 1984. (10) Jose J. Burgos Sr. (1984). 'Cagayan in Motion Conclusion.' *Malaya*. 14 June 1984.

12 Known as a self-organized military group under National Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrile, RAM had taken a right-wing position in response to the emerging communist insurgency violence in the country. However, during the downfall of Marcos and in the subsequent years of the Aquino administration, RAM members had also played significant roles in several coup attempts. Sources: (1) Philippine Daily Inquirer (1987). 'They Planned to Kill Me' Cory Says Rebs Were After Her.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 31 August 1987. (2) Philippine

Daily Inquirer (1987). 'Enrile Grilled on Plot.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 31 August 1987. (3) Gerry Lirio (1989). 'Rebellion Raps Eyed Vs Enrile.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 29 December 1989. (4) Fe B. Zamora, Dave Veridiano, Victor C. Agustin, Gerry Lirio, Danny Petilla, Tony Begonia, Jerry Esplanada, Beth Pango, Mimfa Rueda, Omar Acosta, Eva Diaz, Nick Gumabay, Nelson Flores, Lito Olaer, Loule Baclagon, Gay Dumat-ol, Christine Avendano and Ed Valen (1989). 'Rebel Troops Dig in; Long Fight Feared.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 3 December 1989. (5) Philippine Daily Inquirer (1989). 'Holdouts in Makati, Cebu: 1,000 Rebels Yield.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 4 December 1989. (6) Fe B. Zamora (1989). 'The Coup Plotters: AFP's Best and Worst.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 4 December 1989. (7) Tony Bergonia and Cynthia Balana (1989). 'Senate Sets Probe of "Coup Backers."' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 5 December 1989. (8) Philippine Daily Inquirer (1989). 'Politicians Linked to Coup Attempt: Cory Slams Doy, Enrile.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 9 December 1989.

13 Sources: (1) Malaya (1987). 'Cagayan Mayors Seek Relief of Provincial PC Commander.' *Malaya*. 4 June 1987. (2) Sheila Coronel (1987). 'Cagayan Politicians, Soldiers in Bitter Row.' *Manila Chronicle*. 29 June 1987. (3) Larry V. Sipin (1988). 'Off to See Agi, the Eagle.' *Malaya*. 31 January 1988.

14 Source: Visitacion S. Pattaguan (1992). 'Politics in Cagayan.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 11 April 1992.

15 Regarding Ben 'Angchung' de Guzman's involvement in the Small Town Lottery, there were different accounts. Because of these two major *jueteng* operators' deaths, and because of the anti-*jueteng* campaigns issued by the Tings and the Mambas, *jueteng* had been successfully banned in Tuguegarao City, Tuao and in the Third Congressional District. According to local observers, there was a general perception that Governor Colonel Aguinaldo had certain agreements with De Guzman for a 'division of labour' on *jueteng* operations in Cagayan Province. Whereas all lottery numbers were drawn in Tuguegarao through De Guzman, Colonel Aguinaldo was responsible for controlling lottery operations in the whole province. In each municipality, using the patronage-based political machine, individuals were nominated and protected by local coercive agents to ensure the smooth operation of the lotteries. Colonel Aguinaldo's lawyer, Victor Padilla was also believed to be involved in Small Town Lottery scheme by local sources. Since I was not able to locate Padilla, no interview was conducted.

a protracted political battle against Governor Colonel Aguinaldo until Colonel Aguinaldo was assassinated on 12 June 2001. De Guzman died in 15 January 2002. Both men were shot to death by alleged members of the New People's Army within Tuguegarao City.¹⁶

In light of the alleged involvements of local police and military officers in *jueteng*, there was a delicate issue regarding the early-Ting administration starting from 1988 in Tuguegarao – his relationship with the local police force. According to Director Rodrigo de Gracia, the Provincial Commander of the Cagayan Province's Philippine National Police, although administratively the provincial police force operates under the command of the national police headquarters in Manila, local government officials (i.e., the mayor and provincial governor) have 'supervisory power' over the designated city/municipal/provincial police force (Wong, 2006a, p. 142).

The national police headquarters in Manila had the administrative authority for assigning and transferring police personnel for local operation, and has responsibility for paying the police force. However, in terms of full command of its daily operation, the mayor and provincial governor had the 'supervisory power' over the designated local police force. Local government officials' supervisory power over the police generally refers to: (1) command over the designated police force through the municipal and provincial government's financial support of its day-to-day operation (e.g., maintenance and provision of fuel, electricity and facilities); (2) the authority of law implementation and execution of police order within the domain of maintenance of peace and order (Campos, 1983).

Hence, one could imagine the difficult relationship between the Tuguegarao municipal police force and the early-Ting administration, particularly in the first and second terms, i.e., 1988–1995. For instance, in a local radio program broadcasted on 28 October 1994, Mayor Delfin Ting publicly criticized Municipal Police Superintendent Colonel Hermenegildo Defiesta in an open statement: 'I am accusing Col. Defiesta of Corruption, of protecting gambling in Tuguegarao,

even I think, even the *Shabu*¹⁷ dealer'.¹⁸ Subsequently, the above-named police officer filed a libel case against Mayor Delfin Ting. The Philippine Anti-Graft Court (*Sandiganbayan*)¹⁹ finally acquitted the charge in favour of Mayor Ting:

'As the duly elected Mayor of Tuguegarao, Cagayan, it is the duty of the accused [Mayor Delfin Ting] to insure and maintain peace and order in the City; and to be able to perform this duty, he has to make the City free from any and all gambling vices and elements. To be able to accomplish this public responsibility, the accused has to rely on the help of the PNP Police Superintendent who has jurisdiction over the city. Apparently, illegal gambling and *jueteng* were prevalent in the city at the time the accused uttered the defamatory statement against the herein complainant [Police Superintendent Hermenegildo Defiesta] [...] It would appear therefore that accused did not make such statement with actual malice, that is, with knowledge that it was false or with reckless disregard of whether it was false or not. He made such statement in expressing his sentiment of not getting the support of the PNP leadership in his drive against illegal gambling in the city. In his memorandum, accused claimed that he made the statement against the herein complainant not only to air his personal knowledge regarding the illegal gambling in the city, but also in response to his duty to air the grievances of the other members of the community who share the same knowledge, but who could not come out openly against the herein complainant for obvious reason. Accordingly it is his personal conviction that as a City Mayor it is his responsibility to denounce and make public the deliberate non-performance of duty on the part of the herein complainant. As he [Delfin Ting] aptly puts it 'he entered into a scene where nobody would dare to enter', reminiscent of the song "fools rush in where angels fear to tread."²⁰

