

# Japanese Propaganda's Exploitation of Jose Rizal's Cultural Memory in The Tribune's Reporting of His 82<sup>nd</sup> Birth Anniversary

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## ABSTRACT

Eighty-two years after his birth and 46 years after his death, Jose Rizal became a prominent figure during the Japanese occupation. His 82<sup>nd</sup> birth anniversary on June 19, 1943 was an opportunity that the Japanese propagandists utilized, as it occurred between two significant events: the visit of Japan's Premier General Hideki Tojo on May 6 to reiterate his promise of independence to the Philippines and the eventual inauguration of the Japanese-sponsored Philippine Independence on October 14. This paper looks at how the Japanese propaganda exploited the cultural memory of Rizal in reporting the events for his birth anniversary in 1943 in four news articles, one editorial, and one speech reprinting in the then Japanese-controlled newspaper, *The Tribune*. The four news articles explicitly weaved together the concepts of Rizal's aspiration for independence and how the Japanese were expected to grant it shortly thereafter. Meanwhile, the editorial piece and the reprinting of speech delivered by Jorge Vargas, Chairman of the Philippine Executive Commission, drew upon "Rizal's dream" of independence and its upcoming realization with the help of the Japanese. Following Assman's concept of cultural memory, the three poles being related together in the propaganda were: Rizal as the memory; the aspiration for independence as the culture; and the Filipino people as the group. Three characteristics of cultural memory were identified as being utilized in the propaganda texts. First is the concretion of identity, which is Rizal's martyrdom. Second is the capacity to reconstruct through the messaging of Japan's initiative to render Rizal's martyrdom meaningful through granting of independence to the Philippines. Third is organization in communicating the ceremonies related to Rizal's birth anniversary in *The Tribune*.

**Keywords:** *Japanese propaganda, cultural memory, Rizal, The Tribune*

## Introduction

June 19, 1943, Jose Rizal's 82<sup>nd</sup> birth anniversary, occurred between two significant events during the Japanese occupation period of Philippine history. The event that it succeeded was the visit of Japan's Premier General Hideki Tojo on May 6, 1943 to reiterate his promise of granting independence to the Philippines. It was followed by the formal implementation of this promise, the Japanese-sponsored Philippine Independence on October 14, 1943 under the leadership of Jose P. Laurel in the Second Republic.

It is not surprising then that the almost five-month gap between these two notable events was filled with different propaganda using various media, including newspaper, to condition the mind of the Filipino people. Taylor defines propaganda as "a systematic scheme created by one person or group in an effort to persuade people on insufficient grounds to believe what it wants them to believe or to act to its advantage."<sup>1</sup>

Japan's previous experiences in occupying Taiwan, Korea, and Manchuria made the former realize that propaganda work should be done simultaneously with military campaign.<sup>2</sup> In the 1948 dissertation of Soriano, she said:

*"The great influence of newspapers, journals, and magazines on the thoughts and views of a nation hardly needs emphasizing. It is to be expected, therefore, that the Japanese used these means as one of their chief channels of disseminating their propaganda."*<sup>3</sup>

The Japanese Military Administration utilized the publishing industry "to appeal both to special groups and to the nation at large."<sup>4</sup> In particular, The Tribune, the English daily of the *Tribune-La Vanguardia-Taliba* (TVT) Chain of newspapers owned by the Roces family, became a "propaganda mouthpiece" for the Japanese.<sup>5</sup> In its organized propaganda work using various media, including printed media, the Japanese exhausted the cultural memory of Jose Rizal.

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<sup>1</sup> Warren Taylor, "What is Propaganda?," *College English* 3, no. 6 (1942): 562, <https://doi.org/10.2307/370946>.

<sup>2</sup> Motoe Terami-Wada, "The Japanese Propaganda Corps in the Philippines," *Philippine Studies* 38. (1990): 279, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42633191>.

<sup>3</sup> Rafaelita Hilario-Soriano, "Japanese Occupation on the Philippines, with Special Reference to Japanese Propaganda (1941-1945)" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1948), 145.

<sup>4</sup> David Joel Steinberg, *Philippine Collaboration in World War II* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1967), 49-50.

<sup>5</sup> Ricardo T. Jose, "The Tribune during the Japanese Occupation," *Philippine Studies* 38 (1990): 45, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42633163>.

*“The subject of Rizal was piece-de-resistance in Japanese propaganda during the occupation. It was exploited without let-up or reserve by the Japanese-controlled press, pulpit, and radio... The name of Rizal was cited on every occasion, and there was hardly anything the Japanese authorities wanted to preach or proclaim where the name of Jose Rizal could not be used with some degree of plausibility. The Great Malayan was certainly the favourite topic.”<sup>6</sup>*

This study looks at how the Japanese propaganda exploited the cultural memory of Rizal in the occasion of the latter's 82<sup>nd</sup> birth anniversary in 1943 using the newspaper The Tribune. In particular, it assesses the reporting of and the crafting of messages about Rizal and the Philippine independence on the period of his birth anniversary — June 19 and 20, 1943 — particularly in the four news articles, one editorial, and one speech reprinting that were published in The Tribune. It also analyzes the way these Japanese propaganda in The Tribune published on those days used Rizal through the lens of cultural memory based on the work of Jan Assman (1995) using three applicable characteristics – concretion of identity, capacity to reconstruct, and organization.

### **The Tribune as a mouthpiece of Japanese propaganda**

The Japanese Military Administration utilized the publishing industry “to appeal both to special groups and to the nation at large.” Right away was the establishment of the Manila Newspaper Company (Manila *Shimbun-sha*) under the control of the Military Administration and Mainichi Newspaper Company (Mainichi *Shimbun-sha*), a Japanese firm.<sup>7</sup> One of the major casualties of press occupation of the Japanese was the *Tribune-La Vanguardia-Taliba* (TVT) Chain of newspapers owned by the Roces family.<sup>8</sup>

TVT Chain was an influential pre-war publishing company that gave its founder Don Alejandro Roces the moniker “William Randolph Hearst of the Philippines” owing to the success of his language-specialized dailies.<sup>9</sup> The newspaper chain's prominence witnessed and became active in the battle between the supporters and critics of the Hare-Hawes-Cutting Law before the inauguration of the Commonwealth Government in 1935.

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<sup>6</sup> Martin Dalmacio, *Education and Propaganda in the Philippines during Japanese Occupation* (Manila: s.n., 1952), 156, 161.

<sup>7</sup> David Joel Steinberg, *Philippine Collaboration in World War II* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1967), 49-50.

<sup>8</sup> D.H. Soriano, et al., *The Roces Family Publishers, with a History of the Philippine Press* (Manila: Islas Filipinas Pub, 1987), 50.

<sup>9</sup> Soriano, et al., *The Roces Family*, 41.

