LUZON AT WAR
Contradictions in Philippine Society, 1898-1902

Introduction by Vicente L. Rafael
Milagros Camayon Guerrero
Introduction: Revolutionary Contradictions

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The bourgeoisie, historically, has played a most revolutionary part... It compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, that is, to become bourgeois themselves. In one word, it creates a world after its own image.

Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto (1848)

I.

Over lunch at the Via Mare restaurant at the University of the Philippines campus about two summers ago, Mila Guerrero told me the story of how she came to write the book you’re holding in your hands. It began as her PhD dissertation at the University of Michigan in 1977. Several years earlier, she had received a scholarship to study in the United States. However, she could not leave without securing the permission of the Chair of the department. At that time, this was none other than the well-known historian, Teodoro Agoncillo, principle author of the most widely read textbook in the country’s colleges, History of the Filipino People. Mila had served as his co-author starting with the third edition in 1970 until the seventh edition in 1986. Since Agoncillo was difficult to reach in his office, she had to wait for him to get out of his last class. She asked him if
he would sign the forms that would allow her to leave for Ann Arbor. Agoncillo looked at her skeptically. He did not think it was necessary for Filipino students to go abroad to study history, especially their own. He wanted to know why she felt she had to go. “Look at me,” he said. “I never had to study in the US.” Mila responded, “But sir, I am not as great as you.” He signed the forms right there, then headed down to his waiting Mercedes Benz, and Mila got to go.²

Both the Philippines Mila left and the America that awaited her were in the midst of much turmoil. In the former, the First Quarter Storm in 1970 and the tide of student protests that followed were part of a growing sense of unease over the worsening economic and social conditions during the second Marcos term. In the US, racial strife and cultural uprisings were sweeping through much of America’s major cities even as an unwinnable war was being waged in Southeast Asia. Mila had left the University of the Philippines that had become the nerve center of nationalist dissidence, culminating in the Diliman Commune of 1971, while the University of Michigan she came to had been at the forefront of some of the most radical student organizing. The first anti-war teach-ins were held there in 1964 and it was the birthplace of the Students for a Democratic Society, or SDS, which had led massive free speech demonstrations and was involved in other social movements of that time. Memories were still fresh of student occupations across many US campuses. The growing anti-war movement brought attention not only to the war in Vietnam but also to its precursor, the Filipino-American War. Indeed, many activists and students quickly grasped the connection between these two imperialist wars and the protracted guerilla resistances they incited. By the time Mila arrived in Ann Arbor in the fall of 1972, Richard Nixon had already resigned from the presidency in the
wake of the Watergate scandal. A month later, Marcos declared Martial Law, as the
Philippine State, replaying the contradictions of the First Republic in Malolos, launched a
long war against its own people.

Mila’s sojourn to Ann Arbor in the 1970s occurred against a larger backdrop of
postcolonial developments. She was part of a generation of post-war Filipino intellectuals
and writers who were recipients of what we might think of as American Cold War
largesse. Taking advantage of fellowships from Fulbright, Ford, SSRC-ACLS and
Rockefeller, they came to study in the United States expecting to gain the technical and
scholarly expertise they needed to return home and take up the task of “national
development.” In that sense, they were following the well-worn paths traced by Filipino
creoles, mestizos and indios who made up the ilustrados from the later nineteenth
century, as well as the pensionados and other Filipino students of the early twentieth.

