

# Images of Militarism and Modernity in Japanese Wartime Propaganda in the *Tribune*

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## ABSTRACT

Japanese propaganda in the Philippines during the Pacific War (1941–1945) was focused on enticing the Filipinos to cooperate with Japan, a stronger and more dependable ally than the Western Allies. Medical, military, engineering, and other marvels of Japanese technology were showcased to reinforce this image. The Japanese also championed a modern mindset packaged as uniquely ‘Asian’ – if not ‘Japanese’ – frequently juxtaposing themselves to their Filipino counterparts to emphasize their connection. This article examines the use of propaganda through a content analysis of images from the *Tribune*, the principal organ of propaganda of the Japanese in the Philippines. The analysis has identified two themes among the images presented in the *Tribune*: images of war and the military and images of Japanese modernity in technology and mindset. The article argues that these themes were instrumental in forwarding an image of Japanese supremacy. Studying Japanese propaganda is an opportunity to look at media strategies employed by the Japanese during the war and an attempt to investigate the ideas of militarism and modernity in relation to their discourse of superiority. Ultimately, this study is an exercise on the use of alternative historical sources and an application of critical perspectives in analyzing wartime propaganda.

**Keywords:** Japanese propaganda, Pacific War, Philippine history, visual analysis

## INTRODUCTION

When the combined forces of the Filipinos and Americans succumbed to the power of Japan during World War II, the Japanese Imperial Army marched through the streets of Manila, then declared an Open City. Filipino guerrillas continued the struggle against the Japanese in the countryside, while the Japanese made it their primary concern to restore order in the occupied areas. The task of ensuring a semblance of normalcy fell into the hands of a group of Japanese civilians called the Japanese Propaganda Corps.

The following were the first few orders they received: gain control of newspaper publishing houses and reopen them as soon as possible, capture the radio stations and fix broadcast equipment to return to the air as quickly as possible, and reopen theaters and movie houses (Terami-Wada 1990, 287). The Japanese gave particular attention to media since they surmised that because the Filipinos are “cultured, but read very little” as they prefer to spend their time listening to the radio or watching movies, “accepting whatever they see or hear” (Terami-Wada 1990, 283).

However, this special attention of the Japanese to propaganda could be traced to a time before the war. The Japanese have been in the Philippines even before World War II as businessmen, laborers, fishers, farmers, and other kinds of trades (Yu-Jose 1996, 71). Many were also popular as shopkeepers selling a variety of curio, or even as *karayuki* or prostitutes, lining up underneath tamarind trees with their faces whitened with makeup, enticing foreign and local customers alike (Terami-Wada 1986; Jose 1998). The Japanese were aware of their image to the Filipinos, which they sought to improve through intercultural and education exchanges. When the war started, the Japanese intended to continue this project of improving their image through propaganda. They showered Filipinos with pamphlets, booklets, posters, and other types of reading materials (Terami-Wada 1990, 285). Propaganda highlighted the excellent relationship between the Filipinos and the Japanese, primarily through visuals present in the form of photojournalism, cartoons, and comic strips, among others. These materials aimed to legitimize the membership of the Philippines to the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, an envisioned bloc of Asian nations free from Western powers (De Bary 2008, 622).

There is sufficient interest in the scholarship of the Pacific War in the Philippines, but studies that focus on the nature and development of Japanese propaganda are lacking. One particular aspect that this study seeks to focus on is Japan’s central propaganda messaging of juxtaposing their image to the West. In another article (Candelaria 2021), the author explored how Japanese wartime propaganda in the Philippines portrayed Filipino women and the discourse of womanhood through a content analysis of visual propaganda in the *Tribune*, Japan’s main organ of propaganda in the Philippines. This study expounds on separate themes evident in the analysis of Japanese wartime propaganda – militarism and modernity – and how these propaganda lines reveal that Japan’s positioning as liberators of the

colonial yoke is also an assertion of its naturally superior position. This assertion is evident in the framing and messaging of visual propaganda. Consequently, this study of propaganda offers a peek into the mentality and methods of the Japanese as it fashioned itself as the leader of Asia.

This article is organized as follows. The first section discusses the sources and methods utilized in this research, as well as the significance and scope of the study. The second section explains theories on propaganda and the use of critical mass media perspectives in analyzing Japanese wartime propaganda. The third section provides a background on the *Tribune* and how it became the main organ of Japanese propaganda during the war. Sections four and five present the themes of militarism and modernity as gleaned from the content analysis of visual sources found in the *Tribune*. The conclusion sums up the article and discusses how the discourses derived from analyzing wartime propaganda could resonate with the issues of today.

This research focuses on visual propaganda: photojournalism, cartoons, and comic strips from the *Tribune*, a daily newspaper that was considered as the main organ of propaganda of the Japanese. The focus on visual propaganda is based on the fact that images are more accessible than words; the relatively short Japanese interregnum in the Philippines did not provide Filipinos a working competency to understand the Japanese language.

The study utilized 1004 issues of the *Tribune*, which yielded 3,267 photographs, 264 cartoons and drawings, and 248 comic strips. It used visual content analysis, an empirical, observational, and objective procedure for quantifying recorded visual representation by using reliable, explicitly defined categories (Bell 2001). Note, however, that the scope of the study is limited to 1942 to 1944, the most active years of the Japanese-controlled *Tribune*. From late 1944 until the end of the war in 1945, the images decreased as the *Tribune's* pages dwindled. The last few months of the daily were dedicated to delivering hard news, where visual propaganda through images and feature articles was less pronounced, if not completely absent.

Research on the Japanese occupation of the Philippines has usually focused on the political and military aspect, owing to the vastness of historical sources present, from official government documents in the Philippines, Japan, and the United States. Another aspect that research has concentrated on are biographies and memoirs, either of military or political leaders or other personalities in the war. A distinct gap in the literature is research on different aspects of the war to complete the picture (Mojares 1982). In this vein, this research aims to use an alternative source, that is, visual propaganda, to look into the messaging of the Japanese to gain insights into an unexplored aspect of the war.

This study is inspired by the studies of Motoe Terami-Wada (1984, 1990) on the Japanese Propaganda Corps in the Philippines, and Ricardo Trota Jose's articles on the *Tribune* during the war (1990a, 1990b).