*“Tribune, La Vanguardia, and Taliba were considered in political circles as plus factors in any election contest. Small wonder that Quezon and Osmeña sought the support of the TVT chain in their fight over the acceptance or rejection of the Hare-Harwes-Cutting Law, the Philippine Independence bill passed by the US Congress... the issue of whether to accept or reject the Hare-Harwes-Cutting Law became a question of personalities for the two protagonists. The personality test was inescapable. The TVT, an opinion-maker and a leader in the discussion of many issues, could stay in the sidelines but could not guard against the possibility of even one paragraph creeping into the pages of its paper in favour or against Quezon or Osmeña. The national stake was great. The personal burden was between Quezon and Osmeña. Don Alejandro Roces played his role adroitly as a publisher dedicated to the people’s welfare... The TVT took its own stand. Carlos Quirino, in his book on Quezon, wrote: ‘Not only were leading politicians in the camp of the pros; the most influential chain of newspapers in the Archipelago, the TVT syndicate comprising the Tribune, English; La Vanguardia, Spanish; and Taliba, Tagalog, also came out openly in support of the HHC bill.’”<sup>10</sup>*

The prominence of TVT, particularly of The Tribune, did not cease during the Japanese period. In fact, “it continued to be the most widely read [daily].” The Tribune was published daily except Mondays and had a special Sunday Issue (“Sunday Tribune”), “usually consisted of four to six tabloid-sized pages” and bore crisp slogans promoting friendship with Japan such as ‘Sampaguita is the Flower, Nippon the Friend,’ and ‘The Rising Sun Japan is the Shining Sun of Asia.’<sup>11</sup>

Jose, in his 1990 article, presented various points-of-view as to why The Tribune allowed itself to be used by the Japanese. First is Armando Malay’s stand that the Roces family did not want to fight. Second is Herald newspaper’s Mauro Mendez’s perspective that The Tribune was a mainstay of the Roces family fortune. Third is that some of The Tribune’s staff perceived that Roces and La Vanguardia’s Pedro Aunario believed the Japanese’s strength. Fourth is the belief of others that TVT was Roces’ life and that he could not afford to fold it because of that.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, it was expected that The Tribune served as a platform for the Japanese to present their agenda, as the “Japanese propaganda insisted that Filipinos recognize that they were racially and geographically Asian.”<sup>13</sup> Among the subjects that the Japanese utilized to make the people believe in their causes was Jose Rizal. In fact, six articles on and with relation to Rizal’s birthday and martyrdom were published only in two days – on June 19 and 20, 1943; in particular, three related articles were published for each day.

<sup>10</sup> Soriano, et al., *The Roces Family*, 47.

<sup>11</sup> Rafaelita Hilario-Soriano, “Japanese Occupation on the Philippines, with Special Reference to Japanese Propaganda (1941-1945)” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1948), 147-148.

<sup>12</sup> Ricardo T. Jose, “The Tribune during the Japanese Occupation,” *Philippine Studies* 38 (1990): 50, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42633163>.

<sup>13</sup> David Joel Steinberg, *Philippine Collaboration in World War II* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1967), 48.

Three news articles were reported on the commemoration of Rizal's birthday:

1. "Rizal's 82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday Fete Today" on June 19 issue, pages 1 and 6
2. "82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday Anniversary of Rizal Fittingly Observed" on June 20 issue, pages 1 and 12
3. "Rizal Day Fete Held in Tokyo" on June 20 issue, page 3

Meanwhile, one news report was dedicated for the Thanksgiving Rally for Japanese sponsored-independence, with emphasis on its coincidence to Rizal's birthday:

1. "Filipinos to Give Thanks to Japan," on June 19 issue, pages 1 and 5

On the other hand, an editorial entry and a speech transcription related to Rizal and the occasion of his birthday were also published during the said period:

1. Editorial: "Rizal's Dream Come True" on June 19 issue, page 3
2. Transcription of Jorge Vargas' rally speech on June 19 entitled "Chairman Vargas' Speech at Rally" on June 20 issue, page 3

### Rizal's Trip: His Japanese Connection

Japan relied on the relatively limited association that they had with Rizal. After all, Japan became a notable part of Rizal's memorable sojourn for six weeks in 1888, from February 28 to April 13.<sup>14</sup> In the book "Rizal in Japan" (1961) by Caesar Z. Lanuza and Gregorio F. Zaide, the authors dramatically described Rizal's journey to Japan, prologue of which was his trip to Hong Kong. The hero had to leave the Philippines because of the ire towards him of the Spanish authorities with the emergence of his first novel, *Noli Me Tangere*.

*"He finally came to the conclusion that he had to leave for two good reasons, namely: (1) his continued presence in Calamba was endangering the safety and happiness of his family and friends and (2) abroad, he could, with greater freedom and efficacy, fight his enemies and serve his country's cause. Thus, about the beginning of February 1888, after six months in his hometown, he tearfully kissed his parents' hands and bade goodbye to his relatives and friends. He took passage on a lake steamer bound for Manila, from where he intended to take the first available ship for Hong Kong."<sup>15</sup>*

<sup>14</sup> Cesar Z. Lanuza and Gregorio F. Zaide, *Rizal in Japan* (Tokyo: s.n., 1961), 18, 49.

<sup>15</sup> Lanuza and Zaide, *Rizal in Japan*, 5-6.

An author was quoted in an article in *Liwayway* magazine saying “*Napamahal sa kanya ang Hapon,*” reiterating how Rizal fell in love with Japan.<sup>16</sup> Rizal’s quick attachment to Japan could not be a fallacy; after all, he was a well-travelled man who appreciated the countries he visited in his intellectual journey. He even wrote in his diary that “Japan has enchanted me.”<sup>17</sup>

*“At the beginning, it was Rizal’s intention to stay in Japan for only a few days. On March 1, 1888, a day after his arrival in Yokohama, he wrote his family: ‘I will sail for San Francisco in a few days.’ The ‘few days,’ which he originally planned on spending in Japan, lengthened into six weeks – fully a month and a half. What made him change his mind to tarry longer than he intended in the ‘Land of the Cherry Blossoms’ could have been no other than the many lovely and interesting places he saw, the charming hospitality of the people, and his all-consuming romance with O-Sei-san.”<sup>18</sup>*

Rizal’s fascination with Japanese language *Nippongo*, dramatic art such as *kabuki*, painting such as *sumi-e*, and sports particularly *judo* was a proof of how he appreciated Japanese lifestyle. Moreover, his appreciation to these cultural forms inspired him to learn them during his relatively brief stay in Japan.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, as mentioned above, Rizal fell in love with a Japanese lady, Seiko Usui whom he “affectionately called” O-Sei-san.

*“Rizal’s sojourn in Japan was climaxed by a beautiful romance with a lovely, high-born Japanese woman. Her real name was Seiko Usui, but Rizal affectionately called her O-Sei-san. This romantic incident between a brown-complexioned Filipino who later became the national hero of his country and a fair-skinned samurai’s daughter had all the human interest and tenderness fit for a novel. It was a sweet although short-lived affair, combining intellectual with emotional affinity between the two; that it was a relationship that was honourable there could be no doubt because Rizal could not have been profoundly moved by it the way he was; moreover, he would not have dignified it in his diary if it were just a trifling or sordid episode in his life.”<sup>20</sup>*

*“O-Sei-san helped Rizal in many ways. She was more than a sweetheart; she was his guide, interpreter, and tutor. She showed him the relics of Japanese history in the libraries and museums and the masterpieces of Japanese art galleries. She guided him in his travels in and around Tokyo and the neighbouring towns and villages. She helped him improve his *Nippongo*. She also taught him how to paint in Japanese style (*sumi-sketch*). Being a talented painter in the European style, Rizal easily acquired the skill for Japanese paintings. From O-Sei-san, Rizal enriched his knowledge of Japanese history and literature. Being a highly educated woman, she related to him the old legends of Japan, including stories of Japanese heroes.”<sup>21</sup>*

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<sup>16</sup> Martin Dalmacio, *Education and Propaganda in the Philippines during Japanese Occupation* (Manila: s.n., 1952), 160.