Just as Mila was settling down in Ann Arbor, Samuel Tan had moved to Syracuse.
Reynaldo Ileto, and earlier, Joel Rocamora, Nita Churchill, Roxy Lim and Belinda
Aquino had been or were still at Cornell; Oscar Alfonso was at Chicago, Oscar
Evangelista at Wisconsin; Leslie Bauzon at Duke; Edilberto C. de Jesus at Yale; and
Walden Bello at Princeton and several others. They were preceded by a slightly older
generation such as O.D. Corpuz (Illinois and Harvard), Cesar Majul (Cornell), Benito
Legarda, Jr. (Georgetown and Harvard), Bienvenido Lumbera (Indiana) and the Jesuit
Horacio de la Costa (Harvard). This generation of US-educated Filipinos (along with a
handful who went instead to Western Europe, such as Zeus Salazar to Sorbonne, Randy
David and Dodong Nemenzo to Manchester) in the 1950s to the 1970s had checkered
careers and took divergent paths. Some led placid lives of quiet teaching, others were
coaxed to collaborate, albeit critically, with various projects of the Marcos dictatorship. Most, however, did not become merely mouthpieces for the empire or apologists for the ruling class. Rather, they often turned into some of their fiercest critics. Exposed both to the democratic ambience and socio-economic inequalities of the US, they were influenced in one form or another by the various waves of radicalism that washed over campuses. Small wonder, then, that many of them went on to do groundbreaking work, much of which remains important today.

Mila had gone to Michigan expecting to work with David Joel Steinberg. As with Agoncillo, Steinberg had written a study of Filipino collaboration during World War II, but was far more critical of the collaborationists than the former. And, like Agoncillo, Steinberg was the lead author of a massively influential textbook, *In Search of Southeast Asia: A Modern History*. But by the following year, Steinberg left to take another position at Brandeis University. She was then assigned to work under Norman Owen, who at that time was still an untenured assistant professor, having just completed his dissertation on the social and economic history of Bikol. Little of this mattered in the long run, inasmuch as Mila arrived in Michigan as someone who was “already known,” as the historian Michael Cullinane put it. Unlike her peers, “she was way ahead of the game,” he says. By the time she set foot on campus, she already had the skeleton of her dissertation worked out.

Prior to Michigan, Mila had not only served as Agoncillo’s co-author in the 1970 edition of *History of the Filipino People*. She had also worked as one of the copyeditors for Renato Constantino’s five-volume distillation of the John R.M. Taylor’s massive but unpublished compendium of captured revolutionary documents, *The Philippine Insurgent*
Records, published by the Lopez Museum. Unlike her American contemporaries, she didn’t have to do field work or read up on secondary sources. She had authored part of the latter and had long inhabited the textual landscapes of the former, having spent at least a year doing research at the Library of Congress. Intimately familiar with the archival deposits of the Philippine Revolution as they were then available, Mila pretty much dove right into her project with little need of assistance.

The resulting dissertation, “Luzon at War: Contradictions in Philippine Society, 1898-1902” quickly became a standard reference, surpassing Agoncillo’s earlier work on the Malolos Republic. Long unpublished, the dissertation was difficult to access, especially for Filipinos in the Philippines, though it was widely cited and became required reading. Without doubt, it remains the best, and certainly the most critical, account of the Malolos Republic. Thanks to Anvil’s editor extraordinaire, Karina Bolasco, it is finally being published and can now be widely shared among a new generation of readers.

II

The title of Mila’s book is itself striking. It uses the word “war” to characterize what in Philippine historiography is regarded as the second phase of the Philippine Revolution. As the subtitle, “contradictions in Philippine society” indicates, the emergence of the Malolos Republic in September of 1898 in the wake of the defeat of Spain and the US capture of Manila marked not so much the triumph of the revolution as the outbreak of all sorts of wars: between Filipinos and Americans; between the civilian and the military leaders of the Republic; and between the elite leadership and the rest of
the populace they sought to command. The question, though, is: how did these wars, as the violent articulations of social contradictions, shape the revolution? How did these various struggles curtail or promote the political energies and utopian hopes released by the common struggle against Spanish colonial rule and US imperial invasion? What do these wars tell us about the limits and possibilities of Asia’s first anti-colonial revolution? In other words, how did these wars further revolutionary goals? And whose goals, whose revolution? Indeed, how revolutionary was the Philippine revolution when viewed from the perspective of the wars of contradiction that is the First Republic?