These works were essential in providing a background to the institutions responsible for propaganda during the war. What sets this study apart from these works is the attention to visual sources, particularly photographs, cartoons, and comic strips, and the content analysis employed to identify the main themes and the meaning potentials conveyed. This study is somewhat similar to Karl Ian Cheng Chua's (2005) research on comic strips in the *Tribune*, and the analysis of the latent meanings behind the popular sequential art form is echoed here. A key difference, however, is that this study covers all visual sources in the *Tribune*. It is a contribution to the use not just of propaganda, but also of photojournalistic and hand-drawn images as visual sources to explore the aims of Japan in the Philippines, and how these aims were communicated in the *Tribune*. Grounding the analysis on critical perspectives is also a crucial distinction.

Jowett and O'Donnell (2005) proposed ten stages of analyzing propaganda: 1) the ideology and purpose of the propaganda campaign; 2) the context in which the propaganda occurs; 3) identification of the propagandist; 4) the structure of the propaganda organization; 5) the target audience; 6) media utilization techniques; 7) various special techniques; 8) audience reaction to various techniques; 9) counterpropaganda, if present; and 10) effects and evaluation (269). The present study excludes stages eight to ten, which deal with audience reception, reaction, and counterpropaganda. While it would be ideal for extrapolating how Japanese propaganda was received, the usual evidence of audience reception used by other scholars are existing memoirs from the period. These memoirs, while valuable primary accounts, are often anecdotal, and cannot always provide a complete picture of audience reactions. As Jowett and O'Donnell suggested, it is not always possible to find all information one needs to make a complete analysis, but answering many questions contained within their proposed ten categories allows a thorough picture and understanding of propaganda to emerge (287).

## **THEORIES OF WARTIME PROPAGANDA**

Studies of wartime propaganda began as an effort to understand and analyze World War I propaganda, of which, Lasswell's *Propaganda Technique in the World War* (1927) was most prominent. In this work, propaganda is defined as "the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols" (Lasswell as cited in Scriver 2015, 396). Lasswell argued that there are six significant factors in successful propaganda: 1) one must fasten guilt to the enemy for creating contexts of war; 2) one must claim a unity of the people through claims of common history and favor by God and proclaim the inevitability of victory; 3) war aims must be clearly stated and appeal to culturally held ideals, such as freedom, peace, and security; 4) disseminating examples of the enemy's depravity serves to strengthen the belief that the enemy is responsible for the war; 5) unfavorable news should be cast as enemy lies in order to prevent disunity and defeatism; and 6) horror stories that cast the enemy in poor

light should be told, dehumanizing the enemy and thus, justifies violent action (396). These significant factors have, in one way or another, inspired many of the subsequent studies of propaganda.

While propaganda in itself is not value-free, propaganda, as a concept, is. Thus, propaganda could not be easily dismissed as an interconnected, collected string of lies and deceit with a specific agenda. According to Stanley B. Cunningham, “ersatz truth” emanates from propaganda (2002, 4). It is not merely a way to persuade, because persuasion is a dialog to truths that are acceptable to all parties. It is the “deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandists” (Jowett and O’Donnell 2005, 7). Propaganda targets emotions while persuasion targets logic. It is a collection of methods to influence mass action, the reason why it invades the social psychology of a population (Kushner 2006, 4). While it is challenging to shape the way a group thinks, once it is done, it is hard to take away. According to Hiroshi Minami, a Japanese historian and social scientist, when a group develops a way of thinking, the social pressure to conform drowns individual opinion, and this psychological instrument is thoroughly utilized by propaganda (2004, 385). Propaganda appears to be devoid of logic and reason, mainly because it aims to rouse action, not thinking.

Propaganda is not inherently or intrinsically evil or immoral – it has been linked to mass movements such as suffrage, the abolition of slavery, and environmental conservation (Auerbach and Castronovo 2013, 5). The nexus of war and media during World War I, the interwar years, and World War II have resulted in the powerful pejorative assumptions attributed to propaganda. Scholars of propaganda studies have since called for a reexamination of propaganda by “treating propaganda not as a term of disrepute, but simply as a mode of mass persuasion, neither good nor evil, that can be enlisted for a variety of purposes and with a variety of results” (5).

Propaganda, in the time of total war, creates a context that requires special attention. Sharalyn Orbaugh, in her work *Propaganda performed: Kamishibai in Japan’s Fifteen-Year War* (2015), argued that propaganda produced and launched during wartime are consumed by “people who are tired, hungry, grieving, and generally frightened, which may have intensified their affective impact” (7). Orbaugh wrote that despite this, the audience’s agency remains: “[M]any people are capable of actively resisting mental manipulation and will analyze and reject the messages... they are offered” (7). While this study does not attempt to measure Filipino reaction to propaganda, an analysis of the methods and message of Japanese wartime propaganda in the Philippines has the potential to reveal the discourses that Japan aimed to forward to Filipinos.

## THE *TRIBUNE* AS PROPAGANDA

The Japanese already kept tabs on the Philippines and media activity in the country before the war. Choosing the *Tribune* to be the main organ of propaganda, therefore, not coincidental. The *Tribune* was known as a trustworthy newspaper in Manila and is part of the chain of newspapers owned by Alejandro Roces's TVT (*Tribune*, *La Vanguardia*, *Taliba*) publishing corporation (Jose 1990a, 46). Roces favored journalistic independence and strived to show a balanced view of events. Later on, the *Tribune* would call itself "the Independent Filipino daily" and "the newspaperman's newspaper." Many of its writers were formerly from the rival daily, *Philippines Herald*, whose closeness to Philippine President Quezon caused discontent among its staff (Jose 1990a, 46).

The *Tribune* had the biggest circulation among major dailies in Manila in July 1941: around 70,000 for the special weekly Sunday issue and about 35,000 for its daily iteration (46). The Japanese Consulate in the Philippines deemed the anti-Quezon and anti-American sentiments of the *Tribune* as something noteworthy and reported to Tokyo that it was starting to become pro-Japanese after the consulate sponsored a series of Japan-Philippines friendship articles in 1935. In 1936, this was followed by a competition for readers, with an all-expenses-paid trip to Japan as a prize (47).