<sup>17</sup> Lanuza and Zaide, *Rizal in Japan*, 27.

<sup>18</sup> Cesar Z. Lanuza and Gregorio F. Zaide, *Rizal in Japan* (Tokyo: s.n., 1961), 50.

<sup>19</sup> Lanuza and Zaide, *Rizal in Japan*, 21-23.

<sup>20</sup> Lanuza and Zaide, *Rizal in Japan*, 35-36.

<sup>21</sup> Lanuza and Zaide, *Rizal in Japan*, 41-42

Behind the romantic representation of Rizal's experience in Japan, the national hero could not be wrong with his intellectual prophecy. In fact, in one of his letters to his family on April 7, 1888, as cited in "Rizal in Japan" by Lanuza and Zaide (1961), he predicted the future relations between Japan and the Philippines, saying "I have stayed here a longer time than I intended, for the country appeared to me very interesting and because in the future we shall have much contact and relations with Japan."<sup>22</sup>

However, Rizal did not hide his worry over the danger of the Philippines' proximity to Japan and their future connection. In the January 1, 1951 issue of Manila Times, in reference to the account of Dr. Maximo Viola<sup>23</sup> in 1913, to which the latter said:

*"Rizal 'was particularly worried about Japan's proximity to the islands, its greater population and advanced modern military equipment. He assured me that if the Philippines overthrew Spanish rule by force and violence, she would only land in the clutches of Japan, where she would have far less chance of obtaining her freedom'"<sup>24</sup>*

### News Headlines: Rizal, Independence, and Japan

Three of the four news articles published in The Tribune on June 19 and 20 were straight news covering as mentioned earlier, the events that unfolded in commemoration of Rizal's 82<sup>nd</sup> birth anniversary. If only the headlines will be the basis ("Rizal's 82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday Fete Today"; "82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday Anniversary of Rizal Fittingly Observed" and "Rizal Day Fete Held in Tokyo"), a reader from a distant post-war period would judge it as a mere reporting of events, with 5W's and 1H. However, the lead of the first article aforementioned immediately gave a taste of propaganda. It said:

*"In one of the happiest moments of her history, the Philippines today observes the 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday anniversary of her national hero, Dr. Jose Rizal, who with other great Filipinos sacrificed for their country's independence, which has been promised within the year by the great Empire of Japan."<sup>25</sup>*

Here comes a reiteration of the promised 1943 independence from Japan. On May 6, 1943, Tojo paid a surprise visit in Manila to "again dangle the

<sup>22</sup> Cesar Z. Lanuza and Gregorio F. Zaide, *Rizal in Japan* (Tokyo: s.n., 1961), 50.

<sup>23</sup> Viola was Rizal's friend and fellow *propagandista* who lent him the PhP 300 that was used to print the initial 2,000 copies of *Noli Me Tangere*. In Rizal's signed proof of the novel that he gave to Viola, the former referred to the latter as "the first to read and appreciate [his] work." (in Anna Melinda Testa-de Ocampo, "The Afterlives of the *Noli me Tangere*," *Philippine Studies* 59 (2011): 502, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42634694>).

<sup>24</sup> Martin Dalmacio, *Education and Propaganda in the Philippines during Japanese Occupation* (Manila: s.n., 1952), 160.

<sup>25</sup> "Rizal's 82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday Fete Today," *The Tribune*, June 19, 1943, 1.

promise of independence.” It was a well-attended event when schoolchildren, employees, vendors, and bystanders in Central Manila area were required to welcome the Premier General and wave Japanese flags and shout *Banzai* (Japanese equivalent of *Mabuhay*). A week did not pass without another high-ranking Japanese visitor, in the person of Kazuo Aoki, minister of the Greater East Asia Ministry in Tokyo. He “stressed that Japan’s plans to grant the Philippines independence were unchanged, and urged Filipinos to work still harder to build the new Philippines.”<sup>26</sup>

The said news article of *The Tribune* also cited the line-up of activities in commemoration of the hero’s birthday. The plans included (they were yet to be executed on the day itself) a literary musical program under the helm of the Department of Education, Health, and Public Welfare, a band parade by ten brass bands of the Filipino Band Association from a plaza at Quiapo Church to Luneta, and the Rizaliana exhibit at the former assembly hall of the legislative building. Notable Filipino leaders who were expected to attend these events were Jorge B. Vargas, Chairman of the Philippine Executive Commission; Jose P. Laurel, Commissioner of Education, Health, and Public Welfare; and Camilo Osias, Assistant Director-General of the Kalibapi (Kapisanan sa Paglilingkod sa Bagong Pilipinas).<sup>27</sup>

On the next day, the actual events that unfolded during the June 19 celebration were reported in the second news article. All the activities mentioned above were presented, and another public figure in the person of Jose Figueras, acting mayor of Manila, attended the series of events. But these reporting of activities came next to another flowery lead, which associated Rizal’s martyrdom to the upcoming Japanese-sponsored independence. It said:

*“The nation paid tribute to Jose Rizal in observing his 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday yesterday. Adding significance to the event which was one of the biggest celebrations of the hero’s birthday in years is the fact that the independence for which he gave up his life 47 years ago is now within reach, having been promised by Japan to be granted this year.”*<sup>28</sup>

Likewise, the third news article also captured in words the celebration of Rizal’s birth anniversary. What separated this news article from the two others was that the event took place in Japan’s capital city, where a Filipino inspection party visited the Tokyo Imperial University and celebrated the

<sup>26</sup> Ricardo T. Jose, *Kasaysayan: The Story of the Filipino People, Volume 7* (Mandaluyong City: Asia Pub., 1998), 137-138.

<sup>27</sup> “Rizal’s 82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday Fete Today,” *The Tribune*, June 19, 1943, 1, 6.

<sup>28</sup> “82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday Anniversary of Rizal Fittingly Observed,” *The Sunday Tribune*, June 20, 1943, 1.

event with a luncheon at Dai-iti Hotel.<sup>29</sup> The two-paragraph straight news did not end without hyping Japan's promise.