Prior to, and despite, Mila’s work, nationalist historiography continues to divide the revolution into two distinct periods: the first phase from 1896-1897 characterized as the “revolt of the masses” followed by the second phase from 1898-1902, regarded as the counter-revolutionary take-over of the Republic by wealthy ilustrados who, in collaborating with the Americans, have been blamed for the defeat of the revolution. The term “revolt of the masses,” of course, comes from Agoncillo’s classic account of the Katipunan, written as the embers of the Huk Rebellion still glowed brightly in Central Luzon. Agoncillo’s contention that the revolution, unlike the ilustrado-led Propaganda Movement, was largely a “plebian” effort, was first popularized by Isabelo de los Reyes in 1899. However, more recent scholarship by Resil Mojares, Benedict Anderson, Jim Richardson, and Michael Cullinane alongside the earlier innovative work of Nick Joaquin all show that there was nothing at all proletarian about the leadership of the revolution. Furthermore, the distinction between a “revolutionary” and “counter-revolutionary” phase may in fact be spurious given the remarkable continuity in the leadership and ideology of the revolution and the Republic. Read in the context of this
recent scholarship, Mila’s book takes on a new relevance, foreshadowing many of the findings of these works. How so?

Jim Richardson calls our attention to the fact that from its inception, the Katipunan’s leadership was made up of the educated and gainfully employed "middle class.” It was not until late 1895 and through 1896 when the Katipunan rapidly expanded that the class composition of its membership came to include more from the lower classes. Still, it is interesting to note that more than half of those present at the Cry of Balintawak, for example, had positions in the colonial bureaucracy, while the rest were printers, merchants and teachers. There were only two "laborers." It was more like a smaller version of EDSA I and II, rather than, say, the Paris Commune. Similarly, Michael Cullinane refers to the members of the Katipunan as those from the “middle sector,” an awkward term that nonetheless gets at the ambiguity of the social and political positions of the early Katipuneros. These were of two types: first, the salaried urban empleados—printers, office workers, court transcribers, warehouse clerks, book keepers and the like; and second, the municipal and provincial principales—village heads and their relatives—who administered local affairs.

The growth of this middle sector was a function of the expanded colonial educational system. Starting with the educational reforms of 1863, the Castilian language became more widely taught, thanks to the work of schoolmasters trained at the Normal School and licensed by UST to set up their own private schools in their houses. The emergence of new secondary schools in middle of the nineteenth century such as the Ateneo Municipal and the San Juan de Letran in Manila, along with the University of San Carlos in Cebu (the only one of its kind south of Manila), further increased the number of
Castilian-speakers. The rise in the supply of educated colonials came at a point when there was a sharp increase in the demand for their services. This demand came from two sources: the colonial bureaucracy which had expanded in the aftermath of Spain’s loss of its American possessions, and the growing numbers of Anglo-European commercial houses in the colony. These two developments are closely related.

A series of wars from the mid-18th century to the early 19th dealt Spain a series of major losses--first from the British during the Seven Years War (1756-1763), then from the Napoleonic invasion (1808-1814) and most devastatingly, in the wars of American independence (1810-1821) that led to the loss of its American colonies. Seeking ways to recover from these devastating defeats, Spain sought to find new ways to rationalize governance and maximize the exploitation of their remaining archipelagic colonies. They needed to find ways to accumulate profits and build up a credible military with which to protect and project the power of the existing empire. In the Philippine colony, such imperatives led Spain to establish what turned out to be their first profitable venture: the forced cultivation and sale of tobacco (1782-1883), dramatically altering the ecology and political economy of the Cagayan Valley. By 1834, they also liberalized commerce by opening the Philippines to foreign traders and allowing back Chinese traders who had been expelled for aiding the British in its occupation of Manila. Euro-American commercial houses rushed into the colony to set up branch offices. Working through Chinese middlemen, they extended credit to farmers and purchased crops for export to the world market such as sugar, tobacco, abacca and the like. Thus did Anglo-European and Chinese traders intensify an agricultural revolution whose seeds had already been planted by Bourbon reforms and the Spanish monopoly of tobacco.15
As it expanded, the colonial state required more clerks to push paper, transcribe and translate trials, keep records, collect taxes, police the colony and so forth. Similarly, foreign commercial houses sought educated workers to serve as clerks, artisans, printers and so on to run their day-to-day operations.\textsuperscript{16} Hence did new sources of employment open up for newly educated colonials. As wage workers literate in Castilian, they formed a new social group never before seen in the colony. Finally, the Dominican-run University of Santo Tomas had expanded its curricular offerings and increased its enrollments. Despite its reputation as a bastion of reaction, UST was responsible for educating a whole generation of some of the most militant male nationalists of the era.\textsuperscript{17}