On December 8, 1941, war reached the Philippine shores earlier than expected. It was clear that the Japanese were closing in on Manila. The *Tribune* began toning down its references to the Japanese and newspaper staffers burned their files, afraid that these might be used against them (49). As the Japanese entered Manila on January 2, 1942, the offices of *Bulletin* and the *Free Press* were padlocked, while some, such as the *Debate-Mabuhay-Herald-Monday Mail* (DMHM) building, had already been bombed and destroyed earlier. While the *Tribune* continued to publish freely, the tone was cautious and by January 5, Japanese civilian censors entered the *Tribune* offices (50).

It was later in January that the *Sendenbu* or the Japanese Propaganda Corps took over. The Japanese Propaganda Corps released a set of guidelines for any newspaper to reopen: a permit from the military must be secured, the publication will go through military censure, and heavy penalties would be meted out to those who would not abide (Lent, 1971, 203). The *Tribune*, once under the supervision of the *Sendenbu*, attempted to feign normalcy by running the usual columns and sections that had a following even before the war. Nevertheless, the control is evident in the tone of the opinion pieces that seemed very pro-government. It also reported on the war regularly: its front-page mainly featured news and updates about the Japanese military campaign.

Filipinos know that the *Tribune* of the war is Japanese propaganda. Filipino historian Teodoro Agoncillo attributed the popularity of the *Tribune* to the quality of the paper, great for wrapping goods and thin enough for cigarette wrappers (Constantino 1994, 19). Nonetheless, in a time of war, news

is news – Terami-Wada (1990, 283) contended that Filipinos were hungry for any update about the war.

Aside from reporting about the “imminent victory” of Japan in the war, the pages of the daily focused on teaching Japanese culture and language, removing Western influences, and suggesting practical solutions to everyday economic problems. Cheng Chua (2005), in his analysis of comic strips in the *Tribune*, identified these more apparent topics of Japanese propaganda. Beyond the manifest propaganda lines, his visual analysis of images in the *Tribune* showed the latent positioning of Japan’s military might and modernity to assert racial supremacy. This article focuses on two sets of images that were prevalent in the content analysis of the daily’s images: images of war and the military, and images of modern Japanese technology and modernity.

### **DEPICTING PHYSICAL EXERCISE, THE MILITARY, AND WAR**

Of the 3267 photojournalistic images surveyed from the *Tribune*, 520 images were classified under the theme of images portraying Filipinos and Japanese in military formation, military training, exercising, or participating in activities connected to the military campaign. On the other hand, only 18 out of 264 cartoons and 248 comic strips featured the same themes, since stories in the script featured everyday scenarios. While it could be argued that the proliferation of military images is but logical during the time of war, the repetition of these images supports the argument of a conscious effort from the Japanese to position Japan’s supremacy in terms of military might, which is nonetheless crucial in establishing their capacity to win the war.

The proliferation of military images is also consistent with the Empire of Japan’s emphasis on militarism represented by the national slogan *Fukoku kyouhei* (富国強兵, Enrich the Country, Strengthen the Armed Forces) (Holcombe 2001, 16). As a policy, *Fukoku kyouhei* aimed to strengthen Japan’s economic and industrial foundations to build a strong military, which served as Japan’s ticket to join the fascist powers Germany and Italy.

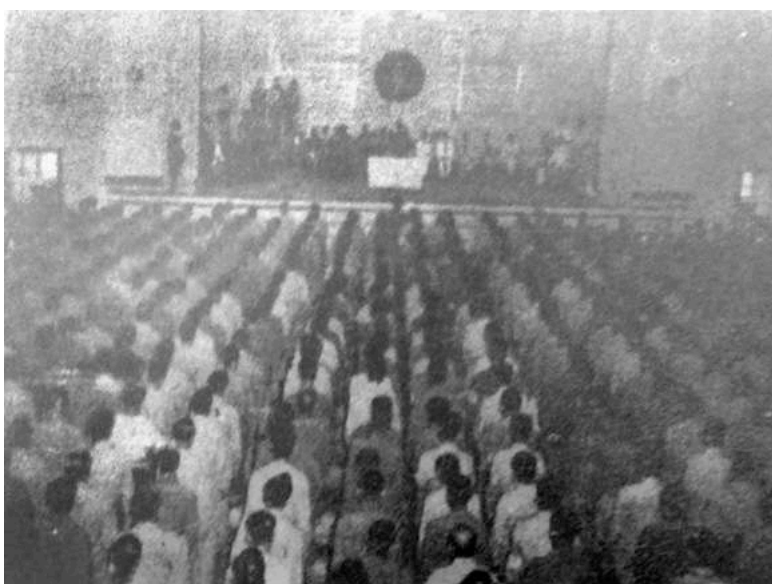
It was important for the Japanese to utilize the Filipinos as human resources during the war. The conscription and training of Filipinos into the Philippine Constabulary were, therefore, eventual. Images of Filipinos training to be soldiers were regularly printed in the daily, and their graduation ceremonies reported (Figure 1). Aside from the Constabulary Academy, the *Tribune* also reported the recruitment in prison camps. Filipino prisoners of war (POW) underwent re-education and re-training, which was reported as a milestone because recruitment in prison camps was not a common practice. The accompanying caption of the image in Figure 2 says: “Unparalleled in the history of international warfare was this unusual commencement exercise at which 1,400 former ranking officers of the

Philippine Army who had been taken prisoners of war were graduated by the Hodoo-bu (sic) of the Imperial Japanese Forces after a 26-day training preparatory to reversion to the Philippine Constabulary.” These reports run counter to the Japanese treatment of prisoners of war established in numerous primary accounts, official reports, and scholarly research: official casualty reports in 1944 account to about 27,000, or 80 percent of Filipino POWs during the first half of captivity (U.S. Military Intelligence Division, 1944).

Police force recruitment was also featured in the newspaper since it was vital to maintain peace and order and mitigate the worsening criminality in the country. Recruits were usually college students and POWs who pledged allegiance to the Japanese (Figure 3).