*"While recollecting Dr. Rizal's self-sacrificing service rendered to the cause of the Philippines, they expressed gratitude to Japan for her promise of according independence to the Philippines within this year."<sup>30</sup>*

What sets apart the fourth news articles from the other three Rizal-related news items in the given publication period was the subject itself. With the headline "Filipinos to Give Thanks to Japan" on the cover page of The Tribune on June 19, 1943, the advance story about the gratitude rally to be held on that day quickly gave an impression of its propaganda nature. Its lead instantly bestowed the essence of Filipino collaboration in the upcoming declaration of Japanese-sponsored independence:

*"Chairman Jorge B. Vargas, of the Executive Commission, will address the country at the New Luneta at 4:30 p.m. today when thousands will congregate to manifest the Filipino people's profound gratitude to the Japanese Empire for the assurance given by Premier General Hideki Tozjo (Tojo) of the grant of independence to the Philippines within this year."<sup>31</sup>*

The article mentioned the Proclamation No. 19 issued by Vargas, encouraging the residents of Manila to join the Gratitude Rally. The expected attendees include the major stakeholders in the capital city during the Japanese period, such as the Executive Commission led by Vargas, the lone political party Kalibapi<sup>32</sup> (which was inaugurated on another Rizal occasion, Rizal Day on December 30, 1942<sup>33</sup>) under the leadership of its Director-General Benigno S. Aquino, the City Government represented by Acting Mayor Jose Figueras and his officials and employees, and the district and neighbourhood associations.

The eighth paragraph of the news story said the purpose of the article best:

*"The rally will not only be a demonstration of gratitude to Japan, but also of the Filipino people's determination to collaborate with Japan actively, unreservedly and spontaneously"*

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<sup>29</sup> "Rizal's Day Fete Held in Tokyo," *The Sunday Tribune*, June 20, 1943, 3.

<sup>30</sup> "Rizal's Day," 3.

<sup>31</sup> "Filipinos to Give Thanks to Japan," *The Tribune*, June 19, 1943, 1.

<sup>32</sup> Kalibapi was inaugurated by the Japanese to replace and dissolve the political parties in the Philippines, with the eventual goal of transforming it to a mass movement and establish a "New Philippines" that embraces the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere or GEACOPS (in Sven Matthiessen, "Re-orienting the Philippines: the KALIBAPI Party and the Application of Japanese Pan-Asianism," *Modern Asian Studies* 53, no. 2. (2019): 560, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26627321>.)

<sup>33</sup> David Joel Steinberg, *Philippine Collaboration in World War II* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1967), 62.

*for the successful prosecution of the Greater East Asia war and in the establishment of the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere.”<sup>34</sup>*

Towards the end of the ten-paragraph article, Rizal was mentioned to highlight the upcoming program:

*“Today’s historic event at the Luneta coincides with the 82<sup>nd</sup> birthday anniversary of Rizal, the national hero, thus further heightening the significance of the day as one of the last milestones to the culmination of the Filipino people’s supreme aspiration for the past 400 years.”<sup>35</sup>*

### **“Rizal’s Dream”: A Persistent Theme in the Editorial and the Speech**

On the other hand, the Editorial Board of The Tribune did not miss to write an editorial piece about Rizal on June 19. Entitled “Rizal’s Dream Come True,” the written piece emphasized Rizal’s love for the country by capturing his gloomy tone on the citation of the classical poem “Last Farewell.”

“My dreams, when life first opted to me,  
My dreams, when hopes of youth beat high,  
Were to see thy lov’d face, O gem of the Orient seas,  
From gloom and grief, from care and sorrow free;  
No blush on thy brow, no tear in thine eye...”<sup>36</sup>

Moreover, the editorial piece attached to Rizal’s martyrdom the “redemption” coming from the Japanese Empire, saying “three days before his people observed his birthday anniversary, Premier General Hideki Tojo (Tojo), with the ardent solitude of a fellow-Oriental, solemnly announced to all the world, from the rostrum of the Imperial Diet in Tokyo, that the Philippines will be granted the honor of independence this year.”<sup>37</sup>

The editorial continued to capitalize on “Rizal’s dream” vis-à-vis the “favour” the Japanese Empire was giving through the promised independence. To quote the last part of the article:

*“Rizal’s dreams for his dear country are on the verge of full realization. His death has been vindicated and finds its ultimate glorification in the benevolent intentions of a brother-people... a new and independent Philippines, whose grateful people, united with all East Asians in one great and sacred cause, solemnly pledge over the memory of Rizal to give unstinted and whole-hearted cooperation with Nippon in the prosecution of this Sacred War to its successful termination and in the ultimate formation of a solid and enduring Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.”<sup>38</sup>*

<sup>34</sup> “Filipinos to Give Thanks to Japan,” *The Tribune*, June 19, 1943, 5.

<sup>35</sup> “Filipinos to Give Thanks to Japan,” *The Tribune*, June 19, 1943, 5.

<sup>36</sup> “Rizal’s Dream Come True,” *The Tribune*, June 19, 1943, 3.

<sup>37</sup> “Rizal’s Dream,” 3.

<sup>38</sup> “Rizal’s Dream,” 3.

Coining the term “Rizal’s dream” from the title to the conclusion of this editorial deliberately exploited the memory of Rizal and explicitly associated it with their promise of independence. The editorial piece wrapped the idea of Japanese-sponsored independence as their act of benevolence as fellow East Asians under the ideals of GEACOPS. It also assumed that the Filipinos were grateful for such granting of independence. However, the Filipinos “felt friendlier with the Americans than with the Japanese, despite their closer racial relations with the latter,” and the treatment of the Japanese military to the Filipino people played a role in their rejection of the Japanese alternative.<sup>39</sup> Likewise, the Filipinos were noted to be aware of the manipulation of the Japanese in their sponsored newspapers.<sup>40</sup>

On the other hand, the last text in *The Tribune* related to Rizal was the transcription of Vargas’ speech at the Thanksgiving Rally mentioned earlier, published on June 20, 1943 (“Chairman Vargas’ Speech at Rally”). His message was tailor-fit for the occasion as his welcome remarks mentioned Rizal at his first sentence. As he went along his speech, he said:

*“It is fitting and proper that we should meet to voice our overwhelming joy at the coming of our independence on this day commemorating the birth of Dr. Jose Rizal, for the day also approaches for the birth of that free and happy Philippines...”<sup>41</sup>*

Vargas’ speech was clever that it maximized the occasion’s theme by equating the birth of the hero with the birth of the new nation. Vargas’ speech likewise drew upon “Rizal’s dream,” as the second part of the address revolved around the concept of Rizal’s aspiration for an independent Philippines and how it was linked to Japan’s plans. To quote the important lines from his speech:

*“Now, Rizal’s dreams have come true. This very year we shall receive the blessing and the glories of independence from the generous hands of the Great Japanese Empire. When Japan, drawing her sword in defense of her rights, destroyed the American regime in our country, we were completely at her mercy. We had no right to ask for our independence because we were misled into opposing the Imperial Japanese Forces and were afterwards abandoned by those who misled us. But Japan, laying aside the sword of the conqueror, extended to us the helping hand of a solicitous elder brother to uplift us and guide us to our proper place in the family of Oriental nations. Without equivocation or evasion, without delay or doubt, spontaneously and with*

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<sup>39</sup> Gonzalo A. Campoamor, “Phases and Faces in the Filipino War Film Images of the Japanese Invader and the Filipino in Contemporary Philippine Cinema,” *Philippine Studies* 57, no. 1 (2009): 94, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42633989>.