To Tuguegarao municipal police force, the transfer of authority to Mayor Delfin Ting automatically involved two uncertainties, which inhibited the police's immediate commitment to the Ting administration. First, the police force had organizational difficulty in offering their full support toward the newly elected mayor who wished them to eradicate *jueteng*, as some members of police force were suspected of being involved in *jueteng* operation. Second, the police force also knew that the eradication of *jueteng* in Tuguegarao would

16 Sources: (1) Lito Salatan (2001). 'Cagayan Solon Slain in Ambush.' *Philippine Star*. 13 June 2001. (2) Carlito Pablo, Juliet Javellana and PDI Northern Luzon Bureau (2001). 'NPA: Aguinaldo Deserved to Die.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 14 June 2001. (3) A. Ilagan (2001). 'Task Force to Probe Aguinaldo Killing.' *Manila Bulletin*. 14 June 2001. (4) Lito Salatan, Jess Diaz, Charlie Lagasca, Efren Danao, Mayen Jaymalin, Christina Mendez (2001). 'NPA Owns Up to Aguinaldo Slay; Government Questions NDF.' *Philippine Star*. 14 June 2001. (5) Lito Salatan, Jaime Laude, Jose Aravilla, Marichu Villaneuva, Jess Diaz, Efren Danajo, Paolo Romeo, Benjie Villa (2001). 'Aguinaldo Slay: Talks with NDF on "Indefinite Recess."' *The Philippine Star*. 15 June 2001. (6) Melvin C. Gasconi (2001). 'Death Proves Cagayanos Undying Love for Agui.' *Manila Times*. 18 June 2001. (7) Philippine Daily Inquirer (2001). 'The Peace Talks, Aguinaldo's Killing.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 10 September 2001. (8) Delon Porcalla (2001). '3 NPA Guerillas Charged for Aguinaldo Ambush-Slay.' *Philippine Star*. 15 December 2001. (9) Philippine Daily Inquirer (2002). 'Suspected Drug Lord Shot Dead.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 16 January 2002. (10) Interview with Saturnino Ocampo, Bayan Muna Headquarters, Manila, the Philippines, 8 July 2004.

17 *Shabu* is an illegal drug found in the Philippines, which is equivalent to amphetamine, methamphetamine and 'ice'. It is an addictive soft drug used in the form of crystalline hydrochloride, used as a stimulant to the nervous system and as an appetite suppressant. According to the local Philippine police force, *shabu* was smuggled from places such as Hong Kong into Cagayan Province, through Manila, northern Luzon coast and the Ilocos region.

18 Source: Criminal Case No. 25203. People of the Philippines, Plaintiff, Versus Mayor Delfin Ting y Telan, Accused. Quezon City: Sandiganbayan, Fourth Division. (No date).

19 A special court created by the National Assembly, which has jurisdiction over criminal and civil cases involving graft and corrupt practices and such other offences committed by public officers and employees.

20 Source: Criminal Case No. 25203. People of the Philippines, Plaintiff, Versus Mayor Delfin Ting y Telan, Accused. Quezon City: Sandiganbayan, Fourth Division. (No date). Pp. 9–10.

be a risky political campaign, which could possibly affect one's own police career when there would be a change of mayor in future election.

In the 1987–1998 election, facing a strong field of mayoral candidates, it seemed that a way to distinguish himself from his competitors was to be standing firm on the hard issue of *jueteng*. In-campaign public debates were organized by the educated elites such as the Rotary Club of Tuguegarao. Candidates were invited to discuss and state their positions regarding peace and order problems in Tuguegarao. Recalled by legal practitioners and key informants in Tuguegarao, Delfin Ting unambiguously stated his anti-*jueteng* position in public, especially the legal elite, who commonly saw *jueteng* as a deep-rooted evil of the Filipino society causing corruption and social-order problems.

Jueteng has been a gambling activity in the Philippines. Because it is illegal, *jueteng* often operated through underground networks of operators and benefactors cutting across state and society: outlaws, trans-local gangsters,²¹ local businessmen, racketeers, police officers and militiamen,²² as well as insurgents.²³ Mayor Delfin Ting's bold position to eradicate *jueteng*, in some peoples' eyes, was not only a suicidal mission, but also a huge political gamble. To eradicate *jueteng* in Tuguegarao inevitably means to coercively uproot the organized criminal network that had been benefiting from this illegal numbers game. In 1988, it was widely believed that the militia-supported newly elected Governor Colonel Rodolfo Aguinaldo had protected illegal logging and established the province-wide illegal gambling network, the *Blue Pearl Corporation* with Atty. Victor Padilla. The *Blue Pearl Corporation* operated *jueteng* and drew its numbers weekly at its base in Tuguegarao. Newly elected Mayor Delfin Ting's anti-illegal-gambling campaign meant a head-on-head clash with the *Blue Pearl Corporation*.

Since the time of Martial Law, Colonel Aguinaldo had worked as a military intelligence officer for the Marcos' security group. He was known as the captor of leading figures of the Philippine communist movement, e.g., Jose Maria Sison and Saturnino Ocampo. Amnesty International implicated Aguinaldo as being responsible for a series of tortures of political prisoners during that period (Coronel, 1993, p. 210). Graduating from the most prestigious military academy in the Philippines, the Philippine Military Academy, Colonel Aguinaldo was remembered by the people of Tuguegarao as '*the legend of Cagayan*', as being a '*Robin Hood*', with immortality protected by his amulets (*anting-anting*). Recalled by his benefactors, Governor Colonel Aguinaldo used to generously fetch out cash money from his desk drawers when poor people asked for financial assistance. Since he was assigned to Cagayan Province by Juan Ponce Enrile in 1985 as a junior constabulary officer, he had established himself as a heroic figure who maintained peace and order by driving away and co-opting the New

People's Army insurgents into his privately funded 1,200-strong paramilitary organization (McCoy, 1999, p. 305).

Colonel Aguinaldo joined Juan Ponce Enrile in the military revolt that led to the February 1986 *People Power Uprising* against the Marcos regime, where Aguinaldo led the famous 'Cagayan 100' to assault Marcos' television broadcasting station (Coronel, 1993, p. 210; McCoy, 1999, p. 305). After that, he was promoted to be the Cagayan Provincial Constabulary Commander. In 1987–1988 election, he broke from Enrile, and ran independently for provincial governor against the long-reigning Governor Teresa Dupaya. While riding in an armoured personnel carrier followed by a convoy of the Armed Forces of the Philippines-owned A-150 tanks and military trucks in his electoral campaign,²⁴ Colonel Aguinaldo made use of the media to discursively construct a violent and heroic Robin Hood image before massive crowds chanting 'Agi! Agi!'

