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Dynasties Thrive under Decentralization in the Philippines

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This working paper is a draft in progress that is posted online to stimulate discussion and critical comment. The purpose is to mine reader's additional ideas and contributions for completion of a final document.

The views expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Ateneo de Manila University.

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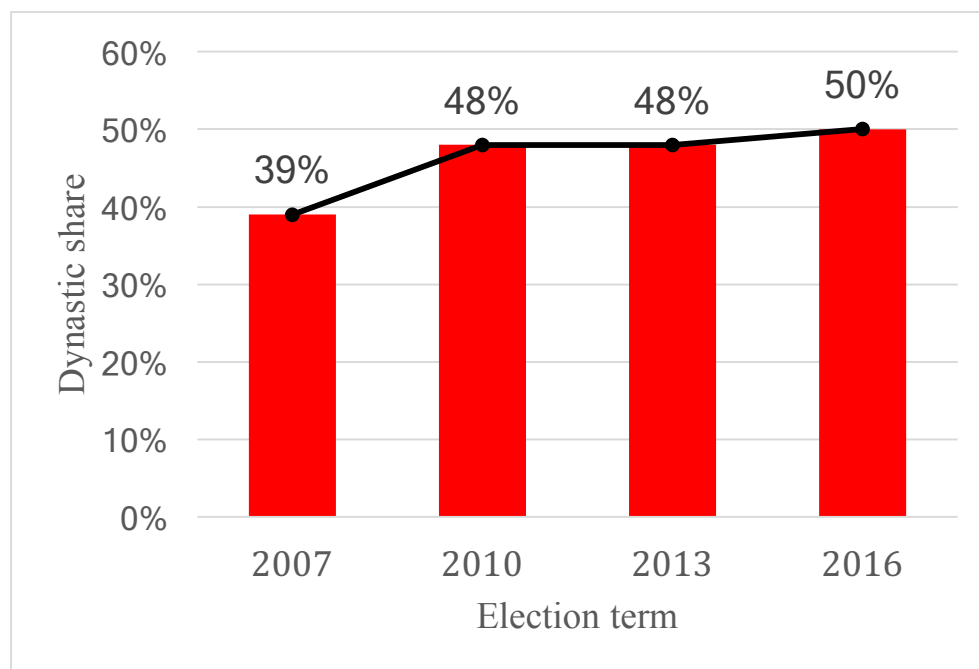
1. Introduction

The 2016 national elections seem so far away in distant memory now; but the official statistics on the elections only recently released and analyzed, should spur the country to think deeply about its democratic future. As noted so many times before, political dynasties run contrary to the 1987 Constitution, which invoked Congress to create a law to regulate dynastic leadership patterns in elective politics.

The association of political clans with traditional politics, vote buying, impunity and other detrimental practices in Philippine politics is well documented in the academic literature. And in very recent studies, political dynasties have also been shown to be associated with deeper poverty—where there are fatter dynasties (i.e. political clan members occupying positions together) there tend to be deeper poverty and underdevelopment.

This paper provides an update on the over-all leadership patterns in the country, incorporating the results from the May 2016 elections. Over-all, when considering the results of the 2016 elections, the Philippines' local governments became more dynastic by roughly 4 percentage points across the board since 2007 (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. National dynastic share from 2007 to 2016



Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data.

2. Most Dynastic Provinces and Positions

All of the top positions in each major local government unit appears to be dominated by dynasties (over 81 percent of governors and vice governors, and around 78% of representatives) it would seem that lack of political competition is stifling progress in fiscal autonomy.

Table 1. Dynastic share from 2007 to 2016 by elected position

Position	Dynastic share (in %)			
	2007	2010	2013	2016
Governor	69.6	82.3	86.3	81.3
Percentage increase/decrease		12.7	3.97	-5
Vice Governor	62	70.9	75	81
Percentage increase/decrease		8.87	4.11	6.01
Representative	75.3	78.7	75.3	77.5
Percentage increase/decrease		3.44	-3.46	2.25
Mayor	57.6	67.2	67.5	68.8
Percentage increase/decrease		9.6	0.3	1.3
Vice Mayor	40.6	51.2	52.6	56.9
Percentage increase/decrease		10.6	1.4	4.3

Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data.

If we measure dynastic prevalence as the share of political dynasties out of the total elective positions in a province (e.g. governor, vice governor, mayors, representatives, councilors), then the most dynastic province in the country is also our country's fourth poorest, Maguindanao. Over time, stretching from 2004 to 2016, the most dynastic provinces appear to have remained so—and new dynasties have begun to dominate additional provinces like Cavite and Catanduanes.

Table 2. Most Dynastic Philippine Provinces, 2004 to 2016

Rank	2004	2007	2010	2013	2016
1	BULACAN	BULACAN	MAGUINDANAO	MAGUINDANAO	MAGUINDANAO
2	MAGUINDANAO	SULU	LANAO DEL SUR	BATANGAS	SULU
3	ISABELA	ILOCOS NORTE	ILOCOS NORTE	SULU	BATANGAS
4	PAMPANGA	ISABELA	SULU	ILOCOS NORTE	PAMPANGA
5	NUEVA ECIJA	LANAO DEL SUR	ISABELA	PAMPANGA	BULACAN

6	ILOCOS NORTE	PANGASINAN	BULACAN	BULACAN	PANGASINAN
7	PANGASINAN	PAMPANGA	PANGASINAN	ISABELA	NUEVA ECIJA
8	BATANGAS	MAGUINDANAO	BATANGAS	LANAO DEL SUR	ILOCOS NORTE
9	SULU	NUEVA ECIJA	EASTERN SAMAR	CATANDUANES	RIZAL
10	LANAO DEL SUR	BATANGAS	PAMPANGA	MASBATE	LANAO DEL SUR
11	CAVITE	NORTHERN SAMAR	CEBU	LA UNION	BATANES
12	CATANDUANES	ABRA	NUEVA ECIJA	PANGASINAN	ISABELA
13	AKLAN	BATAAN	MASBATE	APAYAO	MASBATE
14	EASTERN SAMAR	RIZAL	LANAO DEL NORTE	NORTHERN SAMAR	LA UNION
15	NEGROS ORIENTAL	MASBATE	CATANDUANES	CEBU	CAVITE
16	ABRA	TARLAC	RIZAL	ABRA	WESTERN SAMAR
17	WESTERN SAMAR	ILOCOS SUR	NORTHERN SAMAR	EASTERN SAMAR	EASTERN SAMAR
18	TARLAC	CEBU	CAGAYAN	CAVITE	APAYAO
19	NORTHERN SAMAR	LANAO DEL NORTE	SURIGAO DEL SUR	NUEVA ECIJA	SORSOGON
20	BOHOL	CAVITE	LA UNION	WESTERN SAMAR	CAGAYAN

Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data.