<sup>40</sup> Karl Ian U. Cheng Chua, “The Stories They Tell: “Komiks” during the Japanese Occupation, 1942-1944,” *Philippine Studies* 53, no. 1 (2005): 65, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42633735>.

<sup>41</sup> “Chairman Vargas’ Speech at Rally,” *The Sunday Tribune*, June 20, 1943, 4.

*sincere solicitude, Japan promised our independence from the very first. And now she has declared that the promise will be fulfilled this very year.*<sup>42</sup>

Vargas, as the executive secretary of Quezon, had been given certain powers by the latter to cope with the arrival of the Japanese. He was asked by Lt. Gen. Masaharu Homma, commander-in-chief of the Japanese forces, on January 8, 1942 to organize the civil government, hence his position as the Chairman of the Philippine Executive Commission.<sup>43</sup> He was the Japanese' choice to lead the Philippine government before the Second Republic because he was perceived as a politically neutral elite – which can be interpreted as less ambitious than Aquino and Laurel. At the same time, he was a stand-in for Quezon – a logical alter-ego that may encourage the first Commonwealth president to return to the Philippines during the War.

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Vargas played a role in the Japanese propaganda, particularly in the policy of controlling information. In his position, he instructed government officials and employees that all communications for publication should be approved by the Director General of the Japanese Military Administration. Included in this process of censorship is *The Tribune*.<sup>45</sup>

As the last article from the two-day commemoration of Rizal's birthday, Vargas' speech summarized all the messages that were imparted on the previous propaganda articles. The association of Rizal's aspirations – interpreted by the Japanese propagandists as independence – with that of Japan's promise of granting independence to the Philippines was the main point of all the articles combined. This message was reiterated repeatedly in each article. "Rizal" and "independence" were recurring themes in the period's propaganda, and they maximized the persuasive potential of these twin concepts could bring to people, to the extent of amplifying Rizal's otherwise limited association with Japan. Claims and assumptions of this extent can be placed under what Javier labelled as "historical distortion" of the Japanese propaganda, where "undocumented historical declarations" that imagined the earlier Philippine-Japanese relationship had been inserted in the narration of the history of the Philippines during the War.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>42</sup> "Chairman Vargas," 4.

<sup>43</sup> Satoshi Ara, "Emilio Aguinaldo under American and Japanese Rule: Submission for Independence?," *Philippine Studies: Historical & Ethnographic Viewpoints* 63, no. 2 (2015): 169, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24672333>.

<sup>44</sup> Grant K. Goodman, "The Japanese Occupation of the Philippines: Commonwealth Sustained," *Philippine Studies* 36, no. 1 (1988): 103-104, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42633066>.

<sup>45</sup> Ricardo T. Jose, "The Tribune during the Japanese Occupation," *Philippine Studies* 38 (1990): 51, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42633163>.

<sup>46</sup> Mariano C. Javier, "Japanese Cultural Propaganda in the Philippines," *Asian Studies: Journal of Critical Perspectives on Asia* 13, no. 3 (1975): 54-55.

It is also noteworthy to emphasize that the legacy of Rizal's transformation – from being an original reformist to becoming a perceived revolutionary with anticolonial sentiment – had earlier demonstrated his autonomy from colonial powers in articulating and manifesting the independence of the Philippines years before the coming of the Japanese.

With his complete disillusionment with Spain following the successive events of the Calamba land problem, Rizal turned to radical separatism. This was exhibited in his works from 1888 to 1892, such as *Sobre la indolencia de los Filipinos* (The Indolence of the Filipinos), *Filipinas dentro de cien años* (The Philippines A Century hence), and *El Filibusterismo*.<sup>47</sup> His establishment of the La Liga Filipina can also be aligned to the quest for independence because of the organization's ideal to form a Filipino national community.<sup>48</sup>

Rizal was revolutionary because he went beyond aiming for reform but to change the very structure of the Filipino society – to the point of not only aspiring for independence alone, but also for freedom and justice, which could be surmised from his writings.<sup>49</sup> He acknowledged the prospect of an armed rebellion if the earlier colonizer Spain would not grant reforms. He also envisioned an anticolonial struggle that “can improve the morale, strengthen and perfect the Filipinos in combat,” both as reflected in *The Philippines A Century Hence*.<sup>50</sup>

### The Exploited Cultural Memory of Rizal on His Birth Anniversary

Assman defines cultural memory as “characterized by its distance from the everyday... [with a] fixed point; its horizon does not change with the passing of time. These fixed points are fateful events of the past, whose memory is maintained through cultural formation (texts, rites, monuments) and institutional communication (recitation, practice, observance)... [It] attempts to relate all three poles - memory (the contemporized past), culture, and the group (society) to each other.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Floro Quibuyen, “Towards a Radical Rizal,” *Philippine Studies* 46, no. 2 (1998): 168-169, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42634256>.

<sup>48</sup> Quibuyen, “Towards a Radical Rizal,” 173.

<sup>49</sup> John N. Schumacher, “Rizal the Revolutionary and the Ateneo,” *Philippine Studies* 26, no. 3 (1978): 232, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42632435>.

<sup>50</sup> Ramon Guillermo, “Moral Forces, Philosophy of History, and War in Jose Rizal,” in *Philippine Studies: Historical & Ethnographic Viewpoints* 60, no. 1 (. 2012): 12, 27, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42634701>.

<sup>51</sup> Jan Assman and John Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 129, <https://doi.org/10.2307/488538>.

In the context of this study, Rizal as the cultural memory was maintained through a cultural formation in the form of The Tribune articles (news stories, editorial, and speech transcription) and institutional communication which was the public observance of his 82<sup>nd</sup> birth anniversary on June 19, 1943.

In relating the three poles of memory, culture, and group based on the idea of Assman, Rizal was the memory or the contemporized past; the culture is the aspiration for independence, following the messaging of the texts; and the group were the Filipino people, particularly those who had access to The Tribune in the context of this study.

As the memory of the contemporized past, Rizal was (and continues to be) remembered in annual celebrations. In fact, as early as 1898, then President Emilio Aguinaldo issued a decree for a national day of mourning in remembrance of Rizal's death anniversary on December 30 of the said year.<sup>52</sup> Meanwhile, by 1901, the memory of Rizal started to persist in legislations as the Americans "abetted and encouraged" his elevation to eminence, first with the renaming of the Morong District to Rizal Province through Act 137. In 1902, Act 345 was enacted to make December 30 – Rizal's death anniversary – a public holiday.<sup>53</sup>

Rizal's death anniversary had also been co-opted by the Japanese as part of its bigger objective to exploit the hero's memory in its propaganda. This was manifested in the inauguration date of KALIBAPI of December 30, 1942, or a few months before co-opting Rizal's 82<sup>nd</sup> birth anniversary, to associate Rizal's patriotism to the KALIBAPI.<sup>54</sup>

Rizal's memory in his death anniversary was exhausted in the speeches of the two Filipino leaders during the KALIBAPI inauguration. Vargas explicitly connected Rizal's goals to the aims of Japan to emancipate and protect the Oriental nations. Aquino cited Rizal's death as an inspiration for the Filipinos to also develop a spirit of self-sacrifice.<sup>55</sup>

Meanwhile, the culture identified was the people's aspiration for independence, which was the value that the news stories, the editorial, and the speech transcription targeted in their messaging. This was later

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<sup>52</sup> Eufemio O. Agbayani III, "The First Rizal Day," *National Historical Commission of the Philippines*, December 29, 2022, <https://nhcp.gov.ph/articles/the-first-rizal-day/>

<sup>53</sup> Renato Constantino, "Veneration without Understanding," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 1, no. 4 (1972): 5, [doi.org/10.1080/00472337185390141](https://doi.org/10.1080/00472337185390141).