"Throughout my adult life, I have always been fighting a bloody and senseless war. Filipinos killing brother Filipinos. What for? ... The time has come to bring peace to our poor and weary people.' (Quoted in: McCoy, 1999, p. 305).

Knowing that the Commission of Elections of the Philippines (COMELEC) had asked the Armed Forces of the Philippines to remove him for alleged electoral fraud and terrorism from the 11 May 1987 election,²⁵ speaking confidently in front of a journalist from *The New York Times* on 17 January 1988, Colonel Aguinaldo warned the COMELEC on the polling day concerning his governorship:

"They [COMELEC] just start trying to disarm my men and I hit their houses and I wipe them out. At a given signal, we chop off the heads of anybody who is foolish. We will send them straight to hell, from the grandfather to the grandson. If I am cheated of victory and the people say nothing, then I leave the country. But if the people want a bloody revolution, who am I to refuse them?"²⁶

Colonel Aguinaldo and Delfin Ting were running mates in the 1987–1988 election. After their electoral victories, contrasting positions on *jueteng* immediately split them apart. Once a political ally then a bitter adversary, Mayor Delfin Ting knew about the background of Colonel Aguinaldo and was able to surmise the cause of the hesitation on the part of Tuguegarao municipal police force. Without the backup of the police, Mayor Ting implemented his own iron-fist policy personally, with minimum cooperation from the local police. From there, with a political backing of less than 20 percent of the voting population of Tuguegarao who supported Ting, to establish the coercive authority as the mayor, Mayor Delfin Ting implemented

21 Apart from the Blue Pearl Corporation, a central-Luzon-originated translocal criminal syndicate named the *Cavite-Laguna Group* also made some attempts to penetrate Cagayan Province. Although attempts failed, the assassinations of Colonel Aguinaldo and Ben De Guzman in 2001 and 2002, respectively, were suspected to be associated with the *Cavite-Laguna Group*.

22 Source: Manny Mogato (1990). 'Aguinaldo "Payroll" Includes Top Officials'. *The Manila Chronicle*. 22 March 1990.

23 One of the circulated reasons in explaining the killing of Ben De Guzman in January 2002 by alleged communist insurgents was that he failed to pay dues to them for their protection.

24 Sources: (1) Teresa J. Dupaya (1988). 'Cagayan's Dark Night.' *Malaya*. 24 January 1988. (2) Abe Cerojano (1988). 'Agi "Used AFP Tanks" in Vote Drive.' *The Manila Chronicle*. 15 March 1988.

25 Source: Abe Cerojano (1987). 'Local Execs Press Ouster of Cagayan PC Chief.' *Manila Chronicle*. 16 July 1987.

26 Sources: (1) Seth Mydans (1988). 'Renegade Officer Seeks Philippine Governorship.' *The New York Times*. Monday 18 January 1988. (2) Sheila Coronel (1988). 'Tough-talking Colonel Challenges Cagayan's Political Giants.' *The Manila Chronicle*. Monday 18 January 1988. (3) Malou Mangahas (1988). 'Agi': I Won't Storm Capitol.' *Manila Chronicle*. 1 February 1988.

anti-*jueteng* operations by himself from 1988. Both persuasion and force were used. In terms of persuasion, Mayor Ting gave the following rationale for his anti-*jueteng* campaign to the public:

Lakay Ting: *Jueteng* [has its foundation of] dishonesty and laziness. It is counter-productive because people are hoping to win on false dreams. Production is important because it moves the cycle of growth of the community forward. That's why we need discipline here. Only we have discipline, we have peace. Only with peace, we have economic progress. People could not concentrate on their works, their families get problems, and children could not go to schools, because of *jueteng*. It [*jueteng*] is a lucrative business for those who run it, but not for those who bet on it. The operators rigged the operation. If you are a collector, you collect as much as 5,000 or 10,000 Pesos per game. The operator who draws the numbers would ask the collectors, 'What is the most popular number that people are betting on and I will give you 20 percent commission of what these people bet on you.' So everybody is giving the number to the gambling lord. The betting is based on speculation but the drawing is based on calculation. So people would easily believe the numbers disclosed are randomly drawn. The gambling lord would only disclose the numbers in which people have less bet on them.²⁷

In terms of using force, based on gathered intelligence reports, Mayor Delfin Ting identified and raided the *jueteng* dens. In fact, in the next day after he was elected as the mayor, Mayor Ting raided Ben De Guzman's warehouse and apprehended the operators. During peak time in 1988 and 1989, while Mayor Ting raided these dens once a week, fully armed soldiers frequently visited the Hotel Delfino. Mayor Ting saw these visits as 'harassment' from Governor Colonel Aguinaldo. The Aguinaldo-Ting struggle over *jueteng* was then escalated into a commotion before the 1990 *Hotel Delfino Uprising* when Mayor Delfin Ting went with his fully armed security aides and some 20 municipal policemen to the governor's office and confronted Governor Colonel Aguinaldo. Although nobody got hurt in this incident, in association with previous raids of gambling dens, many believe that the *Hotel Delfino Uprising* was partially caused by *jueteng*.

These stories had been retold by the Cagayanos through daily conversation and gossips, discursively formed a feared image of Mayor Delfin Ting, as being the unforgiving, disciplinary father of Tuguegarao. Nevertheless, there were alternative discourses attempting to explain why the Tings wanted to eradicate illegal gambling from a political economy perspective. To the Tings' critics, the Tings had already foreseen that their family would continue to participate in the politics of Tuguegarao and Cagayan Province. Since their main adversaries were involved in *jueteng*, it was expected for the Tings to wage a full-scale war against illegal gambling, in order to reduce their financial capacity to run against the Tings.

In past elections, it was suspected that *jueteng* had been funding opposition politicians' electoral campaign against the Tings. However, Mayor Delfin Ting's anti-gambling campaign could not be successful if he failed to convince the national government and local constituents to give their endorsements and assistance in law enforcement. As the Tings won many local elections from 1988 to the present in Tuguegarao, they have gradually developed a stronghold in

Tuguegarao under the banners of the rule of law, steady economic progress and social development. In this Philippine frontier, apart from legal charges and verbal disagreements, armed conflict also occurred.