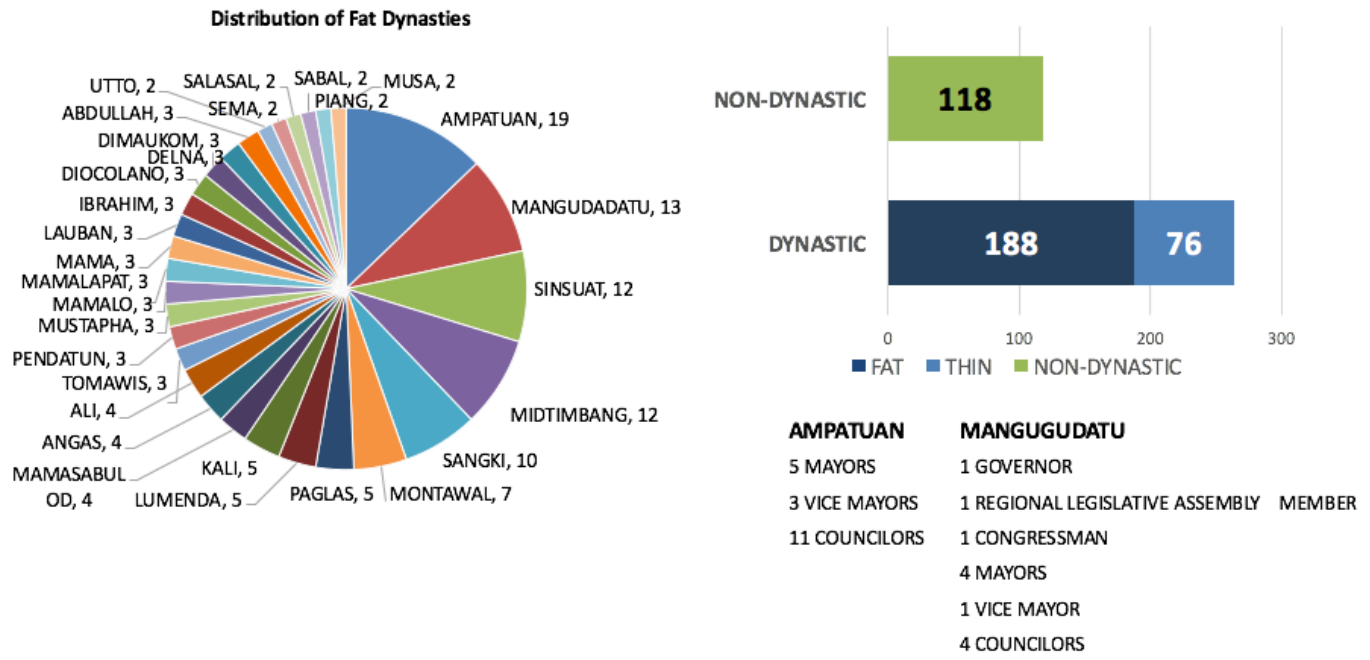
Ten provinces with the highest dynastic share in the 2016 election consistently rank in the top 20 since 2004. These are Maguindanao, Sulu and Lanao del Sur from ARMM; Batangas and Rizal from the CALABARZON region; Pampanga, Bulacan and Nueva Ecija from Region III; and Pangasinan and Ilocos Norte from Region I.

The fact that dynastic growth can be observed across the country suggests that this is not merely a cultural phenomenon one can attribute to the Muslim South.

In a majority of these provinces, political dynasties from the same families have been dominating these provinces for well over a decade now. And that dominance, it seems, can only be degraded by other political clans rising up to compete with the larger dynasties. This signals a complete deterioration of inclusiveness in our democratic leadership selection—only the moneyed and those with the correct last name appear to enjoy the entitlement of leadership.

For example, the Ampatuans in Maguindanao were briefly topped by the Mangudadatus, and the Espinosas in Masbate were eventually displaced by the Khos and the Seachon-Lanetes (see Figure 2). Very few, if any, new leaders were produced in these areas.

Figure 2. Dynasties in Maguindanao (2016)



Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data.

Masbate is a particularly interesting case—four of its Congressmen were assassinated between 1989 and 2005, signaling the intense and vicious competition for Masbate’s leadership. During the entire period, poverty in Masbate deepened—one in two Filipinos in Masbate live below the poverty line.

In many parts of the country, “political competition” under these circumstances brings about a merry-go-round of dynastic families in power, with very little fundamental change in governance or development outcomes on the ground.

3. Dynasties thriving under decentralization?

Some analysts point to the expansion of dynasties under the country’s decentralized governance set-up. And still others note the increased risks if we deepen this with a federalism initiative. While the country has no doubt produced exceptional local government leaders, the evidence seems to suggest that we are producing more Andal Ampatuans rather than Jesse Robredos.

Numerous empirical studies point to the detrimental clan-based practices in public finance. Disaster reconstruction funds are historically allocated based on clan ties according to a study by University of Michigan economists including Nico Ravanilla and Allan Hicken. Joseph Capuno of University of the Philippines found evidence that gerrymandering (the creation of new political jurisdictions) favors the expansion of political clans. Finally, several studies by ADB, AIM, Ateneo and UP economists show how political dynasties thrive in the poorest and most underdeveloped regions in the Philippines, where human development and economic progress fails to take root.

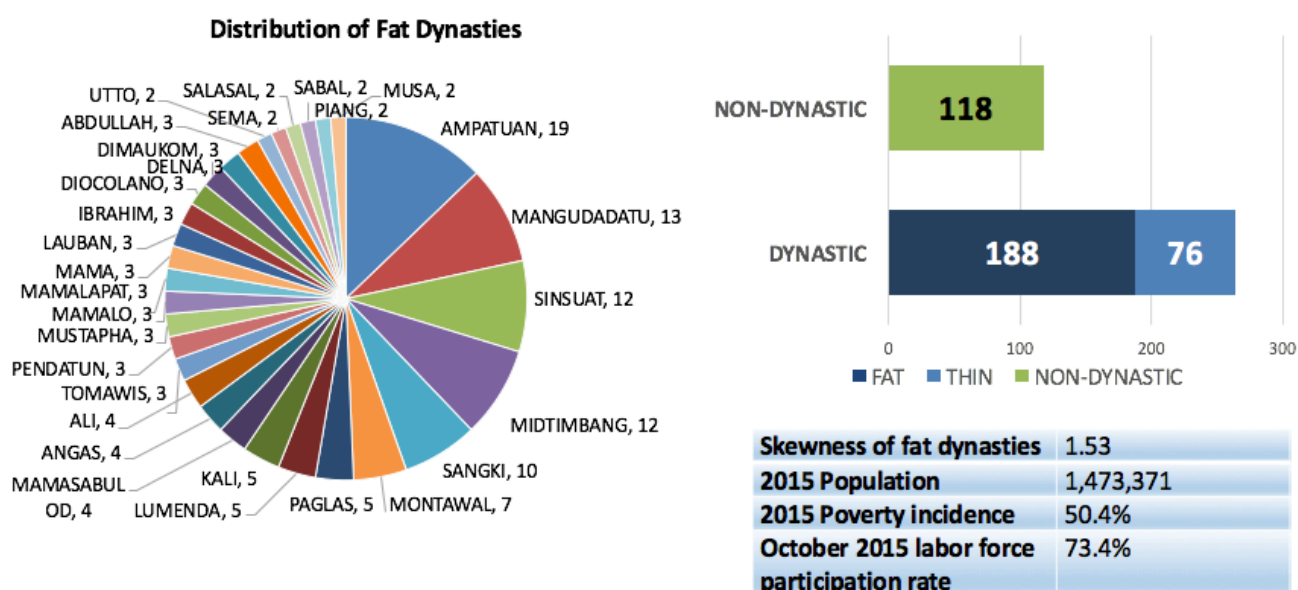
The latest empirical study by AIM and Ateneo economists indicate evidence that the growth of fat dynasties (*sabay-sabay nanunungkulan*) is associated with deeper poverty notably in the provincial periphery, where warlordism and traditional politics thrives to this day.

The challenge for reformists lies in correcting the deep-seated political and economic inequality that continues to divide the country. Unless these are adequately addressed, merely applying a new governance system—even one as ambitious as a federal set-up—on top of existing inequities, risks producing very little change or worse, producing more harm.

Appendix 1: Characteristics of Dynastic Provinces

In this section, we take a closer look at the characteristics of the top 20 most dynastic provinces.