In short, imperial wars and territorial losses forced Spain to make dramatic, and often violent, reforms based on the increased capitalist exploitation of the colony. Such reforms had radical effects. Squeezing profits from every pore, the ensemble of practices and institutions of colonial capitalism altered the fabric of social relations even as it expanded the coercive capacities of the State. Taken as a whole, these developments set the conditions for the emergence of a novel revolutionary class.

III

Like the wealthier \textit{ilustrados}, members of these middle sectors were far from being monolithic in their thinking, their stance towards the colonial state shifting over time. Yet, they shared enough things and lived through similar conditions to foster a sense of class identity. They all felt the weight of Spanish demands for increased taxation, while at the same time suffering the daily hurt of racist exclusion. Conscious of other possible futures and imbued with a new progressive outlook not unlike those who
had traveled to Europe, the more localized middle sectors began to take on a cosmopolitan outlook. Moving between Castilian and their vernacular languages within the shared spaces of the oficina and casa tribunales, having gone to the same schools, reading the same newspapers, attuned to the same gossip and sharing the same gripes, they bore the same humiliations along with a common history of violent persecutions. As such, they began to form what Benedict Anderson had famously called an “imagined community.” Feeling entitled, yet excluded from legal equality, economic opportunity and cultural respect by Peninsular Spaniards, they began to dream of another world, one that entailed separation from Spain by way of armed struggle. By 1892, a small number organized a secret society in Manila called the Katipunan dedicated to carrying out precisely such a project.

Organized a few months before Rizal’s short-lived Liga Filipina, the Katipunan from the outset was liberal in orientation. The members of the secret society had much in common with ilustrados and in fact a few of its earliest members came from this class of people. This did not mean that they were indifferent to the various millenarian colorum sects that had begun to emerge in various parts of the country, especially in the aftermath of Hermano Pule’s 1841 Tayabas revolt. But evidence suggests that the Katipunan had neither organizational nor ideological links with millenarian and colorum sects. Indeed, it would be the colorums themselves that would come to appropriate aspects of the Katipunan’s discourse and set-up later on. Not surprisingly, Katipunan liberalism was articulated in the language and symbols of Freemasonry and bits of the French Enlightenment, rather than the rituals of the Catholic Church or some other folk epic like the Pasyon. The Katipunan, however, was also characterized by the emphasis on mutual
help and the use of the Tagalog vernacular that widened its reach among and below the “middle sectors.” For this reason, the Katipunan had, in its early stages, a greater potential to mobilize across class divides that set it apart from the more elitist Propaganda Movement before it or the Republican government after it.