4.3 Hotel Delfino uprising: rise and decline of a Cagayano Robin Hood

As the birthplace and political base of the Martial Law regime's Minister of National Defence Juan Ponce Enrile, by early 1987, Cagayan Province was regarded as 'a redoubt for right-wing rebellion' (McCoy, 1999, p. 304). Many locals could recall a coup attempt sieged the Hotel Delfino of Tuguegarao on 4 March 1990 – the *Hotel Delfino Uprising*. As a Reformed Armed Forces Movement's (RAM) leading figure, Governor Colonel Rodolfo 'Agi' Aguinaldo led several coup attempts from 1986 to 1990.²⁸ He had previously won national distinction when he led a 100-strong troop from Cagayan to Manila to join the *People Power Revolution* to topple the Marcos regime – the *Cagayan 100*, which allegedly was responsible for assaulting the Marcos government's television broadcasting station, as well as playing an important strategic role in the military operation during the *People Power Revolution* in 1986.

Colonel Aguinaldo was then implicated in a few coup attempts against the Corazon Aquino regime between 1986 and 1989, where the National Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrile was suspected of being the mastermind (House of Representatives, 1988).²⁹ After an unsuccessful coup attempt against the Aquino administration on 1 December 1989, through Local Government Secretary Luis Santos, President Corazon Aquino ordered a 'preventive suspension' to Governor Colonel Aguinaldo in mid-January 1990.³⁰ In response to Secretary Santos' warning, 'The Government must enforce the law. Even if we do not want to use force, we will,' Governor Colonel Aguinaldo defied the suspension order and made a stern warning, '*Kung may masaktan sa isa sa aking supporters, diyan lalabas ang mga armado* (If any of my supporters get hurt, we would have to use arms)'. Human barricades were then formed preventing military officials going into the Provincial Capitol. Governor Colonel Aguinaldo and his supporters showed likelihood of preparing to retreat to the nearby Sierra Madre Mountain ranges for guerrilla resistance.³¹ After several failed talks, central governmental troops were then despatched from Manila to Tuguegarao whilst President Aquino assigned Colonel Aguinaldo's Philippine Military Academy classmate, General Oscar Florendo as the leading mediator in negotiations for his surrender.

27 Source: Interview with Delfin Ting, Hotel Delfino, Tuguegarao City, the Philippines, 30 November 2003.

28 Sources Malaya (1987). 'Gov't Reminded of Pledge to Bust Private Armies.' *Malaya*. 22 January 1987. (2) Malaya (1988). 'Laurel Backing Coup Supporter in Cagayan Race.' *Malaya*. Monday, 4 January 1988.

29 Sources: (1) Benjie Guevarra (1986). 'Alvarez Rejects Move to Oust Cagayan Mayors.' *Malaya*. 22 October 1986. (2) Manila Chronicle (1988). 'Aguinaldo Heads POC.' *Manila Chronicle*. 5 August 1988.

30 Source: Ted Aljibe and Manuel Silva (1990). 'Aguinaldo Hangs On, Has New Legal Tactic.' *The Manila Chronicle*. Friday, 19 January 1990.

31 Sources: (1) Ted Aljibe and Manuel Silva (1990). 'Aguinaldo Hangs on, Has New Legal Tactic.' *Manila Chronicle*. 19 January 1990. (2) Ted Aljibe (1990). 'Officials Fail Anew to Remove Aguinaldo.' *The Manila Chronicle*. Saturday, 20 January 1990.

On the surface, the *Hotel Delfino Uprising* was seen as a coup against the Aquino regime, yet local observers accounted this event to an additional dimension: a populist revolt against the anti-*jueteng* campaigners. The *Hotel Delfino Uprising* served as an escalated armed protest by the local illegal gambling networks against Tuguegarao Mayor Delfin Ting's iron-fist policy. The capacity to mobilize a crowd of 3,000 protestors in front of the Hotel Delfino was partly because of Colonel Aguinaldo's personal *Robin Hood* charisma; and partly because of the organizational capacity of his province-wide *jueteng* networks.

With hundreds of Colonel Aguinaldo's supporters forming human barricades blocking 10,000 governmental troops and four helicopter gun-ships from entering into Tuguegarao (McCoy, 1999, p. 306), the negotiations failed. The situation suddenly spun out of control into a secessionist rebellion on 4 March 1990 at the Hotel Delfino where the rebels declared political independence.³² The Cagayanos widely called this mutiny the *Hotel Delfino Uprising*, where Colonel Aguinaldo and a total of 300 defected soldiers stormed Tuguegarao. Half of them were designated to various strategic points inside and outside Tuguegarao. The remaining 150-strong forced into the Hotel Delfino lobby with a large crowd of 2,000 local supporters plus 1,000 others marching into Tuguegarao town centre, who took General Oscar Florendo hostage. Inside the Hotel Delfino, Mayor Delfin Ting was accompanied by his third son (Randolph Sera Ting) and Local Government Secretary Luis Santos as well as other Armed Forces of the Philippines leaders. Having noticed the negative turn of events, armed with an Israeli-made Uzi sub-machine gun, Mayor Ting ordered his security aides to shoot any mutineers who attempted to penetrate the hotel building. Fully armed personnel were subsequently positioned at the stairway connecting the ground-floor hotel lobby and the first-floor *Myrose Restaurant*, guns-pointing downstairs. As a counter strategy, the mutineers cut off the electricity supply and telephone wires connected to the hotel. However, they missed one telephone line.

In Manila, Mayor Delfin Ting's second son and fourth son, Rafael Sera Ting and Raul Sera Ting, were assisting the military's operation to pacify the revolt in Tuguegarao. After learning that bombing the Hotel Delfino was considered by the military a strategic option, they immediately made a phone call to urge their father, the mayor, to evacuate from hotel building. Outside Hotel Delfino, Colonel Aguinaldo officially declared the independence of Cagayan from the Republic of the Philippines surrounded by a crowd of 3,000 chanting 'Agi! Agi!'. Colonel Aguinaldo fired his Armalite rifle into air, celebrating a victory with his supporters.

Realizing that the mutineers had blocked the hotel exits, while learning that AFP might consider bombing Hotel Delfino, Mayor Delfin Ting counseled the family to stay on. An ultimatum was then given to the secessionist rebels – either surrender or to be bombed. The governmental troops eventually penetrated into central Tuguegarao. With Colonel Aguinaldo's 300-strong militiamen

positioned at Tuguegarao's main entry points, the first gun battle led to the deaths of six rebels at the Balzain Road Caltex gasoline station, about 500 metres northeast of Hotel Delfino. In the ensuing melee a total of 14 people were killed and over 20 were wounded. Outside the Hotel Delfino, upon learning of the successful penetration of governmental troops into Tuguegarao, Colonel Aguinaldo decided to flee with the rebels for guerrilla resistance. They left over 200 high-calibre firearms and numerous military uniforms in front of the hotel lobby.