Figure 1. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic¹ statistics of Maguindanao



Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data; other data from Philippine Statistics Authority

Maguindanao has the highest dynastic share at 69% and largest clan in position (Ampatuan with 19 members, followed by Mangudadatus, Sinsuat and Midtimbang). Since 2010, dominance of Ampatuan clan has consistently declined. From 37 elected officials bearing the Ampatuan surname, it has declined to 23 in 2013 and further lowered to 19 in the 2016 election. In contrast, ascending dominance of Mangudadatu clan is also notable. From 6 members elected in the 2010 election, it has increased to 11 in 2013, then to 13 members in the latest election. Fat dynasties are heavily skewed towards few dominating clans such as Ampatuan, Mangudadatu, Sinsuat, Midtimbang, Sangki and Montawal. Maguindanao also ranked 7th among provinces with highest poverty incidence in 2015.

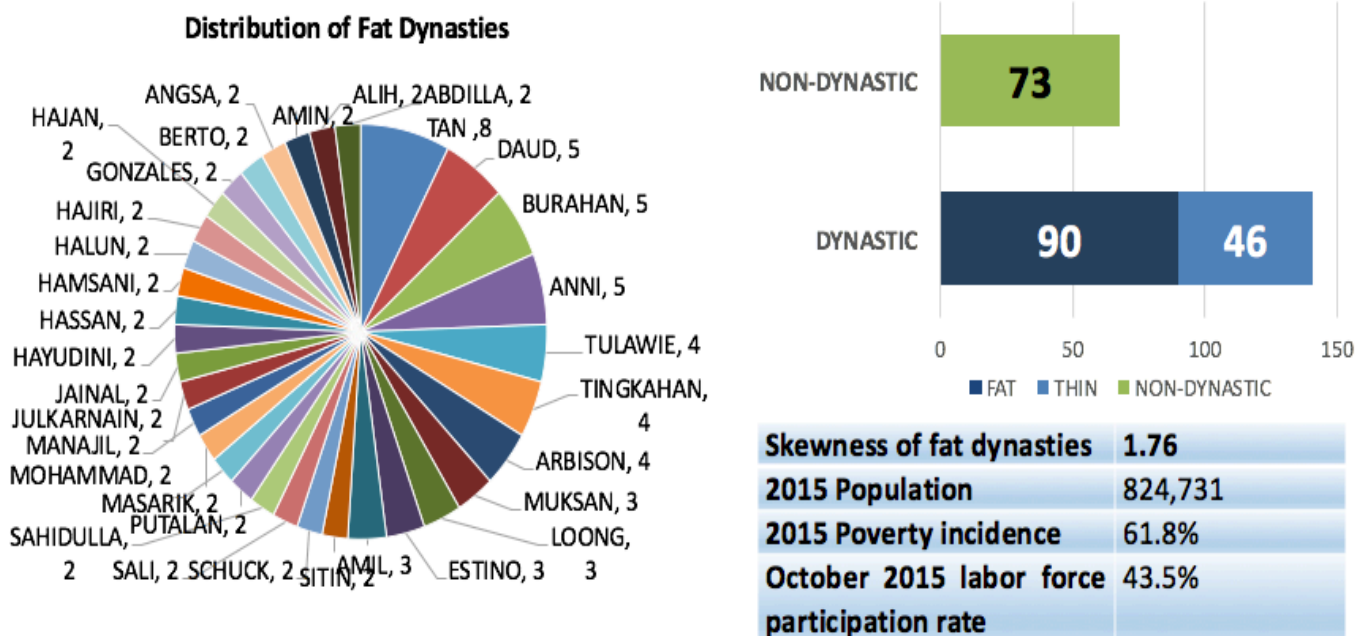
¹ a. *Skewness of fat dynasties* – provides information on the existence of extremely fat or thin dynastic clans, a positive value means there are few dominating fat dynasties in the province.

b. According to 2015 Census on Population, the total Philippine population as of August 2015 is 100, 981, 437

c. Philippines' poverty incidence among families in 2015 was recorded at 21.1%

d. National labor force participation rate in October 2015 was recorded at 63.3%

Figure 2. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic statistics of Sulu



Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data

2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

Dominated by the Tans, Sulu has 67.5% dynastic share. Distribution of fat dynasties is skewed towards few clans such as the Tan, Daud, Burahan and Anni. Sulu was tagged as the 2nd poorest province based on the 2015 official poverty statistics and has the lowest labor force participation rate according to October 2015 Labor Force Survey. With a son-father tandem, Tans currently hold the two highest local government position in the province, governor and vice-governor. The older Tan served as the governor since 2007 until 2015.

Distribution of Fat Dynasties

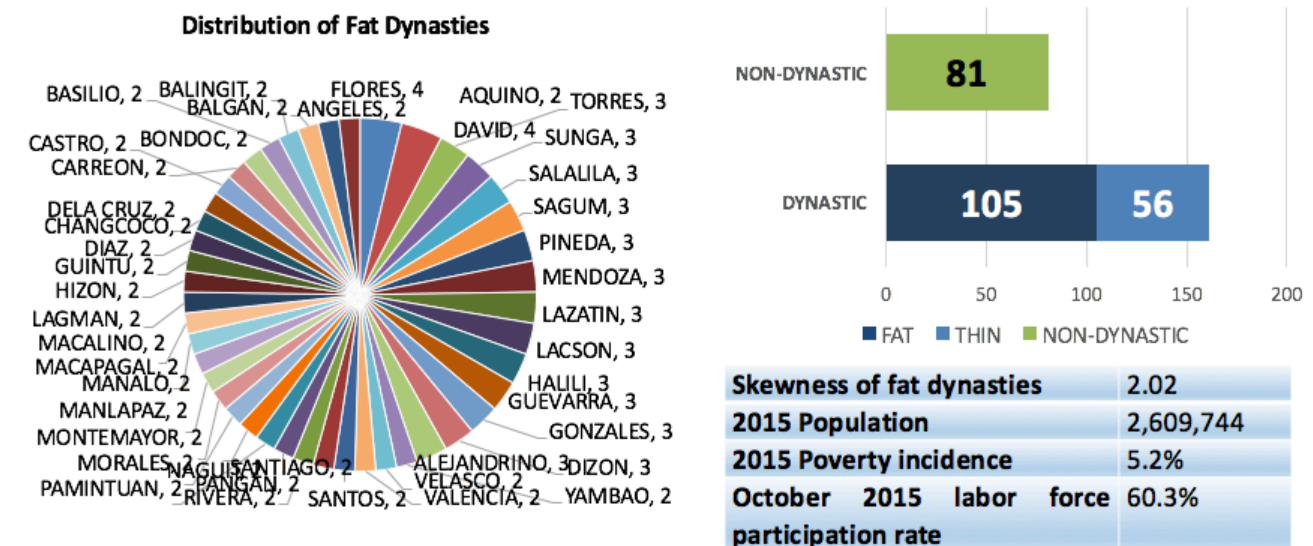
Legend: FAT (dark blue), THIN (light blue), NON-DYNASTIC (green)

NON-DYNASTIC	122
FAT	152
THIN	96

Skewness of fat dynasties	1.82
2015 Population	2,694,335
2015 Poverty incidence	11.2%
October 2015 labor force participation rate	64.7%