<sup>54</sup> Sven Matthiessen, "Re-orienting the Philippines: the KALIBAPI Party and the Application of Japanese Pan-Asianism," *Modern Asian Studies* 53, no. 2. (2019): 569, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26627321>.

<sup>55</sup> Matthiessen, "Re-orienting the Philippines," 570.

articulated in the October 14, 1943 Proclamation of the Independence of the Philippines, saying – “The Filipino people value their independence as the blessed fruit of the sacrifices of their heroic forefathers and brothers who fought and died in farflung battlefields, from Mactan to Bataan, in their persistent struggle for freedom.”<sup>56</sup>

The Filipino people were the group – the ones who persevered and valued the memory of Rizal and served as the target audience of the articles published in The Tribune that became the focus of this study, such that the debate of his prominence and unofficial title as the national hero even continued after the war. In the words of Renato Constantino: “Rizal was already a revered figure and became more so after his martyrdom, it cannot be denied that his pre-eminence among our heroes was partly the result of American sponsorship.”<sup>57</sup> As the group that was tied to the memory and culture, the Filipinos were the ones being persuaded by the Japanese to embrace the latter’s GEACOPS, which principles were disseminated to them, alongside the propagation of Filipino culture in the Japanese educational policy Military Order No. 2 signed on February 17, 1942.<sup>58</sup>

This study discusses three of the six characteristics of cultural memory according to Assman that are applicable to The Tribune propaganda articles that were analyzed. These are the concretion of identity, capacity to reconstruct, and organization.

According to Assman, “the concretion of identity” is “the relation to the group” by which “the group derives an awareness of its unity and peculiarity.”<sup>59</sup> In this study, the concretion of identity is Rizal’s martyrdom, a concept attached to the memory of his death but was articulated on the then present occasion which was his birth anniversary. As Constantino put it: “His dramatic death captured the imagination of our people.”<sup>60</sup>

Rizal’s martyrdom were articulated in the three news articles about the celebration of Rizal’s birthday. The June 19 article “Rizal’s 82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday

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<sup>56</sup> Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *The Fateful Years: Japan’s Adventure in the Philippines, 1941-45, Volume II* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2010), 930.

<sup>57</sup> Renato Constantino, “Veneration without Understanding,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 1, no. 4 (1972): 4, doi.org/10.1080/00472337185390141.

<sup>58</sup> Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People* (Quezon City: R.P. Garcia Pub, 1990), 396.

<sup>59</sup> Jan Assman and John Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 130, https://doi.org/10.2307/488538.

<sup>60</sup> Renato Constantino, “Veneration without Understanding,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 1, no. 4 (1972): 5, doi.org/10.1080/00472337185390141.

Fete Today” written in anticipation of the actual event on the said date reiterated Rizal’s sacrifice for the country’s independence.<sup>61</sup>

The June 20 post-event article “82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday Anniversary of Rizal Fittingly Observed” referred to his quest for Philippine independence as the reason for his death 47 years ago.<sup>62</sup> The third article “Rizal’s Day Fete Held in Tokyo” also published on June 20 called Rizal’s legacy to the country as “self-sacrificing service.”<sup>63</sup>

Meanwhile, in cultural memory’s characteristic of “capacity to reconstruct,” it “works by reconstructing, that is, it always relates its knowledge to an actual and contemporary situation.”<sup>64</sup> In the texts by *The Tribune*, it unleashed its capacity to reconstruct Rizal’s martyrdom by articulating that the Japanese will make such sacrifice of Rizal worthy and relevant by granting the Philippines its independence. These were manifested in the post-event article and the Vargas speech transcription, both published on June 20, and the editorial that came out on June 19.

In the June 20 news story about the post-event celebration of Rizal’s birthday, the article said that the reason for Rizal’s death 47 years ago was “within reach” because Japan would grant independence to the Philippines a few months from then.<sup>65</sup> In the June 19 editorial, it branded Rizal’s aspiration for the country as “Rizal’s dreams” in the context of attaining independence. It continued to declare that Rizal’s death had been “vindicated” with the forthcoming “full realization” of his dream because Japan is paving way for “a new and independent Philippines.” It explicitly and literally banked on the memory of Rizal, particularly with the lines “solemnly pledge over the memory of Rizal to give unstinted and whole-hearted cooperation with Nippon.” The editorial also contextualized the GEACOPS to unify all East Asians with an independent Philippines.<sup>66</sup>

Likewise, the speech of Vargas in the Gratitude Rally on June 19 also made a reference to Rizal’s dream, declaring in the former’s written address that the “glories of independence” that was the said dream will come true because of “the generous hands of the Great Japanese Empire.”<sup>67</sup> In his speech, Vargas

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<sup>61</sup> “Rizal’s 82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday Fete Today,” *The Tribune*, June 19, 1943, 1.

<sup>62</sup> “82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday Anniversary of Rizal Fittingly Observed,” *The Sunday Tribune*, June 20, 1943, 1.

<sup>63</sup> “Rizal’s Day Fete Held in Tokyo,” *The Sunday Tribune*, June 20, 1943, 3.

<sup>64</sup> Jan Assman and John Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 130, <https://doi.org/10.2307/488538>.

<sup>65</sup> “82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday Anniversary of Rizal Fittingly Observed,” *The Sunday Tribune*, June 20, 1943, 1.

<sup>66</sup> “Rizal’s Dream Come True,” *The Tribune*, June 19, 1943, 3.

<sup>67</sup> “Chairman Vargas’ Speech at Rally,” *The Sunday Tribune*, June 20, 1943, 4.

expounded that Japan “destroyed the American regime” in the Philippines but the Filipinos were “misled” in fighting the Japanese. He described Japan as an “elder brother” offering its hand to bring the Philippines in its “proper place in the family of Oriental nations.” He added that Japan had promised independence to the Philippines right from the very start.<sup>68</sup>

In the aspect of cultural memory’s “organization,” the articles in The Tribune communicated the institutionalization of Rizal’s memory to serve Japanese propaganda purpose. In cultural memory, organization is described as “the institutional buttressing of communication, e.g., through formulation of the communicative situation in ceremony, and the specialization of the bearers of cultural memory.”<sup>69</sup>

The articles in The Tribune further demonstrated the institutional buttressing of Rizal’s memory through the reporting of commemorative events in celebration of the Japanese-sponsored activities associated with Rizal’s birth anniversary. These was through the Rizal’s 82<sup>nd</sup> birth anniversary celebration in Manila, which were reported in the two articles in this study – one a pre-event story, the other a post-event story.