Inside the hotel lobby, gunfire occurred between the rebels, Armed Forces of the Philippines officers and Mayor Ting's armed security aides. Subsequently, the defected Seventeenth Infantry Battalion Scout Ranger Captain Feliciano Sabite suffered serious gunshot wounds, whereas leading central governmental negotiator General Oscar Florendo was shot dead inside the hotel lobby. According to the Criminal Investigation Service and an autopsy report, General Florendo's death was caused by an Armalite-type bullet, probably fired from higher ground within a 10-metre radius whereas a bullet fired from a 9-mm pistol hit the mutineer Captain Feliciano Sabite.³³

Ballistician pointed out that the Armalite bullet probably entered from General Florendo's right chest, hit and imploded the victim's heart, until it was released from his left armpit. Two rebel soldiers, Armed Forces of the Philippines deputy chief of staff Colonel Emiliano Templo and his Philippine Marines escorts, and finally, Oscar Dumagan, a security aide of Mayor Delfin Ting were identified as possible sources of this single fatal gunshot.³⁴ Among the suspects, Oscar Dumagan seemed to be the only one holding an Armalite-type rifle – an M-16 Baby Armalite rifle, which was personally owned by Mayor Delfin Ting. Although Oscar Dumagan admitted that he had opened fire four times into the downstairs direction, Mayor Delfin Ting testified at a Philippine Senate hearing session that Oscar Dumagan only fired in retaliation to the firing made by the companion of the mutineer Captain Feliciano Sabite ([Committee on National Defence and Security, 1990, p. 3](#)).

In Manila's military headquarters, after having learnt the death of General Oscar Florendo, National Defence Secretary General Fidel V. Ramos vowed to get Colonel Aguinaldo at all costs. In addition to thousands of armed soldiers and well-equipped armaments stationing in Tuguegarao, General Ramos despatched two specialized battalions of battle-tested Philippine Marines to Cagayan Valley with a 'shoot-to-kill' order toward the rebels.³⁵ With a price on his head for being the rebel leader who had General Oscar Florendo killed, Colonel Aguinaldo tactically evaded hunts by the Philippine military. His former followers suggested that Colonel Aguinaldo had been hiding in a rural village inside Tuguegarao while letters were sent by his

32 Symbolically, the Hotel Delfino was a political centre of Tuguegarao City. Apart from its contested construction history, Hotel Delfino had been a major convention venue for local governments, businesses and celebrities. National, regional and provincial government officials had liked to stay in the Hotel Delfino from late 1970s to 1990s. In addition, it was also the personal residence of Mayor Delfin Ting and the usual gathering place of the Ting family.

33 Sources: (1) Dave Veridiano (1990). 'Mayor's Aide Eyed in Slay of Florendo.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 13 March 1990. (2) Globe (1990). 'Mayor's Aide Most Likely Killer of Florendo, Says CIS Report.' *Globe*. 1 April 1990. (3) Globe (1990). 'Florendo: CIS Report Points to Mayor's Aide as Most Likely Killer.' *Globe*. 1 April 1990.

34 Sources: (1) Fe B. Zamora (1990). 'General Shot Dead in Aguinaldo Revolt.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 5 March 1990. (2) Fe B. Zamora (1990). 'Mayor's Bodyguard Killed Florendo – CIS.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 22 March 1990.

35 Source: Fe Zamora and Dave Veridiano (1990). 'Troops Given Shoot-to-kill Order on Agi.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. Tuesday 6 March, 1990.

province-wide supporters to fake addresses, mainly to the municipalities of Gattaran and Lasam. General Fidel Ramos subsequently admitted that the military had lost track of Colonel Aguinaldo.³⁶ The rebels hid safely for the next 100 days until Colonel Aguinaldo surrendered in Tuguegarao before a crowd of chanting supporters on 12 June 1990 (McCoy, 1999, p. 306).³⁷ In September 1990, the Aquino government formally filed rebellion charges against Aguinaldo and suspended him from the provincial governorship for 60 days, which Governor Aguinaldo initially refused to comply with but eventually yielded.³⁸

Being implicated as the mastermind of several unsuccessful coup attempts, the Corazon Aquino-reappointed National Defence Minister Juan Ponce Enrile decided to leave Aquino's presidential cabinet and ran for congressman in his own birthplace and political base – Cagayan Province – in the May 1992 election. Rebel leader Colonel Aguinaldo was released on bail. He then ran for re-election as the provincial governor in the May 1992 election, rivalling against Enrile's favourite. At behest of Enrile, COMELEC attempted to bar Colonel Aguinaldo's candidacy by citing pending rebellion charges (McCoy, 1999, p. 306). Aguinaldo filed a legal case against COMELEC in the Manila Supreme Court arguing that 'when a public official is charged with wrong-doing, his re-election constitutes a condonation of the administrative charge provided that the case against him is not decided before he is re-elected.'³⁹ Thus, there were apparently two legal justifications for Colonel Aguinaldo to run for provincial governor, despite his candidacy being questioned by COMELEC. Firstly, since the decision of the Supreme Court was only made after his re-election in 1992, it was regarded as lawful for him to retain his candidacy. Secondly, there was a change in the legal framework between 1990 and 1992 – the passing of the Local Government Code in 1991. Under the Local Government Code, a candidate who was dismissed from office because of an administrative lawsuit should be disqualified from electoral candidacy. But Colonel Aguinaldo was only suspended in January 1990. Hence, although the legal framework changed in 1991, the new Local Government Code could not be applied to his case.

In the May 1992 election, Colonel Aguinaldo won again by a landslide as the governor of Cagayan Province – garnering a total of 170,382 votes against Enrile's candidate, who only got 54,412 votes. Despite the disputes regarding his candidacy as a former rebel, considering the overwhelming

support he gained from the voters, the Supreme Court confirmed his electoral victory and his rebellion charges were then dismissed by a lower court (McCoy, 1999, p. 306). Since then, Colonel Aguinaldo proved himself to be a legend in the eyes of many supporters, turning him a heroic figure featured in the popular movie: '*Agi nac Cagayan*' ('*Aguinaldo: The True-to-Life Story of Gov. Aguinaldo of Cagayan*') – one of the most popular contemporary productions in the Filipino cinematic industry (McCoy, 1999, p. 308–312).