2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

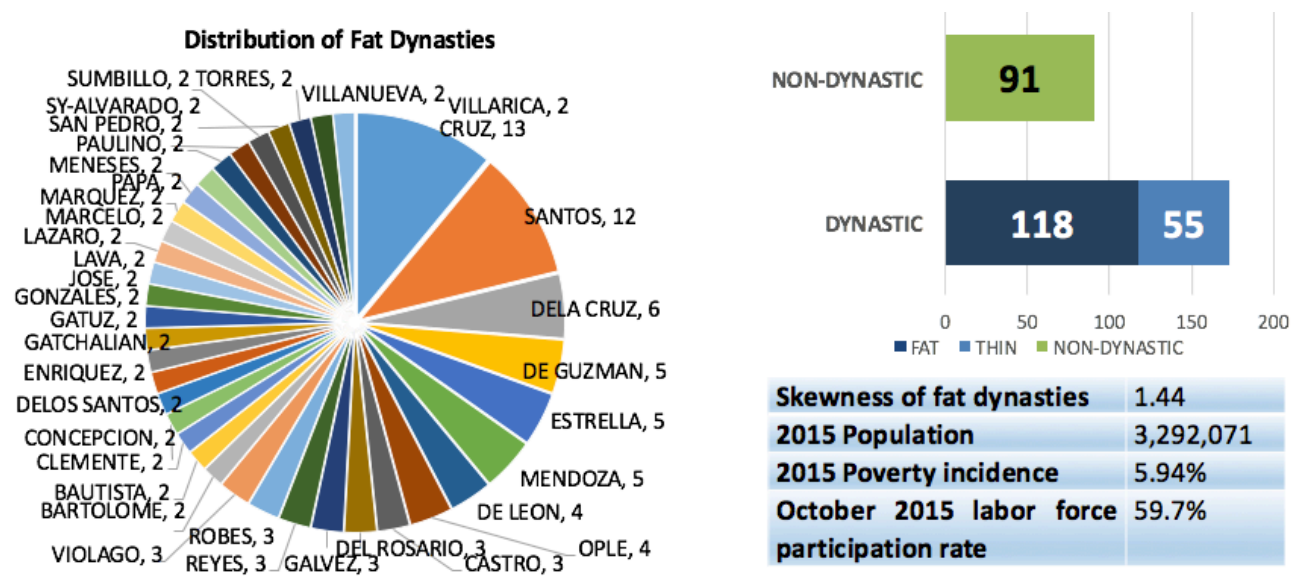
Figure 4. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic statistics of Pampanga



2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

Clans that dominate Pampanga are Flores and David, both of whom have members who occupy lower positions (councilors to mayors). In the 2016 election, it registered a dynastic share of 66.5%.

Figure 5. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic statistics of Bulacan

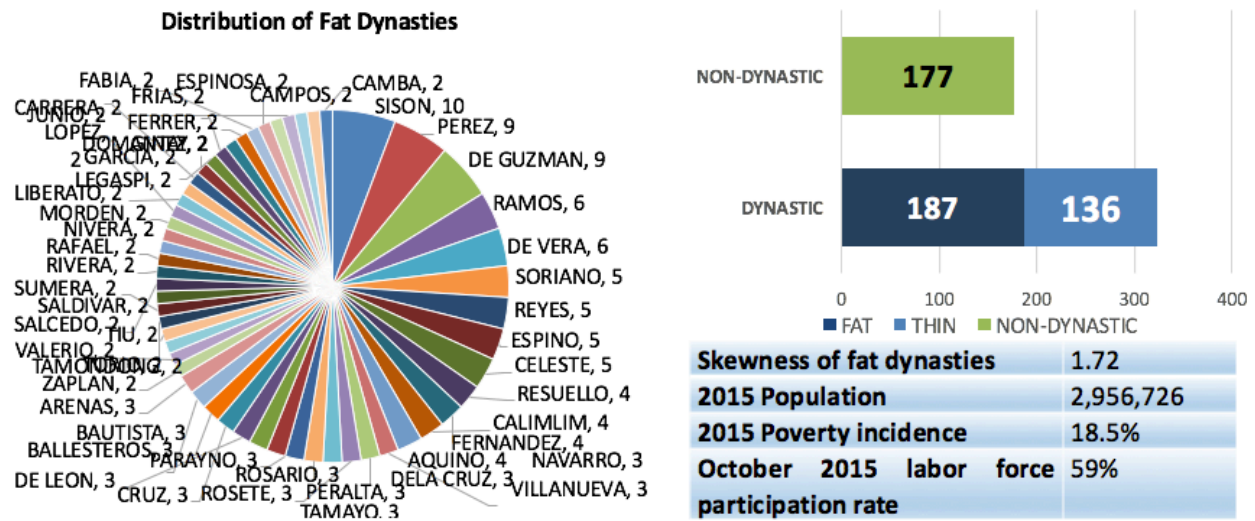


Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data

2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

Bulacan has 65.5% dynastic share with relatively low poverty incidence. Dominance of few clans occupying lower local government positions can be observed (e.g. Cruz- 11 councilors, 1 mayor and 1 vice-mayor).

Figure 6. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic statistics of Pangasinan

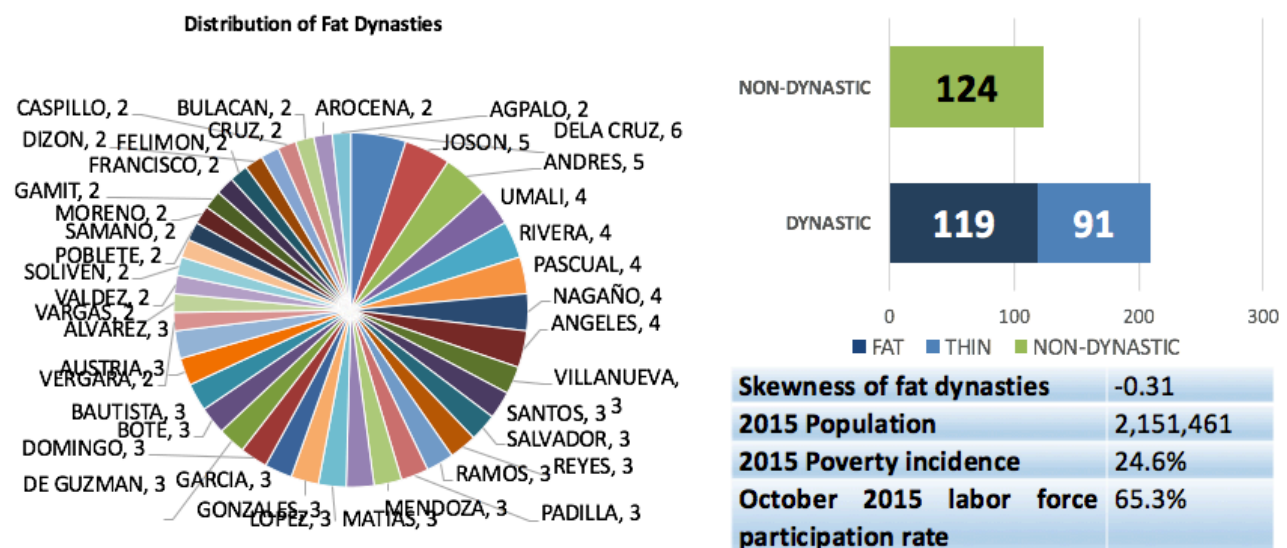


Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data

2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

Pangasinan has a dynastic share of 64.6%. Notable is the dominance of Sison clan in the 2016 election. Elected officials bearing the Sison surname include 2 board members, 1 mayor, 2 vice mayors and 5 councilors.