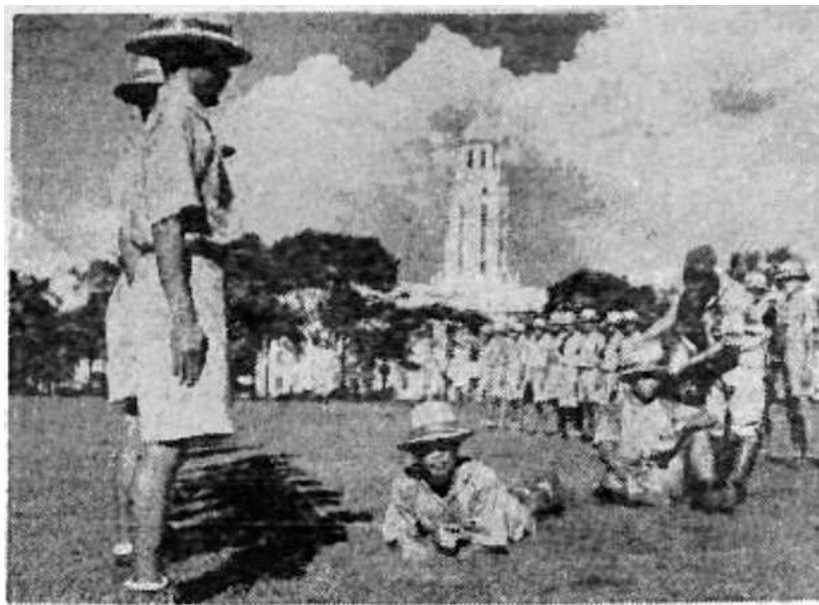


**Figure 1. Graduation ceremonies of Branches 1 and 2 of the Constabulary Academy. *Tribune* reported that 500 graduates were included in the event. *Sunday Tribune* (Manila), December 20, 1942.**



**Figure 2. Commencement exercises of 1400 former soldiers and officials of the Philippine Army that were to join the Philippine Constabulary. The re-training of the prisoners of war was held at Camp del Pilar. *Tribune* (Manila), August 11, 1942, 5.**





**Figure 3. Police recruits training at a public park in Intramuros, Manila.**  
*Tribune (Manila)*, December 1, 1942, 2.

The amicable relations between the Philippines and Japan were usually featured through events where Filipinos and Japanese interacted. An example of this is the *New Life Camp*, a program for young Filipino boys to train and learn with their Japanese counterparts. It was held in Balara and lasted for ten days. The boys trained in swimming (Figure 4), calisthenics, and basic military routines and were introduced to the Japanese language and culture. Photographs of the camp featured several of these activities, including the Japanese wrestling sport of sumo (Figure 5) and rifle drills (Figure 6).



**Figure 4. Filipino and Japanese children pose for a photo while swimming in Balara.** *Sunday Tribune (Manila)*, April 18, 1943, 5.



**Figure 5. Filipino and Japanese children practicing "sportsmanship" through wrestling. *Sunday Tribune* (Manila), April 18, 1943, 5.**



**Figure 6. Officials of the Japanese Military Administration observing and inspecting the military drills performed by the trainees at the New Life Camp. *Sunday Tribune* (Manila), April 25, 1943, 6.**

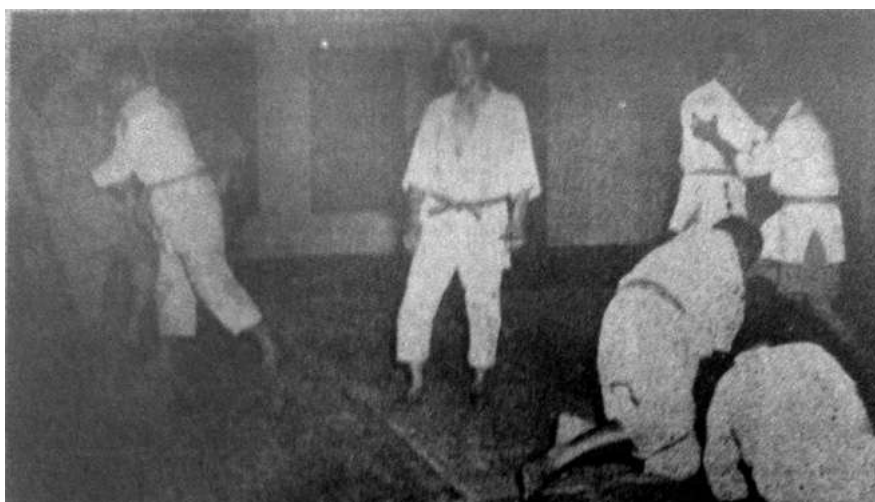
Public military exhibitions were also held to showcase the military power of Japan. Weapons and military vehicles such as tanks were exhibited in these events, and demonstrations of the superior military capabilities of Japan were featured. Prominent Japanese military leaders gamely displayed their techniques and shared their expertise (Figure 7). Filipino soldiers are also showcased in numerous photographs while in their uniforms and demonstrating their use of arms. The captions to these images often highlighted the athleticism, discipline, and endurance of the Filipino soldiers as a result of the

Japanese training they received. Other military and police training also featured Japanese sports, such as Sumo and Judo. In an article titled "Zyudo: the 'art of conquering by yielding,'" Filipino police recruits are shown training in this Japanese martial art (Figure 8). It is evident through these images that the Japanese were transplanting their belief that a strong military, coupled with Japanese training and practice, should form the foundation of nation-building for the Philippines.