At odds with derogatory depictions of Colonel Rodolfo Aguinaldo as a 'warlord,' 'local despot' and 'human rights violator,'⁴⁰ the local choice of the term *Hotel Delfino Uprising* reflected a sympathy to this rebel-politician as outlaw-hero. Governor Colonel Rodolfo Aguinaldo was remembered as '*Robin Hood of Cagayan*' for his identification with the poor masses. In Tuguegarao, it was remembered that Colonel Aguinaldo donated funds for financing many school buildings, hospital facilities and scholarships that bore his name. Although many knew that his money came from operating illegal activities, Colonel Aguinaldo was still credited as being a respected man who used these monies as a wealth distribution mechanism. His assassination on 12 June 2001 by communist insurgents caused thousands of Cagayanos to mourn his death. By 2001, with gradual confinement of *jueteng* in Tuguegarao, Colonel Aguinaldo's decline in Cagayano politics gave the Tings further inroads to consolidate power through strengthening ubiquitous disciplinary surveillance network of 'eyes and ears' against the illegal gambling networks.⁴¹

4.4 Indigenous surveillance: prevalence of eyes and ears

The surveillance capacity of the local Philippine leader's encompassing ripple-like patronage networks that can monitor the flow of information and sanction undesirable behaviours. Among the Ilongots, gossip, whispered reports and rumored stories have been crucial for the political leadership in maintaining control (Rosaldo, 1980b, p. 15). The specifics of this indigenous surveillance mechanism do not necessarily negotiate legitimacy from the formal legal system. It stems from the political symbolism that the mayor is the physical person who has the legitimacy to deploy physical force within the organized networks of eyes and ears.

Before 1988, Tuguegarao's wet market⁴² was adjacent to the dry goods market, which was located along the central business street of the town centre. Vendors sold meat, seafood, fruits, vegetables and other food items in the busiest part of the town. In order to improve the hygiene conditions of the town centre, the early-Ting administration legislated to first abolish the wet market inside the central business district (*poblacion*) of town centre, and relocated it to the newly renovated Don Domingo Market, which was 1.5 km away from the original site.

36 Sources: (1) Fe B. Zamora (1990). 'Get Agi at All Cost – Ramos.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 4 March 1990. (2) Ernie Sarmiento (1990). 'Ramos: Gov't Troops Having Difficult Time Finding Agi.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. Thursday 15 March 1990.

37 Source: Noli Cabantug (1990). 'Aguinaldo Surrenders in Cagayan.' *The Manila Chronicle*. Wednesday 13 June 1990.

38 Sources: (1) Manila Chronicle (1990). 'DLG Poised to Use Force against Gov. Aguinaldo.' *Manila Chronicle*. 1 September 1990. (2) Carlos Arguillas (1990). 'Gov't Vows Aguinaldo Will Be out in 10 Days.' *Manila Chronicle*. 1 October 1990. (3) Gerry Zaragoza and Manny Mogato (1990). 'Aguinaldo Yields Post to Vargas.' *Manila Chronicle*. 1 November 1990.

39 Source: Civil Case En Banc G.R. No. 94115 (21 August 1992). Rodolfo E. Aguinaldo, Petitioner Versus Luis Santos, as Secretary of the Department of Local Government, and Melvin Vargas, as Acting Governor of Cagayan, Respondents. Manila: Supreme Court. Also see: Civil Case Docket No. 212 SCRA 768 (1992). Rodolfo E. Aguinaldo, Petitioner Versus Commission of Elections, Respondent. Manila: Supreme Court.

40 Source: Danny Petilla (1990). 'Cagayan's Robin Hood a Local Despot.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. 6 March 1990.

41 According to fieldwork in Cagayan Province, in the third congressional district, *jueteng* operation was stopped in 2002. However, there are still isolated reports of *jueteng* operation in a few far-flung barangays in northern Amulung. In the first and second congressional districts, there are regular reports of *jueteng* and similar illegal gambling activities.

42 A wet market sells fresh food items such as meats, fruits and vegetables, whereas a dry market sells dry products such as garments, shoes and utensils.

Because of inertia and apparent better customer flow, many vendors refused to be relocated. Many continued to vend illegally in the town centre. The first time when I visited Don Domingo Market (the wet market of Tuguegarao) in 2003, I had already encountered a crowd of approximately 100 vendors putting up their private stalls blocking the market entrance. Surrounded by five supporting vendors, a fruit vendor Maria⁴³ started to tell me about her difficult life in Tuguegarao, '*Mahirap ng buhay sa Pilipinas!* (Life in the Philippines is difficult!)' She had three kids to feed, owed money and paid daily vending fees to the local government officials. Having started her business in Tuguegarao in the early 1980s, Maria was among a number of vendor informants who confronted former mayor Delfin Ting when actions were taken to clear the 'squatter vendors'. She recalled:

'You know the 'old man' [Lakay Delfin Ting] once asked me where did I come from, I told him I came from Quezon. Ha! He told me to leave Tuguegarao with my fruits back to Quezon. The 'old man' just came and shouted '*Alis!* [Leave!] *Alis!* [Leave!]' I used to sell outside the dry good market. I sold *mongo* [green beans]. The 'old man' came and kicked my things. Oh ... I have to pick up each *mongo* [(green bean)] seed, one by one, by finger. The 'old man' is bad. [...] He once 'robbed' my products and gave them to the prisoners to eat. Phoooooooooooo ... Once he came here again, I went to shout at him then I ran away! We did not vote for them! Never. They are bad. We voted for another candidate.'⁴⁴

The guerrilla-like cat-and-mouse chase lasted for several years. But Maria and her friends managed to do business continuously as 'squatter vendors'. Before 1998, they had to form an alliance with the opposition politicians, forming a political fault-line within the vendor community: some are for the Tings whereas some are against the Tings. This political fault-line was firstly drawn during Mayor Delfin Ting's first administration. Ting's iron-fist policy to clear illegal vendors created a group of dissident vendors who sought protection from his political rivals.

The opposition camp patronized their merchandise periodically to ensure their survival, in exchange for votes and their efforts to sabotage the reputation of their political rivals. Meanwhile, the Ting-led business community, especially the Chinese-Filipino owned hotels and restaurants, also routinely patronized their favoured vendors. As a result of routine business transactions, a network of eyes and ears has been established. This intelligence network enabled Mayor Delfin Ting to identify and target his 'political enemies' in the market, whom he sometimes slapped and scolded on the spot. In other words, Mayor Delfin Ting's iron-fist operation does not inflict force onto everyone indiscriminately. Starting from 1998, the newly elected City Mayor Randolph Sera Ting legalized these 'squatter vendors' by charging them daily vending fees and renting out vending stalls outside the market.