Figure 7. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic statistics of Nueva Ecija

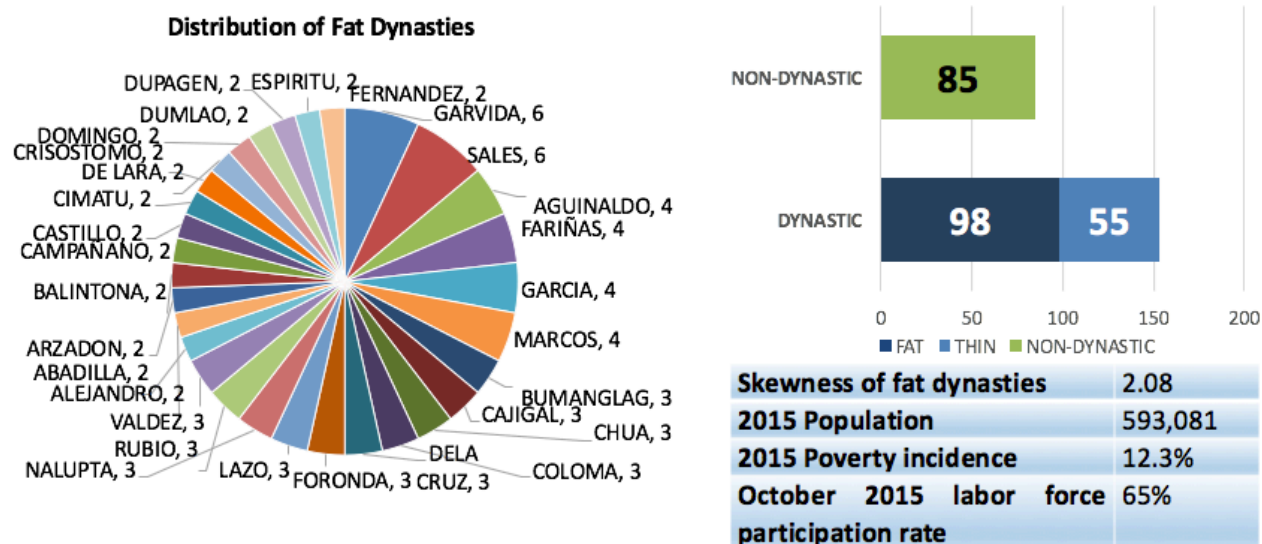


Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data

2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

Nueva Ecija has a dynastic share of 62.8%. 2016 gubernatorial election marked a new era for the province with its first female governor who happened to be the wife of the former governor.

Figure 8. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic statistics of Ilocos Norte

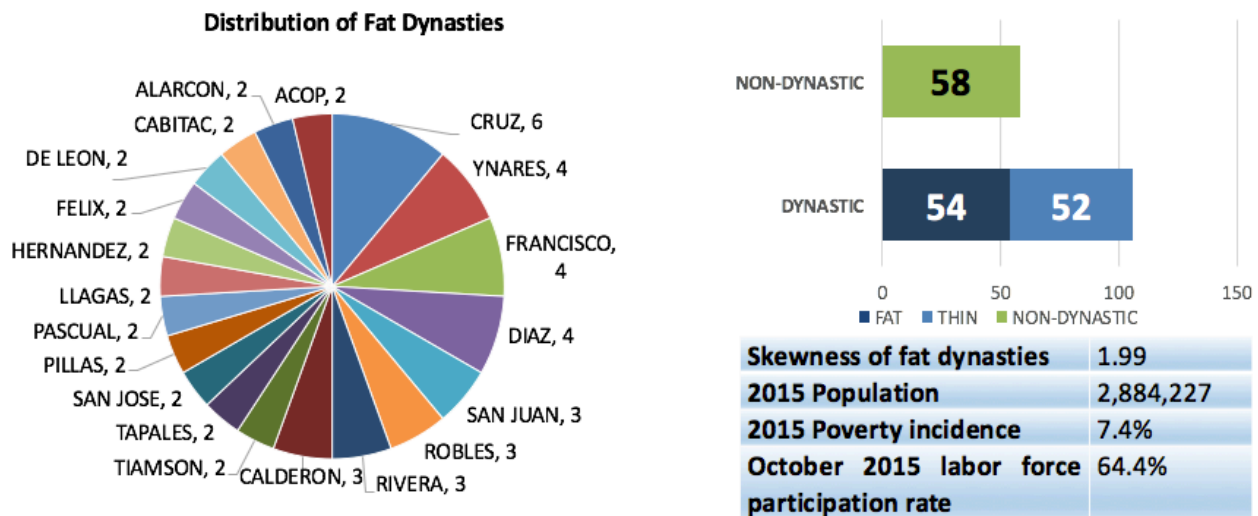


Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data

2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

With a dynastic share of 64.3%, Ilocos Norte is led by Imee Marcos. Other clans that dominate the province are Garvida, Sales, Aguineldo, Farinas and Garcia. Marcos clan currently comprise 1 governor, 1 congressman, 1 board member and 1 councilor in office.

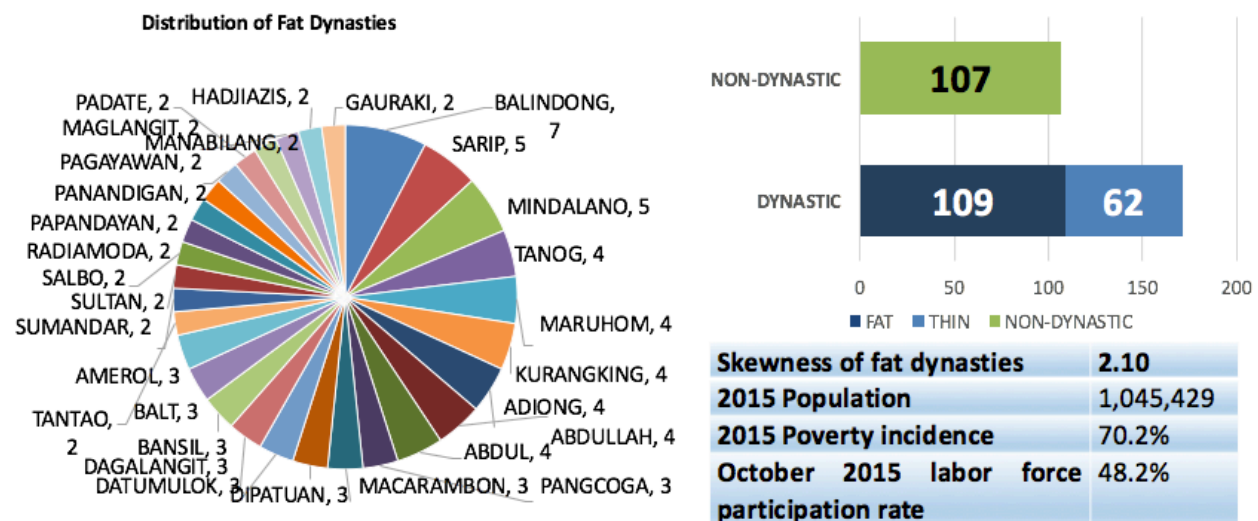
Figure 9. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic statistics of Rizal



Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data
2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

Local governance in Rizal is being dominated by the Ynares clan for more than two decades now. Gubernatorial position has been passed on from father to son, then eventually, to mother.

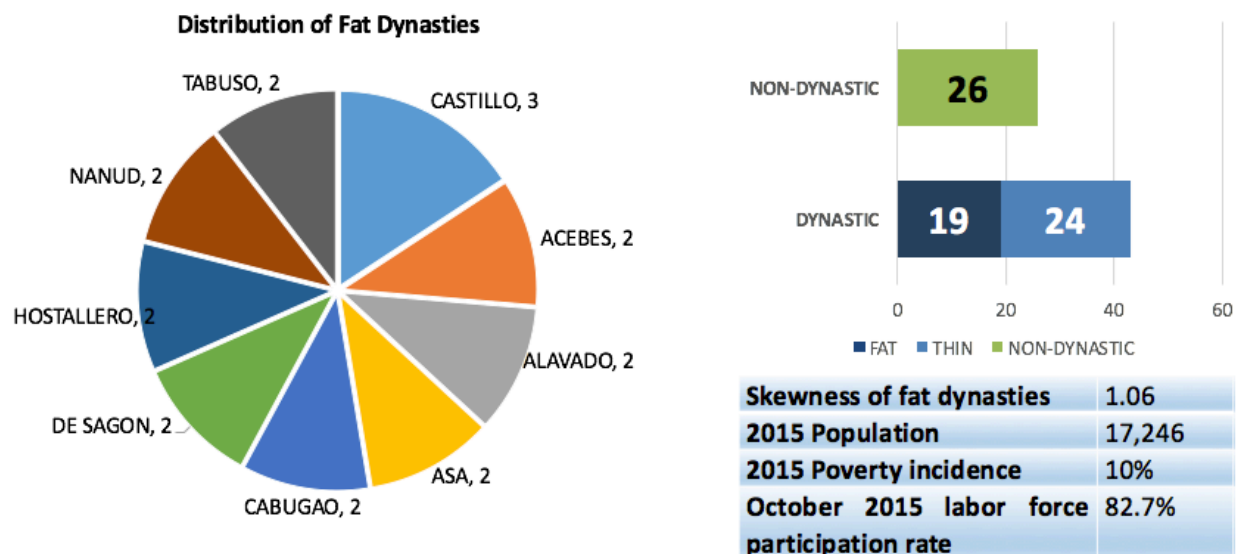
Figure 10. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic statistics of Lanao del Sur



Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data
2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

Lanao del Sur has the highest 2015 poverty incidence and ranks 3rd among provinces with lowest labor force participation rate. Adiong clan currently holds the highest local government position.