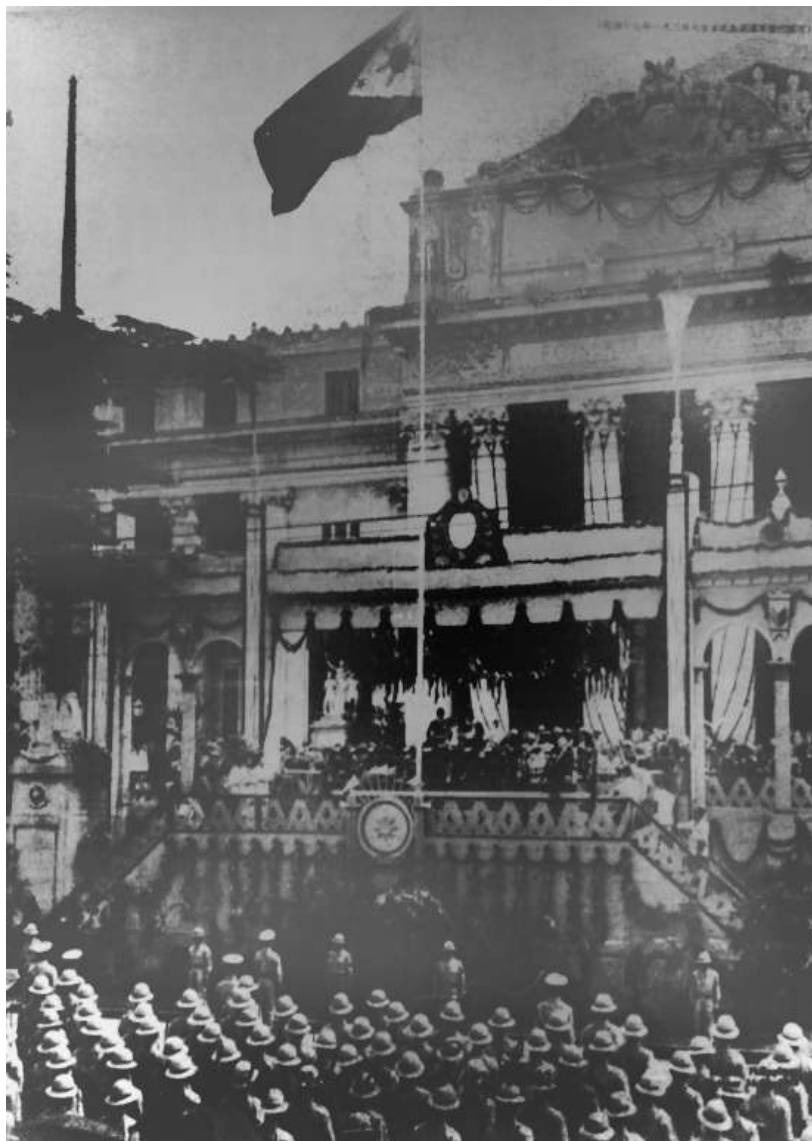


**Figure 7. Japanese General Hideki Tojo demonstrates for the Philippine Constabulary during an exhibition. *Tribune* (Manila), May 2, 1943, 6.**

The military as the primary institution of nation-building is featured in the celebration of the granting of independence by Japan to the Philippines on 14 October 1943. In a special issue of the Pictorial Review of the *Sunday Tribune*, the inauguration of the new Philippine republic showcased elaborate military exhibitions, many of which were featured in the release (Figure 9).



**Figure 8. Police trainees practice Judo as part of their regular training. *Tribune* (Manila), October 25, 1942, 4.**



**Figure 9. The military formation occupies stage front as independence was bestowed on Filipinos by the Japanese during the inauguration of the new Philippine Republic on 14 October 1943. *Sunday Tribune* (Manila), October 17, 1943, 3.**

In the first issue of the *Tribune* comic strip "Kalibapi Family" on 10 October 1943, we also see the military's special position. The strip's issue, titled "Salute to the Flag" (Figure 10), features one of the protagonists, a boy named Bayani, running while holding a dummy rifle. He called on his sister, Nene, younger brother, Totoy, and cousin, Nena, to salute the flag. The final frame of the strip features the Philippine flag. Bayani is shown doing the rifle salute, while Nene, Totoy, and Nena bow. Interestingly, bowing as a form of salutation to the flag is not a Filipino custom, but a Japanese one. The strip's author, Tony Velasquez, who came to be known later as the Father of Filipino Komiks, was a known comics illustrator who probably worked under strict Japanese censorship during the war.



Figure 10. "Kalibapi Family," *Tribune* (Manila), October 10, 1943.



Figure 11. The original caption of this image reads:  
 "Even Japanese children in the Philippines participate in  
 Radio Taiso." *Sunday Tribune* (Manila), October 18, 1942, 1.

Another militaristic activity that the Japanese hoped to inculcate into every Filipino is daily morning exercising. Called 'Radio Taiso' (体操, physical exercise), this warm-up calisthenics performed to regular morning radio broadcasts initially started in Japan in 1928 to improve the health of Japanese soldiers at home and abroad during the 1930s and 1940s (Fukue 2009). These exercises were introduced to Japan's occupied territories during the Pacific War. Filipinos were encouraged to wake up at 7:00 am to exercise along with the radio broadcast; otherwise, they could also do it in the afternoon (Soriano 1954, 148). The schedule of the radio station KZRH was regularly printed in the *Tribune* to serve as a guide for readers. Musical pieces and illustrations of the exercises were also printed, most commonly in

1942, when the campaign for the exercise was new and just taking root. A special feature of the *Sunday Tribune* about the exercise was issued on 18 October 1942, where Filipinos and Japanese were shown doing different exercises (Figures 11 and 12).



Figure 12. Young boys do the Taiso. *Sunday Tribune* (Manila), October 18, 1942, 1.

The exercises were also featured in comic strips and cartoons. In an anonymous cartoon released on 16 October 1942 (Figure 13) and titled "Health First...." the reception of Filipinos to Radio Taiso was featured with a young boy, a man, a woman, and some animals (frog and turtle) exercising. The cartoon's caption said: "Here's how interest in radio taiso strikes a Japanese cartoonist." Notice that the Japanese sun is prominently featured in the cartoon, above the exercisers. The cartoon is an illustration of the news article "12,000 Will Take Part in Mass Calisthenics Drill Tomorrow," which announced that school children and government employees would participate in the first mass calisthenics drill in Manila, to be held in Luneta Park.



Figure 13. An unnamed Japanese artist's impression on the reception of Filipinos to Radio Taiso. *Tribune* (Manila), October 16, 1942, 2.