With the Tings' efforts to consolidate their stronghold in Tuguegarao, their political network has expanded gradually and penetrated deeply into the vendor community. During City Mayor Randolph Ting's administration, he successfully and gradually co-opted opposition vendors. Although some suggested that Mayor Randolph Ting is perhaps

the best mayor, this image would not be possible without a contrasting 'unforgiving' father – Lakay Delfin Ting, who apprehended some illegal vendors during his administration. Mrs. Lopez,⁴⁵ one of the biggest seafood vendors, stated that she has been supplying seafood to the major hotels and restaurants in Tuguegarao. Her family has been doing business with the Chinese-Filipinos since her father's time. She defended former Mayor Delfin Ting's iron-fist policy, suggesting that the Tings only wanted to institute discipline in Tuguegarao. After the interview, I accompanied Mrs. Lopez back to her stall in the market. While I was leaving the market, the fruit vendor Maria intercepted my way. She asked about my conversation with Mrs. Lopez. Informed by her 'eyes and ears' that I had already conversed with Mrs. Lopez, Maria was also quick in her information-gathering.⁴⁶

An identified law enforcement technique was to maintain surveillance networks of 'eyes and ears'. The maintenance of this information exchange network is based on connections. Since most of the media in Tuguegarao is privately owned, throughout my fieldwork, I frequently encountered media practitioners exchanging information and soliciting deals with local government officials, e.g., electoral advertisements and consultation programmes. It was therefore not surprising that some television/radio stations were accused of being biased or politically inclined. Gradually, through his iron-fist policy, Mayor Delfin Ting negotiated for more cooperation from the local police force and other sectors in society, such as the media. This was further reflected by the situation when two policemen accompanied him to padlock a local radio station in 1996.

In late July 1996, Antonio Tabbad, a local radio broadcaster reported that Mayor Delfin Ting violated the municipal ordinance by using a plot of land inside the municipal centre area for his bus company's terminal. Tabbad reported that he started an angry exchange with Ting because of 'his taking the cudgels for a rival bus firm whose terminal was blocked by gravel and dumped by four trucks to prevent it from operating' due to 'its application for a mayor's permit has yet to be approved'.⁴⁷ Mayor Ting insisted that his bus terminal only operated after seven o'clock in the evening, which was lawful. On Thursday, 1 August 1996, during Tabbad's evening radio program, Mayor Ting, with a detail of two policemen and two civilian bodyguards in tow, went to the radio station and ordered them to padlock the radio station, citing the broadcasting networks' failure to present a valid business permit. In the broadcasting room, while Tabbad was discussing his allegations against Mayor Ting, Mayor Ting slapped him and ordered that the electricity to the station to be cut off.

According to Mayor Delfin Ting and an anonymous media practitioner, Tabbad was suspected of being associated with a gambling lord and using the bus-station issue to sabotage the mayor's reputation. Many Tuguegaraoños vividly remembered what happened during the evening of August 1996: they heard an on-air argument between the mayor and the radio broadcaster, then after a few slapping sounds; the programme suddenly went off air. The mayor's security aides nailed the door of the broadcasting room with hammers, padlocked the radio station, and announced the closure of the station until further notice.

⁴⁵ As this informant consented, fictitious identity 'Mrs Lopez' was adopted.

⁴⁶ Source: Interviews with market vendors, Tuguegarao City, the Philippines. 22 November 2003.

⁴⁷ Source: Cagayan Star (1996) 'Mayor Padlocks DZCV'. *Cagayan Star*. 4–10 August 1996.

⁴³ As informant consented, 'Maria' was adopted as fictitious identity.

⁴⁴ Source: Interviews with market vendors, Tuguegarao City, the Philippines. 22 November 2003.

Heated public discussions followed. Within media circles, opinions were divided. Noticing an increase of abusive practices by the media, some legal elites asserted that the padlock incident would be an instructive lesson for the media to learn how to conduct their profession properly.⁴⁸ Afterwards, the management of the broadcasting networks offered formal apologies to the local government. Antonio Tabbad was dismissed and the radio station was re-opened.⁴⁹

'*Kamay na bakal* (the iron fist)' could be regarded as a discursive field where the hegemony of the Cagayano ruling elite was continuously contested. Although it was acknowledged that former mayor Delfin Ting could sometimes be 'hot-headed' (*mainit ang ulo*), he was also considered to be an imaginative politician. I considered his iron-first policy as a set of dynamic strategies in responding to unfolding situational counter-forces in the process of domination, especially the maintenance of social order. To slap someone's face did not only mean to hit by hand, it also created the discursive effect of reasserting the power relations between the superior (Ibanag father) and subordinate (Ibanag children).

Moreover, in a similar spirit, I considered the discursive impact of these actions circulated in the everyday social interactions of the inhabitants, e.g., gossip, news reports and jokes, etc. More importantly, the (re)-production of these discourses actually served the purpose for the

inhabitants to aware and internalize what it means to be the local authority – who had the recognized authority to exercise *kamay na bakal* (the iron fist) to enforce law. From 1988 to 1998, Mayor Delfin Ting gradually won the full cooperation of the local police regarding the iron-fist policy. The mayor's supervisory power over the local police force provided elected officials with the legal means to acquire coercive legitimacy, but this had to take time in order for the elected politicians to negotiate political support from the state coercive apparatus.

Mayor Ting's disciplinary actions against media practitioners and sidewalk vendors serve three intertwining political functions. Firstly, backed up by laws against illegal activities, Mayor Ting successfully negotiated police support by identifying rival police personnel. Secondly, by insinuating himself into the interaction-intensive market, he divided the vendor community into two camps of 'friends' and 'enemies'. In doing this, he restructured the political undertakings of these vendors through the patronage business practice that marginalized opposition vendors. Moreover, his 'unforgiving' actions against media practitioner Antonio Tabbad actually amplified his populist self-construction as the 'iron fist mayor' through more news headlines and radio broadcasts. These actions were seen to be well thought out, if not entirely well planned. The iron-fist policy could be regarded as a 'divide and rule' tactic – by utilizing contests, the ruling elite as the law enforcer pulled the fault-line across law-abiding citizens and law-breakers by displaying coercive capability as the 'father' of Tuguegarao. By doing so, more opportunities were opened up to neutralize political rivals and co-opt adversaries for law enforcement.