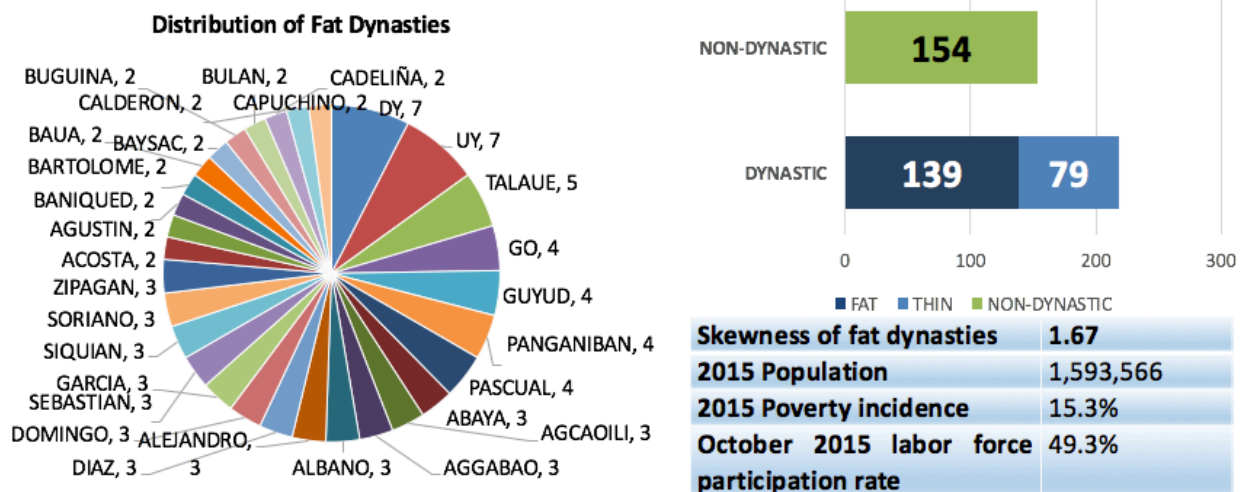
Figure 11. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic statistics of Batanes



Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data
2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

Batanes has the highest labor force participation rate based on the 2015 Labor Force Survey. It is also one of the provinces with the lowest population. Noticeable is the existence of very few fat dynasties in the province.

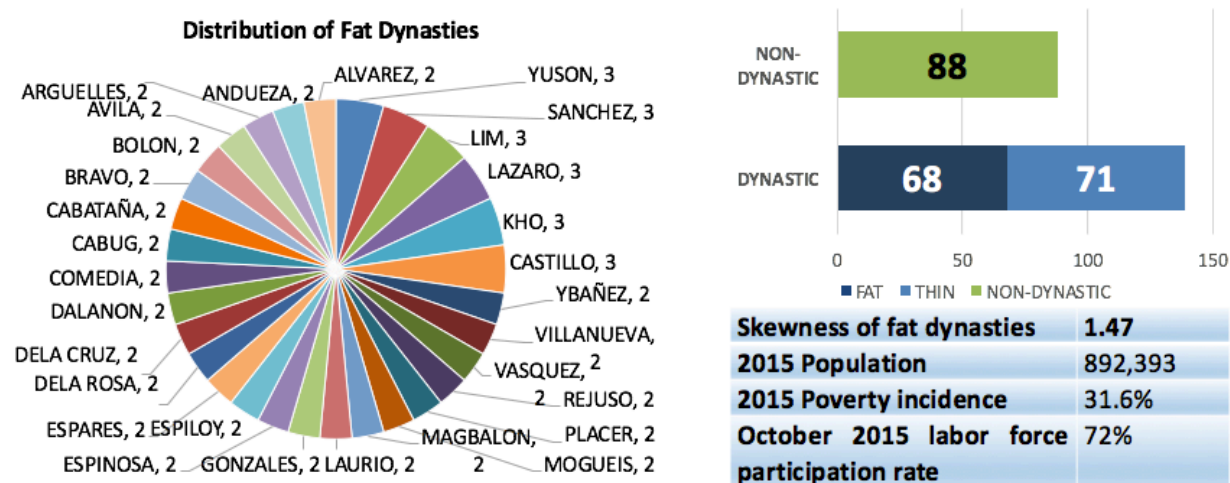
Figure 12. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic statistics of Isabela



Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data
2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

With 1 member currently holding the gubernatorial seat, 1 congressman, 1 board member and 4 mayors, the Dy family managed to dominate the province of Isabela for over 40 years since 1965. It was only in 2004 when the reign of the said clan was temporarily stopped by a non-dynastic elected politician, Grace Padaca. However, they were able to take back the position since 2010.

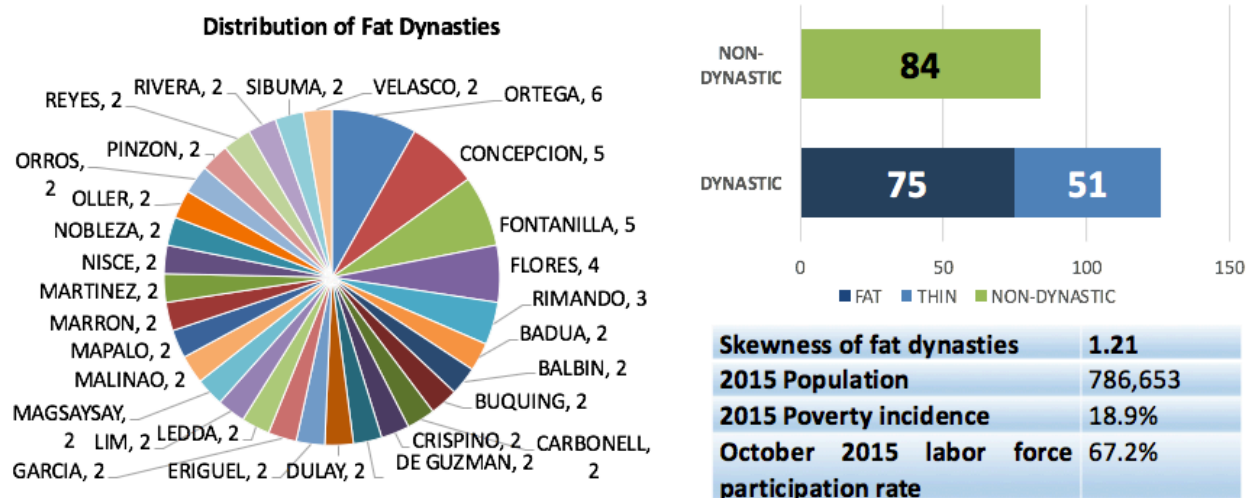
Figure 13. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic statistics of Masbate



Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data
2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

Masbate is currently ruled by Khos, having 1 member in the gubernatorial seat, 1 congressman and 1 mayor. The province is known for its issues of political violence, where rampant patronage on private armed groups among politicians are a common means to maintain political power.