In another “Kalibapi Family” comic strip, we see how Radio Taiso was directly linked to the ideals of a soldier. The strip, titled “Daily Taiso, Sturdy Sundalo” (Figure 14), showed Nene waking up her younger brother Totoy to do the morning exercise. Their mother scolds Nene for bothering the still sleepy Totoy, to which, Nene retorts: “But Inay... He is a boy, he must exercise to grow up to be a strong soldier!”



Figure 14. *Tribune* (Manila), October 17, 1943.

Radio Taiso has also been considered by scholars Ricardo Trota Jose and Lydia Yu-Jose (1997) as an attempt by the Japanese to establish their dominance over Filipinos (126–127). The teaching of discipline through morning exercises, done only by following an invisible authority and represented only by music and voices from the radio, reiterated to the Filipinos that they must follow authority, even when it was practically absent.

The discipline of waking early and improving one’s physical capabilities has been an essential ideal for soldiers. As Nene in the comic strip (Figure 14) puts it, exercise must be practiced, especially by young boys, because growing up to be a soldier was vital for the country. This ideal also highlighted the creation of a strong military for the country, since the Philippines was then preparing for independence that was to be bestowed by Japan on 14 October 1943.

In analyzing war and armed forces in the postcolonial perspective, Barkawi (2013) noted that war and the military play an essential but underacknowledged role in Eurocentric constructions of modernity, as armed forces are conceived as “embodying nationalism, rationality, and high technology, and are sharply distinguished from pre-modern, non-Western ‘warriors’ and indigenous military traditions” (88). However, a postcolonial critique of the regular military shows that it is a cosmopolitan institution – while a Western construct, the military is at home anywhere in the world, especially in Japan. Thus, Japan’s juxtaposition of its image to that of the West was an assertion that they were the leaders of Asia – a military power that was capable of outdoing the Filipino’s former colonial masters.

## THE ALLURE OF TECHNOLOGY AND MODERNITY

In analyzing Japanese propaganda in the Philippines, it is imperative to note that the Japanese strategically used their purported technological and economic development to entice Filipinos, whose model for growth was the United States. Japan intended to show an image of its country that equaled or even surpassed the Americans, and that the Philippines did not have to look to the West for guidance since Japan was a nearby Asian neighbor. The *Tribune* is replete with articles and images that serve as proof of this development. The study identified 308 photographs and 60 cartoons and comic strips consistent with Japan's propaganda line concerning technology and modernity.

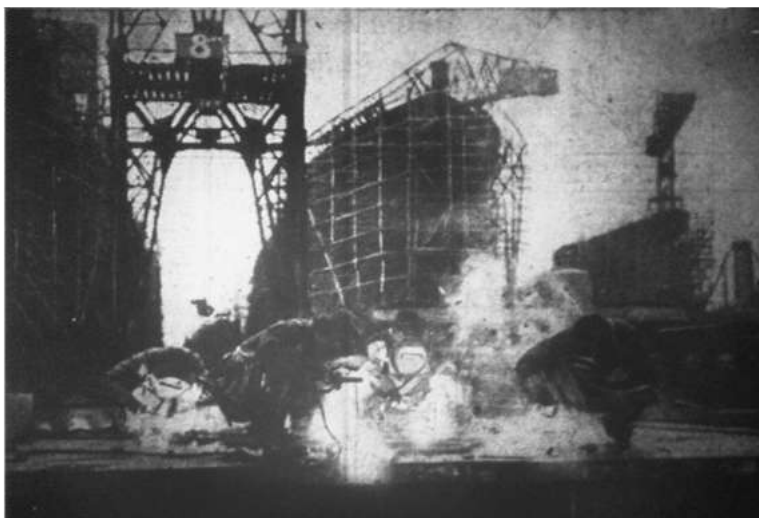
Modernization is usually identified with Westernization, but Dana Buntrock (1996) argued that modernity is a construct that has specific attributes associated with Western culture that are not necessary for modernization. She points to the case of Japan, where industrialization and rapid development from a closed and feudal country to one of the world's largest economies required neither modernity nor Westernization. While Buntrock contended that Japan's modernization project during the Meiji Era was connected to its attempt to Westernize, it did not achieve the latter: "[T]o say... that the West is present in Japan is not necessarily to claim that Japan has Westernized" (Buntrock 1996, 3). Japan took to the West by selecting elements of Western industrialization that were most useful and blended them with the traditional Japanese way of life, allowing the Japanese to assert a modernization that may have been influenced by the West, but was also something they could claim as their own.



Figure 15. A Japanese bomber en route to Australia.

*Tribune* (Manila), December 17, 1942, 1.





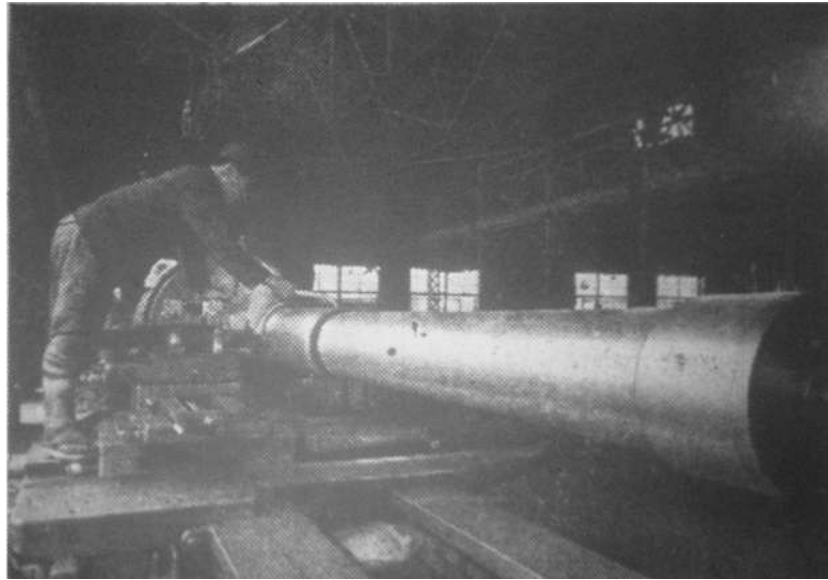
**Figure 16. A shipyard in Japan. Welders are working on a new ship's hull. *Tribune* (Manila), April 21, 1943, 2.**

The propaganda of Japan in the Philippines, however, centered on leaving behind the country's attachment to the West and following Japan's lead. To enable this, Japan had to emphasize its supremacy in terms of technology. While the *Tribune* published news of Japan's battle wins in the war, photos and snippets of Japanese war technology were also published. Photographs of warplanes were regular front-page material (Figure 15), as well as shipyards and tank yards, showcasing battleships and tanks as they were made (Figure 16). The high quality and speedy production of these war machines were usually highlighted in the caption or accompanying article. In one of the captions, the tank (Figure 17) is referred to as "the flower of modern weapons" and an "iron horse."