5 Conclusion

In response to the long-time 'assimilation vs. integration' dualistic debate regarding the ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia, this article has substantiated the novel concept of 'assimilative integration' as an inclusive intercultural continuum-spectrum that enables not just the Chinese cultural but also other ethnic groups, their distinctive identities and cultures to interact and intermingle each other as a compatible socio-cultural process with the national state-building process. Assimilative integration refers to the cultural diffusion and hybridization processes for both assimilationist advocacies and integrationist actions to happen concomitantly out of an already-existing cultures-in-reserve complex reality of Southeast Asia, where multiple ethnic/cultural groups have dwelled and intermingled for centuries.

Majority studies of ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia have contributed significantly to the domains of economics, business, culture, society and religion as well as a burgeoning wealth in political and policy participation. To fill the research gap wherein ethnic Chinese's presence and contributions to post-colonial Southeast Asia's core state-building matters of national security and law enforcement were relatively under-researched, this article have filled this gap by demonstrating the Chinese-Filipinos' contributions to Philippine national security and local law enforcement in a northern Philippine frontier wherein the ethnic groups of Ibanag, Ilocano and Itawes are the majority.

Former Tuguegarao City Mayor Delfin Ting's iron-fist policy to fight against illegal gambling and secessionism as well as to instil surveillance networks proved to be largely contingent on his local cultural knowledge and capability to perform as the Ibanag-Ilocano-Itawes *lakay* (chieftain), who was able to constantly draw symbolic authority of coercion and cultural resonance of fatherhood from the Cagayano cultural continuum-spectrum. This ethnographic-historiography of his iron-fist policy has

48 Mayor Delfin Ting also once charged the *Philippine Daily Inquirer* journalist Raymund Cantindig for possession of an illegal firearm in Tuguegarao. After a local court trial, Cantindig was jailed for six months. According to Mayor Ting, after he refused to buy an advertising slot from him, Raymund Cantindig started to report Ting as 'the boxing mayor of Cagayan' who abused his authority and violated human rights. Cantindig was also suspected of having received money from the illegal gambling networks in Cagayan. Unfortunately, I was not able to locate Raymund Cantindig for an interview. After he was released from the prison, he left Cagayan Province. See: (1) Raymund Cantindig (1994). 'Cagayan "Boxing Mayor" Strikes Again.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. Thursday 20 October 1994. (2) Raymund Cantindig (1995). 'Tuguegarao Mayor Loses Cop Powers.' *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. Monday 17 April 1995.

Regarding the article 'Tuguegarao Mayor Loses Cop Powers', Delfin Ting also provided a set of documents for reference. The first is a legal certification certifying that the Office of the Mayor 'did not receive any letter or communication in any manner from the Office of the President of the Republic of the Philippines removing from the incumbent Mayor, Hon. Delfin T. Ting of the Municipality of Tuguegarao his police powers as local chief executive' (Ting, 20 April 1995). Two more letters were sent to Executive Secretary Teofisto Guingona of the Malacañang Palace, Manila and Secretary Rafael Alunan III of the Department of the Interior and Local Government to ask for clarification on the truthfulness of this news report. Mayor Ting stated in the letter to Secretary Teofisto Guingona: 'The truth of the matter is that I personally requested Philippine National Police Regional Director Rufino Ibay that I be relieved of the supervision over the police in my municipality because of the divided loyalty of the police to gambling lords in the province. General Ibay was the one who beseeched me to reconsider as it shall not speak well of their command. Now, Catindig prompted by CIS [Criminal Investigation Service] Supt. Herminigildo Defiesta, whom I reported to be coddling *jueteng* and *peque* [*pekyu*] operators, is waging an unjust and malicious campaign against me, especially now at the height of my re-election campaign' (Ting to Guingona, 18 April 1995).

49 After this incident, Antonio Tabbad moved out of Cagayan Province. Since his colleagues could not locate him, I was unable to contact and interview him.

demonstrated that from 1988 to 2002, on one hand, Lakay Delfin Ting forcibly instituted law and order in this frontier, as trusted instrument and asset of Philippine national security to gradually institute state sovereignty in the Cagayan Valley, northern Philippines.

On the other hand, by implementing an iron-fist policy, while identifying outlaws and adversaries, opportunities were given to them to be subdued and co-opted into the Philippine state. Moreover, Mayor Delfin Ting performed as the benevolent but feared *father* of Tuguegarao by discursively constructed himself as a coercive law-enforcer, and amplified it through the interaction-intensive market and discourse-productive media. A to-be-feared image of this *father-mayor* was therefore constructed to instil fear among the inhabitants of Tuguegarao as *children* and discipline them through a prevalent surveillance network of eyes and ears that the mayor promised to protect them from 'all bad elements'. Since 1988, the Chinese-Filipino governing elites of Tuguegarao have succeeded in gradually consolidating their stronghold, making Tuguegarao a tight-knit surveillance society defending Philippine national security.

In response to the rise of 'Global China' phenomena in which both Southeast Asia and the Chinese diaspora in the region have been impacted, this article suggests that it has become more important than ever for the ethnic Chinese to be assimilatively integrated into the state-building project such as national security domain so that they would be the instruments and assets of defending Southeast Asia's national and regional security interests.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The research data used in this article stems from long-term ethnographic fieldwork carried out between from 2002 and 2022 in research collaboration with the Philippine government, military and police, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Tuguegarao, Yuchengco Center of De La Salle University – Manila, and the Asian Center of the University of the Philippines – Diliman. Research permissions and ethics approvals were obtained from the following academic institutions where the author studied and worked as well as affiliated with: Oxford University (2002–2006), De La Salle University – Manila (2002, 2006–present), Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Tuguegarao and its Lyceum of Aparri (2006–present), Ateneo de Manila University (2003–2004), the University of the Philippines – Diliman (2003–2004), City University of Hong Kong (2006–2008; 2012–2015), and the Chinese University of Hong Kong (2008–2012). Security approvals to carry out fieldwork and research were also obtained from the Philippine government, military and police as well as the office of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Tuguegarao. The author was entrusted by these Philippine collaborators to be the owner and caretaker of the collected historical-ethnographic data. For the individuals whose names are being identified in this article, their informed consents

were sought or their actions were already recorded in such open sources as news reports, legal proceedings and publications. For the individual informants who did not wish to be identified, either anonymity or fictitious identity was applied to protect their identities.

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PW: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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The author declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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