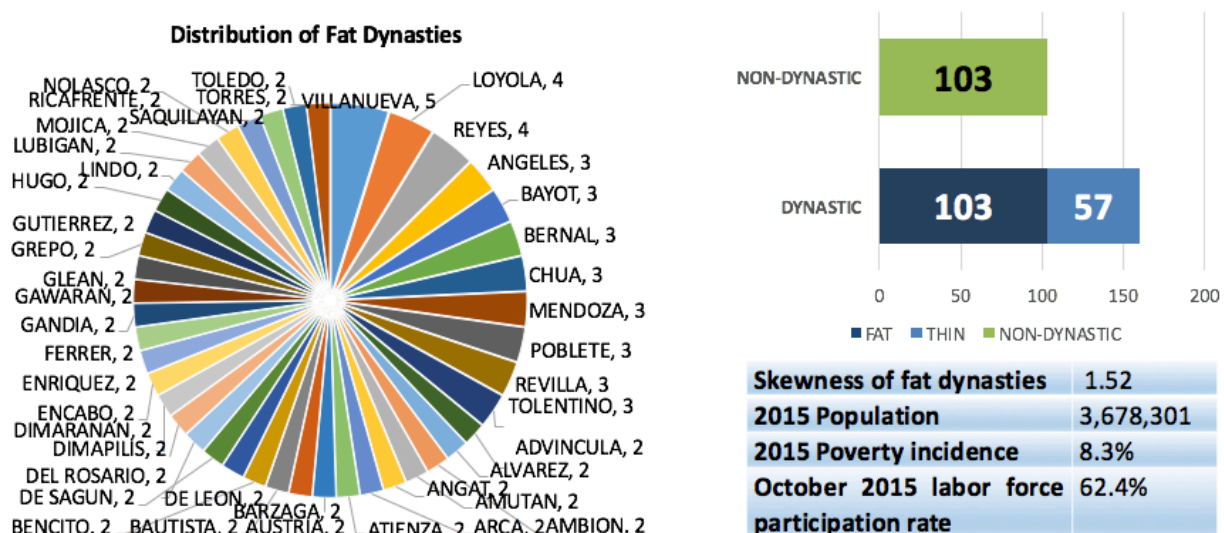
Figure 14. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic statistics of La Union



Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data
 2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

The province is dominated by the Ortega clan, a century old and one of the longest reigning dynastic clan in the country. In the 2016 election, they managed to maintain the gubernatorial seat, 1 congressional, 1 provincial board, 1 vice mayoral and 2 municipality councilor seats.

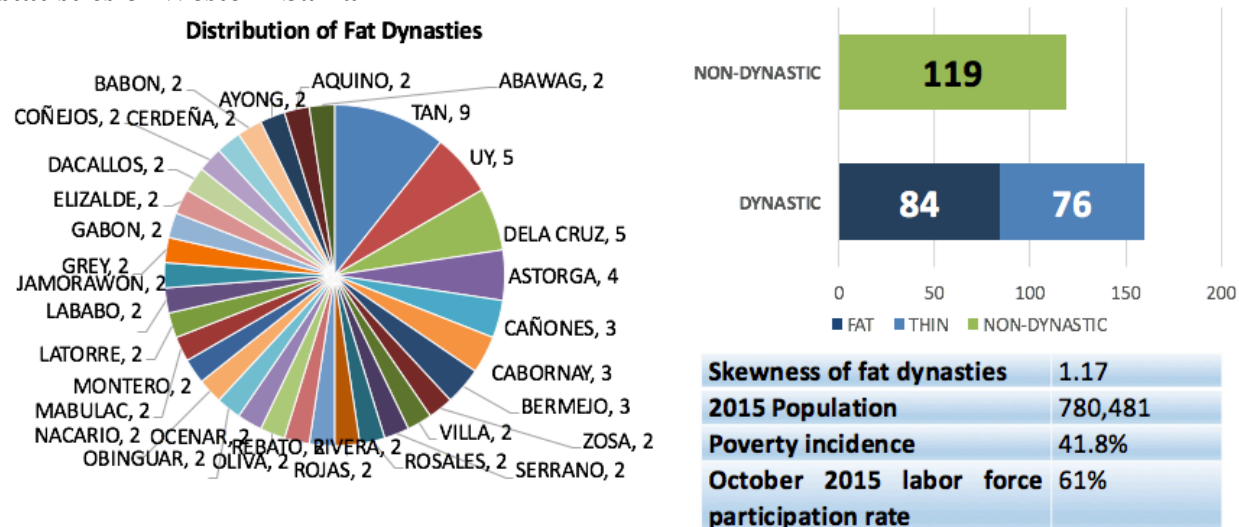
Figure 15. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic statistics of Cavite



Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data
 2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

Majority of the elected local government officials in Cavite are dynastic, with 60.8% share among 2016 elected officials. Also, apparent in the graph above is the existence of several fat dynastic clans in the province.

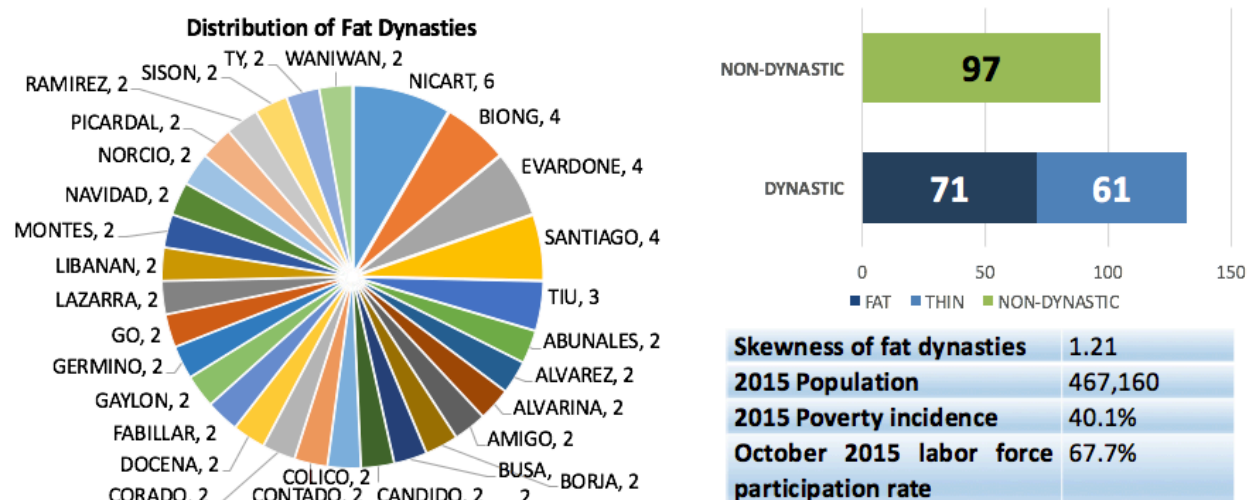
Figure 16. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic statistics of Western Samar



Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data
2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

Tan clan dominates the province of Western Samar. The clan was able to win the two highest positions – governor and vice governor. Other members of the clan were able to secure 1 congressional, 3 mayoral and 3 councilor seats. They have been in power, dominating the province, for more than a decade. The province is one among the top 20 poorest provinces in the country, with an estimated poverty incidence of 41.8% in 2015.