The pre-event story published on June 19, 1943 articulated the line-up of events for the occasion on that day, including the pilgrimage of Manila schoolchildren to the Rizal monument; a literary musical program spearheaded by the Department of Education, Health, and Public Welfare that will highlight the songs “Alin Mang Lahi” and “Song of Maria Clara,” supposedly composed and worded by Rizal; a band parade led by brass bands and the Filipino Band Association, and a Rizaliana linguistic exhibit at the legislative Building.<sup>70</sup>

Meanwhile, the post-event story published on June 20, 1943 provided the actual details of the events that were reported in The Tribune the next day. The pilgrimage to Rizal monument was participated in by pupils from 22 schools in Manila, concluded by a wreath-laying activity on the historical landmark. After this were special numbers, such as the tableau vivant on a Noli Me Tangere chapter and the delivery of speeches and poems that exalted the virtues and patriotism of Rizal. The band parade, on the other hand,

<sup>68</sup> “Chairman Vargas’ Speech at Rally,” *The Sunday Tribune*, June 20, 1943, 4.

<sup>69</sup> Jan Assman and John Czaplicka, “Collective Memory and Cultural Identity,” *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 131, <https://doi.org/10.2307/488538>.

<sup>70</sup> “Rizal’s 82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday Fete Today,” *The Tribune*, June 19, 1943, 1 and 6.

featured eight bands that marched from the Quiapo Church to the Rizal monument through Escolta.<sup>71</sup>

The literary musical program held at the former normal school auditorium and the Rizaliana exhibit at the Legislative Building also took place as originally planned. Vargas was reported to have graced these events from Luneta to the Legislative Building, together with the officials of Manila led by Figueras. Education commissioner Claro M. Recto's presence was also cited in the article, particularly in his announcement that the exhibit was extended until June 22, 1943 to further accommodate the general public.<sup>72</sup>

Two other ceremonies were intentionally held on the exact date of Rizal's birth anniversary with apparent intent to exhaust the cultural memory of Rizal, and these were also communicated in The Tribune articles.

First was the gratitude rally on June 19, 1943 at New Luneta in the afternoon after the Rizal's birth anniversary celebration, which was held "to manifest the Filipino people's profound gratitude to the Japanese Empire for the assurance given by Premier General Hideki Tozyo of the grant of independence to the Philippines within this year."<sup>73</sup> The article further described the gratitude rally as a coincidence to Rizal's birth anniversary and reiterated Vargas' Proclamation No. 19 that urged Filipinos, especially the Manileños, to take part in the event that was expected to gather "a mammoth throng."<sup>74</sup>

It was in this celebration where Vargas delivered his speech, whose transcription was also published by The Tribune the day after. In his speech, Vargas contextualized the essence of holding the rally during the birth anniversary of Rizal:

*"It is fitting and proper that we should meet to voice our overwhelming joy at the coming of our independence on this day commemorating the birth of Dr. Jose Rizal, for the day also approaches for the birth of that free and happy Philippines of which he dreamed..."<sup>75</sup>*

Second was the memorial luncheon of visiting Filipino inspection party in Tokyo at the Dai-iti Hotel. According to The Tribune article, the event became an avenue for the Filipino contingent to remember Rizal's "self-

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<sup>71</sup> "82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday Anniversary of Rizal Fittingly Observed," *The Sunday Tribune*, June 20, 1943, 1 and 12.

<sup>72</sup> "82<sup>nd</sup> Birthday," 1 and 12.

<sup>73</sup> "Filipinos to Give Thanks to Japan," *The Tribune*, June 19, 1943, 1.

<sup>74</sup> "Filipinos to Give," 5.

<sup>75</sup> "Chairman Vargas' Speech at Rally," *The Sunday Tribune*, June 20, 1943, 4.

sacrificing service” for the country and to thank Japan for its promised independence.<sup>76</sup>

### The Necessary Propaganda Before The Inevitable Second Republic

This study only focused on a two-day reporting of only one newspaper that is The Tribune during the implementation of propaganda in the more than three years of Japanese occupation of the Philippines. And yet, this couple of days were filled with text that persuaded the Filipinos to believe the Japanese cause by exhausting the memory of Rizal.

The persistence of Japanese propaganda during World War II in the Philippines was necessary and inevitable. The organized Propaganda Corps and the maximum utilization of the press were crucial to gain the trust of the Filipinos.<sup>77</sup>

Even before the War, Japanese propaganda – or at least maintaining Japan’s good image in the Philippines – had been there. As early as the 1920s, Japan had picqued the curiosity of the Filipinos, at the time it was negotiating its independence from the Americans. Japan was portrayed in the media as the only independent Asian country.<sup>78</sup> The American period was a heyday for the Japanese in the Philippines, and they entered the archipelago virtually without restriction. They were able to socialize with government officials, influential Filipinos, and even journalists.<sup>79</sup>

However, it was its economic interests in the Philippines that served as Japan’s pre-war motivation to its cultural policy to attract Filipinos to Japan. They wanted the Filipinos to see and appreciate Japan. This sustained Japan’s dialogue with the Philippines in the last five years of the 1930s.<sup>80</sup> The Tribune itself, which had established its independence from the Quezon administration, was manifesting a pro-Japanese tone, at least from an observation and a report in 1936.<sup>81</sup> The newspaper, in fact, featured contents sponsored by the Japanese, such as a series of articles about Japan in the late

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<sup>76</sup> “Rizal’s Day Fete Held in Tokyo,” *The Sunday Tribune*, June 20, 1943, 3.

<sup>77</sup> Motoe Terami-Wada, “The Japanese Propaganda Corps in the Philippines,” *Philippine Studies* 38 (1990): 287, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42633191>.

<sup>78</sup> Lydia N. Yu-Jose, “Building Cultural Bridges: The Philippines and Japan in the 1930s,” *Philippine Studies* 49, no. 3 (2001): 415, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42634450>.

<sup>79</sup> Lydia N. Yu-Jose, “World War II and the Japanese in the Prewar Philippines,” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27, no. 1 (1996): 68, 73, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20071758>.

<sup>80</sup> Lydia N. Yu-Jose, “Building Cultural Bridges: The Philippines and Japan in the 1930s,” *Philippine Studies* 49, no. 3 (2001): 415, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42634450>.

<sup>81</sup> Ricardo T. Jose, “The Tribune during the Japanese Occupation,” *Philippine Studies* 38 (1990): 47, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42633163>.