**Figure 17. A tank yard in Japan. *Tribune* (Manila), April 21, 1943, 3.**

The Japanese also highlighted their high quality and fast manufacturing of arms, which, according to them, was “feared” even before the war. These arsenals were regularly featured, especially from 1942 to 1943. Figure 18 shows a gun factory in Japan, its caption noting that this was but one of thousands of arms factories in the country.



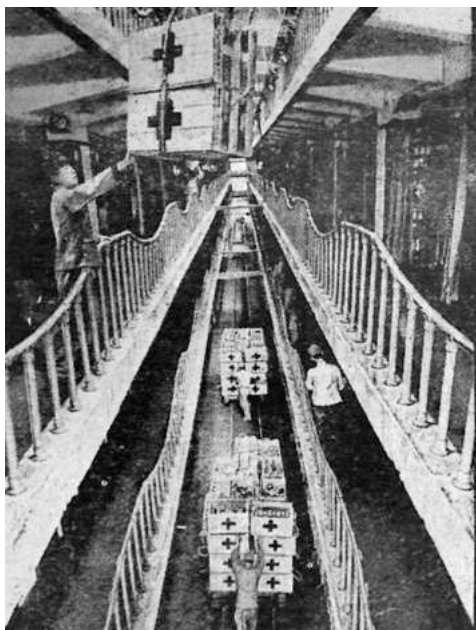
**Figure 18. A gun factory in Japan. *Tribune* (Manila) April 27, 1943, 5.**

Japan’s message of its supreme military might was unmistakable in many of the *Tribune*’s photographs, which is connected to the propaganda line of Japan winning the war. The *Tribune*’s articles elaborated on this point. In “Japan’s industrial might is a potent factor in her prosecution of this war,” which appeared on June 21, 1942, the anonymous author argued that the war is not just about bravery and strategy, but also, and more importantly, about the level of industrialization. Japan, according to the article, has a strong, disciplined, and massive army, as well as industrialization that the West envied because it was achieved in record time – in less than a century, Japan has become one of the biggest manufacturers of arms. The article concluded that Japan’s defeat in the war is, therefore, impossible.

Aside from images of weapons, warplanes, and tanks, Japan’s industrial development is also exhibited in its scientific innovations. In the article “A fortress of army supplies” (November 1, 1942), Japan was touted to have been leading in the invention, discovery, and manufacture of medicines, and that there were many diseases that only the Japanese could cure. Japan, the article contended, had secured an essential factor in winning the war. The article is accompanied by a photograph of medical supplies (Figure 19).

In another article titled “War time efforts speed up scientific progress” (October 18, 1942), Japan’s efforts to continue its scientific discoveries are featured, as “Japanese scientists worked night and day

to contribute to the successful military operations.” The article was accompanied by a photograph of veterinarians operating on a horse (Figure 20). A photograph of a ceramic plant touted the Japanese innovation of using porcelain to replace metal in cooling factory machines, with a caption saying that “the ceramic industry is ready to fulfill its role in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” (Figure 21). These articles were published to condition the reading public that in anything regarding the war, Japan was prepared with enough food supply, consistent rice rations, and high-quality arms and weapons. Japan, therefore, was ready for any eventualities of the war.



**Figure 19. Hundreds of medicine boxes  
at a medical station in Japan.**

*Tribune (Manila), September 18, 1943, 5.*



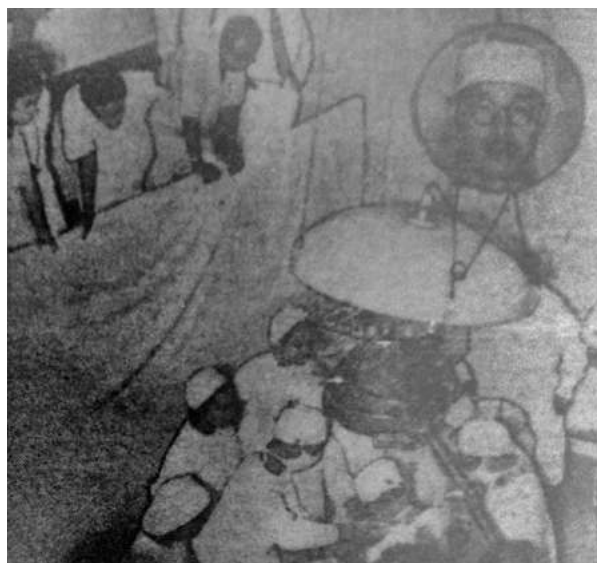
**Figure 20. Veterinarians and their students are  
operating on a horse at a college in Japan.**

*Tribune (Manila), October 25, 1943, 3.*



**Figure 21. Japanese workers are inspecting cooling coils made out of porcelain. *Tribune* (Manila), February 14, 1943, 3.**

A news feature on November 3, 1942 reported that prominent Japanese doctors visited the Philippines to perform delicate surgical operations. Dr. Yoshiyuki Oshima performed a cesarian delivery (Figure 22), while Dr. Takehiro Yamada performed an appendectomy. Dr. Oshima, assessing the state of Philippine medical science, noted that it is “not that far from Japan,” but Filipino medical practitioners tended to be unkind to their patients, which he believed to be an American influence.