Figure 17. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic statistics of Eastern Samar

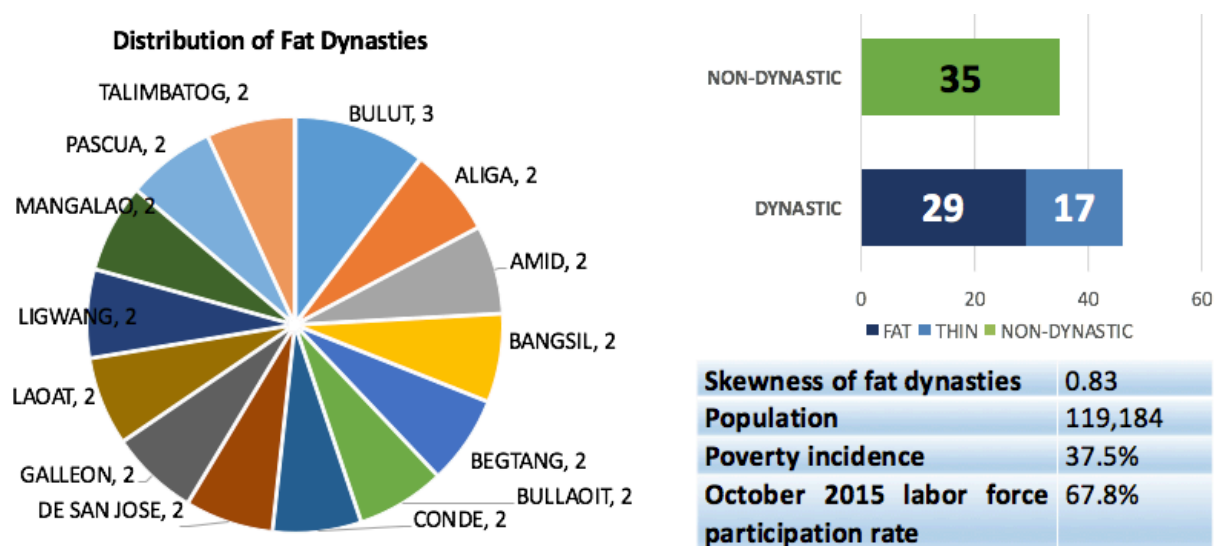


Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data

2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

Eastern Samar is dominated by the Nicart clan, 1 governor, 1 mayor, 1 vice mayor and 3 councilors. Majority, 57.6%, of the elected officials in the province are dynastic.

Figure 18. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic statistics of Apayao

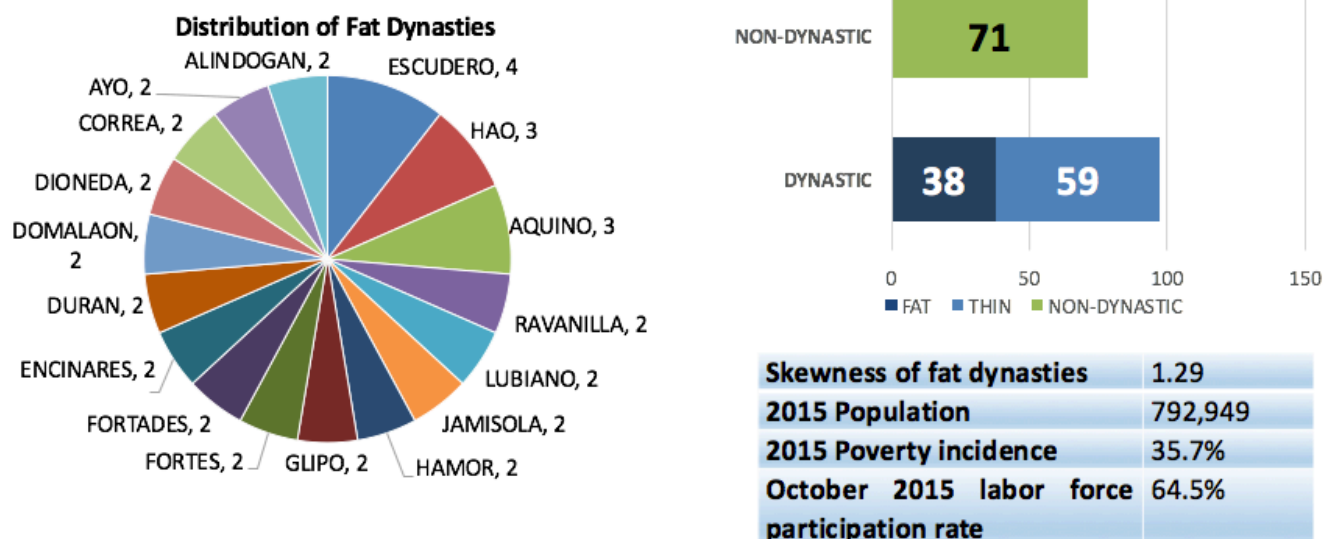


Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data

2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

Bulut clan reigns the province of Apayao for having been in the hold for the gubernatorial position, 1 vice mayor and 1 councilor seat.

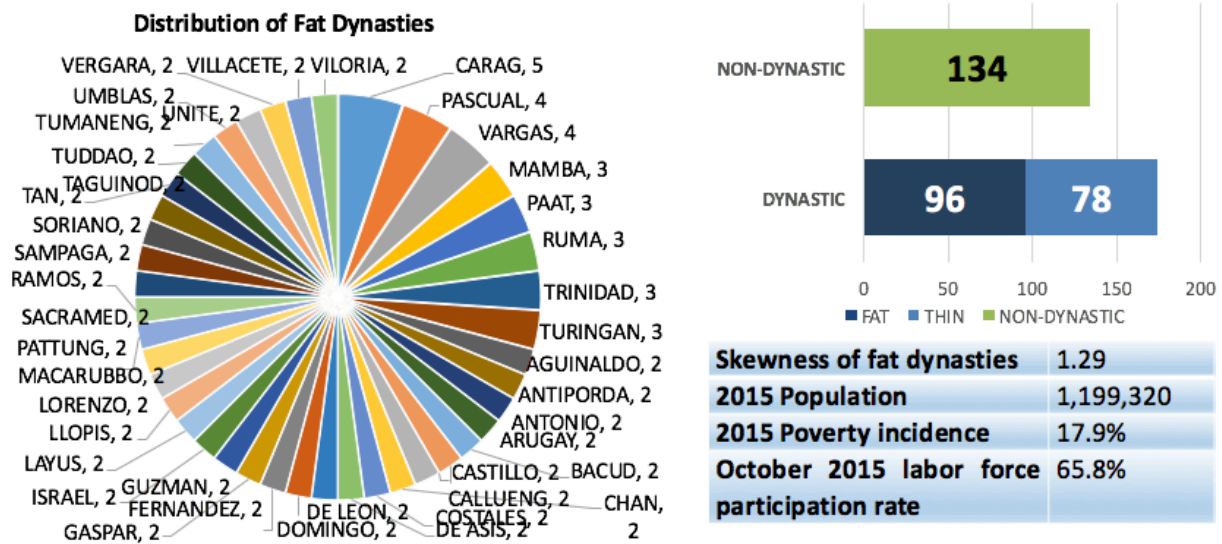
Figure 19. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic statistics of Sorsogon



Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data
2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

Escudero clan holds the highest number of members in position in Sorsogon. The clan has 1 board member, 1 congressman, 1 vice mayor and 1 councilor. The province is the 20th poorest in the country as per 2015 official poverty statistics.

Figure 20. Distribution of fat dynasties, dynasty classification and some socio-demographic statistics of Cagayan



Source: ASOG staff calculations based on COMELEC data

2015 Census on Population, Labor Force Survey and FIES: Philippine Statistics Authority

One among the clans who dominate the province is the Mamba clan. They won the gubernatorial seat, 1 mayoral and 1 vice mayoral seat. Presence of numerous fat dynasties can be observed and relatively low poverty incidence is evident in the province.

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