1930s and a female popularity contest with a prize of an all-expense-paid trip to the Land of the Rising Sun.<sup>82</sup>

While the Philippines was on the brink of securing independence from the Americans and to stand on its own feet, Japan wanted for the Philippines to still depend on Japanese labor and capital. This desire led the Japanese to pursue diplomacy, agitation, and even illegal means to maintain its economic interests in the Philippines.<sup>83</sup> In the midst of promoting Tagalog as the national language of the Philippines during the Commonwealth period, Japan came up with the Japan Information Bulletin to counter unfavorable information about them using the vernacular, including a Tagalog column in April 1938 and a Tagalog conversation book in 1939.<sup>84</sup>

Returning to the Tribune articles, through Assman's lens of cultural memory, the Japanese drew upon the memory of Rizal to target the Filipino's culture of valuing independence, as the Japanese were "fascinated with the life and courage of Dr. Jose Rizal."<sup>85</sup>

It was not only Rizal's memory, but also those of other historical figures – both living and deceased during World War II – that was exploited by the Japanese to serve its purpose. A number of Japanese journalists and writers – some "infamous" and "forgotten" as described by Serizawa – also wrote and produced knowledge about Andres Bonifacio and Emilio Aguinaldo that were influenced by American discourse.<sup>86</sup>

For instance, Tomizo Hanano, in his 1942 work *Biography of Jose Rizal* (with Japanese title *Jose Rizal den*), incorporated the struggle of Bonifacio in the study of Rizal amid the existing comparison between the two, which the "white writers" he referred to favored the latter. By combining Rizal's thought and Bonifacio's practice of the Philippine Revolution, Hanano sought to justify Japanese invasion "under the pretext of protecting Asian peoples from Western powers."<sup>87</sup>

Meanwhile, Zentoku Nakahara, in the *Race and Life in the Philippine Archipelago* (with the Japanese title *Firipinguntōno Minzoku to Seikatsu*)

<sup>82</sup> Jose, "The Tribune," 47.

<sup>83</sup> Lydia N. Yu-Jose, "World War II and the Japanese in the Prewar Philippines," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 27, no. 1 (1996): 74, 75, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20071758>.

<sup>84</sup> Yu-Jose, "World War II," 77-78.

<sup>85</sup> Mariano C. Javier, "Japanese Cultural Propaganda in the Philippines," *Asian Studies: Journal of Critical Perspectives on Asia* 13, no. 3 (1975): 57.

<sup>86</sup> Takamichi Serizawa, "Japanese Solidarity Discourse on the Philippines during the Second World War," *Philippine Studies: Historical & Ethnographic Viewpoints* 63, no. 1 (2015): 71, 76, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24672308>.

<sup>87</sup> Serizawa, "Japanese Solidarity," 81-82.

published in 1942, concluded that Aguinaldo's negative image was a creation of the Americans. Nakahara made a reference to Aguinaldo's personal account of the Philippine Revolution in 1899, and stated the Japanese' own perspective of the first Philippine President.<sup>88</sup>

Ki Kimura, who wrote the book *Aguinaldo's Independence Army* in 1943, argued that the American propaganda portrayed Aguinaldo in a negative light – a “trap set up by the enemy.” Kimura added that Aguinaldo's surrender to the Americans was unavoidable as a result of Frederick Funston's conspiracy with the Macabebe Scouts.<sup>89</sup>

But unlike Rizal and Bonifacio who were both dead in the time of Japanese propaganda that exploited their memory, Aguinaldo was still alive. He was not only used by the Japanese in recognition of his influence to a significant number of Filipinos based on the result of the 1935 Presidential Elections, but he also collaborated with Japan.<sup>90</sup>

In the June 12, 1943 convention of the *Asociación de los Veteranos de la Revolución* (Association of Veterans of the Revolution), Aguinaldo pledged cooperation to Japan in building GEACOPS.<sup>91</sup> Aguinaldo also attended the inauguration of the Second Philippine Republic and was still involved in the undertakings of the Japanese Propaganda Corps, particularly in convincing the surrender of the guerrillas in Luzon.<sup>92</sup>

However, the Filipinos' perception and reception to Japanese propaganda were a different matter. As Ricardo T. Jose noted about *The Tribune* during the Japanese period: “The propaganda was not effective.”<sup>93</sup> He added that “since much of this was propaganda and Japanese-style newspaper writing, it created an unsavory reputation among many readers.”<sup>94</sup> With only a few people believing *The Tribune*, the newspaper was described by some as “baloney,” “utterly despicable,” and “wishful thinking.”<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Serizawa, “Japanese Solidarity,” 81.

<sup>89</sup> Takamichi Serizawa, “Japanese Solidarity Discourse on the Philippines during the Second World War,” *Philippine Studies: Historical & Ethnographic Viewpoints* 63, no. 1 (2015): 83, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24672308>.

<sup>90</sup> Satoshi Ara, “Emilio Aguinaldo under American and Japanese Rule: Submission for Independence?,” *Philippine Studies: Historical & Ethnographic Viewpoints* 63, no. 2 (2015): 170, 172, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24672333>.

<sup>91</sup> Ara, “Emilio Aguinaldo,” 170, 172.

<sup>92</sup> Ara, “Emilio Aguinaldo,” 181.

<sup>93</sup> Ricardo T. Jose, “Tribune as a Tool of Japanese Propaganda, 1942-45,” *Philippine Studies* 38 (1990): 145, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42633175>.

<sup>94</sup> Jose, “Tribune as a Tool,” 139.

<sup>95</sup> Jose, “Tribune as a Tool,” 144.

It is also important to point out that despite Japan's deliberate association of Rizal to their sponsored Second Republic under the principle of GEACOPS, Rizal never explicitly espoused an Asian for Asian values. Rizal's six-week visit to Japan in 1888 was not enough to label him as a pan-Asianist, let alone a Japanophile. Instead, as Matthiessen insisted, Rizal was a cosmopolitan, who also visited other countries aside from Japan. He was a Filipino patriot who wrote his anti-colonial pieces using Spanish, the language of the colonizer.<sup>96</sup>

While The Tribune continued to publish during the Japanese occupation "amidst a skeptical, disbelieving audience,"<sup>97</sup> the original TVT newspapers never saw print after the war; the company revitalized with new faces, but not to regain its former pre-war glory.<sup>98</sup>

Nevertheless, the promised declaration of Philippine Independence that marked the Second Republic of the Philippines was fulfilled by the Japanese. In his inaugural address on October 14, 1943 as its President, Jose P. Laurel described this milestone as a fulfilment of the centuries-old aspiration of the Filipino people, paid with "full price of blood and treasure for freedom." In Laurel's tribute of thanksgiving to Filipino heroes of independence in his speech, Rizal still persisted in the messaging, albeit implicitly and this time mentioned collectively with other Filipino heroes, with Laurel saying: "The long night of vigil is ended. You have not died in vain. The spirit of Mactan, of Balintawak, of **Bagumbayan**, of Malolos, and Bataan lives again!"<sup>99</sup> \*

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<sup>96</sup> Sven Matthiessen, "Re-orienting the Philippines: the KALIBAPI Party and the Application of Japanese Pan-Asianism," *Modern Asian Studies* 53, no. 2. (2019): 571-572, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26627321>.

<sup>97</sup> Matthiessen, "Re-orienting the Philippines," 146.

<sup>98</sup> D.H. Soriano, et al., *The Roces Family Publishers, with a History of the Philippine Press* (Manila: Islas Filipinas Pub, 1987), 50.

<sup>99</sup> Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *The Fateful Years: Japan's Adventure in the Philippines, 1941-45, Volume II* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 2010), 932.

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