**Figure 22. Dr. Oshima's cesarean delivery. *Tribune* (Manila), May 3, 1943, 4.**

It is important to note that while unabashedly a mouthpiece of Japan, the *Tribune*, in publishing news and features about the war, employed the legitimizing effect provided by experts. For example, news

features about prominent Japanese doctors performing delicate surgical operations, Japanese military and tactical experts showcasing new weapons and strategies, and 'expert opinions' from academe and industry regarding the certainty of Japan winning the war not only assert an image of modernity but also structure the bias and give off the illusion of objectivity. Herman and Chomsky (2008) argued that this reliance of the media on information provided by "experts" is an essential news "filter" (62), and indicates the inequality of wealth and power and its multilevel effects on mass-media interests and choices.

Modernization is not limited to technology. Japanese propaganda also underscored the need for a modern mindset, one that does away with vestiges of being a former colony and embraces development. Western influences on Filipino culture were packaged as backward and with the notion that the way forward was to embody the ideals of Japan expressed through the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. In the *Tribune*, this is made more apparent in comic strips, whose sequential storytelling allowed it to carry a more complete message.

The idea that Filipinos are Asians and must connect with fellow Asians in the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere is central to Japanese propaganda. To send this message, Japanese propaganda encouraged Filipinos to remember their unique Filipino values. An issue of the "Kalibapi Family" emphasized the role of women in society. Nene asks her father why their neighbor, Aling Anita, was not always at home, and her father explains that Aling Anita is involved in a buy-and-sell business. When Nene shares that she would have done the same if she were older, her father explains that a woman must devote her interest in the upkeep of her home as they are building the Philippine republic. Nene responds in Japanese: "Honto desu ne!" (That's right!) (Figure 23). This strip reinforced the role of women as the keepers of the house and home, and that their time must be spent in supporting the family. In another strip, Bayani asks his father why men must give up seats to women on the train. His father explains that it is because women are weaker than men. Bayani argues that there are scenarios when women must also give up their seat to men and points to an older man. Bayani quips: "I think it is human enough for a woman to stand up and offer her seat to that old man" (Figure 24). Respect towards the elderly has been a treasured Filipino value, which holds for the Japanese as well.



Figure 23. "Kalibapi Family." *Tribune* (Manila), October 26, 1943.



Figure 24. "Kalibapi Family." *Tribune* (Manila), November 3, 1943.

The message of friendship and cooperation among neighbors was also presented in another strip of "Kalibapi Family" (Figure 25). One of Nene's foes is seen waiting for her with a stone in hand. He suddenly changes his mind, asks himself why he has to quarrel with a neighbor, and remembers his teacher's words: "Let us stand together and establish the New Philippines." In the end, the kids hold hands and exclaim: "Long live the free Philippines!" This strip underlined the importance of cooperating with neighbors, which was consistent with the goals of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.



Figure 25. "Kalibapi Family." *Tribune* (Manila), October 16, 1943.

## CONCLUSION

Barak Kushner in his work *The Thought War* (2004) retold a story during the early days of the occupation of the Philippines:

One well-respected Japanese propagandist working for the military took to traveling around the countryside delivering fiery orations filled with allegory about Japan's mission in Asia. Another Japanese listening to both the speech and the translation burst out laughing and had to explain himself. It turned out the lofty presentation had not only gone over the translator's head, it had totally surpassed his ability in Japanese as well, so he had simply told another story in Tagalog about "when I went to Japan as a study-abroad student, this is what I saw." (184)

This anecdote is a useful representation of how language was a difficult barrier to overcome in the attempt of the Japanese to win the battle of thoughts and ideas during the occupation. While the literacy rate increased rapidly during the American occupation, visual, more than written texts, would have been the ideal carrier of propaganda, which the Japanese recognized by making sure they controlled the media. In this light, this study has sought to demonstrate the potential of propaganda materials as a source to glean vital aspects of the Japanese mentality and the way they attempted to position themselves and win the hearts of Filipinos. The analysis has shown that the discourses of modernity and supremacy were of undeniable prominence in Japanese propaganda. It was important for the Japanese to position themselves as superior to the United States during the war, and that the Filipinos now had a new and more dependable ally that they could turn to for support.

Propaganda focusing on Japanese technological supremacy was built on the level of development that Japan had reached on its own. There was a constant reminder that Filipinos did not need to look to the West for a model to follow and that in Asia, Japan stands as the most advanced nation, able to conquer enormous powers and to develop unparalleled technology. Advancements in military technology frequented the newspaper. Coupled with news of Japanese victories in particular battles were descriptions and photographs of the latest tanks, warplanes, weapons, and other implements that were positioned to be integral to Japan's victory. It was highlighted that while military tactics and strategy mattered in the war, what gave Japan the advantage was its advanced level of industrialization. The *Tribune* also regularly featured the latest Japanese innovation on technologies that assisted the war, such as medical and mechanical industries.

Modernity in terms of technology was also paired with a modern mindset. It is crucial in propaganda to highlight that together with advances in technology, Filipinos should embrace the change and set aside traditions embedded by hundreds of years of Western colonialism. Propaganda focused on making the Filipinos realize that their 'Asian' values needed to be appreciated more. Colonial mentality was also negated in favor of a brand of 'love of country' that is made apparent through patriotic acts that hark back to Asian traditions.

But these frequent juxtapositions of the West as damaging to Filipino indigenous culture and Japan as the new standard the Philippines should turn to revealed Japan's attempt to take advantage of the postcolonial discourse evident in Philippine nationalism and the Philippines' desire for independence. Japan's "Asia for Asiatics" rhetoric was mainly targeted towards countries under Western colonial rule. This message was conveyed by constructing modernity through military, technology, and indigenous mindset. However, it is clear that Japan was fashioning itself as a new colonizer of Southeast Asia – after all, they were already the colonizers of Taiwan, Manchuria, and Korea.

To this day, the military as an institution has remained a vital indicator of modernity among nations, and technology an indication of development and progress. China's recent rise to power has been paralleled to that of Japan's almost eight decades ago (Chin 2014) and Xi Jinping's new 'Asian security concept' that calls for Asian security to be left to Asians sound eerily familiar to the 'Asia for the Asiatic' dictum. China's ambitious 'Belt and Road Initiative' has even been dubbed "colonialism with Chinese characteristics" (Brewster 2018). An analysis of Japan's positioning as a superpower and its fashioning as a new colonizer, as is evident in its wartime propaganda in the Philippines, could provide insights to the great power politics unfolding in the present.

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