

Opinion of the Court. 212 U. S.

articles [the articles recognizing prescription of twenty and thirty years] may legalize their possession, and thereby acquire the full ownership of the said lands, by means of adjustment proceedings, to be conducted in the following manner." This seems by its very terms not to apply to those declared already to be owners by lapse of time. Article 8 provides for the case of parties not asking an adjustment of the lands of which they are unlawfully enjoying the possession, within one year, and threatens that the treasury "will reassert the ownership of the State over the lands," and will sell at auction such part as it does not reserve.' The applicant's possession was not unlawful and no attempt at any such proceedings against him or his father ever was made. Finally, it should be noted that the natural construction of the decree is confirmed by the report of the Council of State. That report puts forward as a reason for the regulations that, in view of the condition of almost all property in the Philippines, it is important to fix its status by general rules on the principle that the lapse of a fixed period legalizes completely all possession; recommends in two articles 'twenty and thirty years, as adopted in the decree; and then suggests that interested parties not included in those articles

may legalize their possession and acquire ownership by adjustment at a certain price.

It is true that the language of arts. 4 and 5 attributes title to those "who may prove" possession for the necessary time, and we do not overlook the argument that this means may prove

in registration proceedings. It may be that an English conveyancer would have recommended an application under the

foregoing decree, but certainly it was not calculated to convey to the mind of an Igorot chief the notion that ancient family possessions, were in danger, if he had read every word of it. The words "may prove," (acrediten), as well, or better, in view of the other provisions, might be taken to mean when called upon to do so in any litigation. There are indications that registration was expected from all, but none sufficient to show that for want of it 'ownership actually gained would be lost.

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