The Katipunan’s main goal was to "unite" the Philippine colony under its leadership for the sake of overthrowing Spain. As its founding documents indicate, the Katipunan sought the formation of "isang catipunanang malago, masicap at iisa sa loob," (“a vigorous association, determined and unified at heart”) that would become a new sovereign nation. However, the goal of "unity" also meant side-stepping, if not suppressing, differences: ethnic, class, regional, even religious. Rarely do the Katipunan documents make mention of such social categories. This avoidance of difference was as strategic as it was ideological. The secret society aimed primarily at regime change, not social change. It never had a program for addressing social inequities, only for instituting legal equality within the terms of Spanish civil law. Neither did it furnish a theory or an analysis of social conflicts. Instead, the Katipunan offered moral exhortations à la Rizal, urging its members to lead virtuous lives. As such, the Katipunan never planned to redistribute land or to democratize social relations. This would have been difficult, if not impossible, given that its leadership was made up of male, urban middle classes and provincial elites. Its revolutionary aims were thus limited to replacing the Spaniards on top with male Filipino leaders, and limiting, but not banishing, the Church's power by neutralizing the influence of Spanish friars (again, a standard liberal goal).

IV
It is well known that deep factional divisions tore through the Katipunan ranks beginning late 1896, culminating in March-May 1897. Bonifacio was executed for plotting a coup as Aguinaldo became president of the Revolutionary Republic. But the conflict between the two was part of a larger intra-class conflict among the middle class over control of the revolution. No alternative visions of utopia or sharply divergent ideological stances were at stake. The Magdiwang and Magdalo members easily slid into each other, as practical needs determined their allegiances.

By the time Bonifacio and his brothers broke away to plot an uprising, most of his most trusted followers had already deserted him and gone to the side of the Republic. This was happening just as Spanish reinforcements were bearing down to re-take Cavite. In the end, nearly everyone but a small group deserted Bonifacio. Heeding Aguinaldo’s appeal and realizing Bonifacio’s loss of popular support, they took the practical step of siding with the larger forces of Aguinaldo’s Republic. So if we want to blame anyone for Bonifacio’s execution, we should blame not just Aguinaldo but everyone else in the Republic: del Pilar, Noriel, Ricarte, et al, who were complicit with the execution, even urging Aguinaldo not to commute the death sentence.21

Sustained class conflicts arguably did not emerge until much later from 1898-1899 with the return of Aguinaldo from exile and the formation of the Republic in Malolos. Everywhere in the archipelago, the relatively swift defeat of Spanish forces led to openings into which new forces could rush in to take advantage of the sudden collapse of colonial authority. Peasant groups and urban strikers had begun to ride the revolutionary wave, often resisting the agents of the Republic, while insisting on their rights. For their efforts, they found themselves faced with the Republic’s heavy-handed
attempts to assert its authority. As Mila shows, it sought to raise funds by imposing new 
taxes while reviving old ones—poll taxes, sales taxes, taxes for transporting goods, for 
selling them, for buying them, etc. In addition, after initially ending forced labor, the 
Republic restored it as a way of drafting men into the militias. The result was economic 
disaster. Able-bodied men were removed from their fields and no one was left to plant 
and harvest crops. Food shortages were common along with frequent starvation. Trade 
suffered and currency devaluation and inflation occurred to further decimate the 
economy.

As Mila carefully points out, the Republic needed to secure the support of 
provincial elites who provided much-needed material and military support. It conducted 
highly restrictive elections that would safeguard elite positions and exclude the majority 
of the people. Thus began the history of a weak central state finding itself dependent 
upon strong local units. In order to keep local elites close, while satisfying the pent up 
demand of other elites for property, the Republic initiated a period of intense land-
grabbing, seeking to transfer ownership of friar lands to Republican leaders—a process 
that US rule would later consolidate. Furthermore, it sought to float a National Loan, 
whereby Congress mortgaged the assets of the country to wealthy *ilustrados* in exchange 
for loans to finance the fight. What would have been a massive transfer of wealth to the 
rich was temporally interrupted by the US invasion and the fall of the Republic.

Adding to the problems of the Republic was the fact that Congress was unable, 
and perhaps unwilling, to curb the on-going abuses of its military forces. As with most 
volunteer forces, the soldiers relied on donations, and barring that, on pillage. It was not 
uncommon for them to steal food, money and jewelry, as well as engage in rape and other
violations. But instead of alleviating the plight of the masses, the Republic proved unable to rein in soldiers whose primary loyalty were to local elite commanders. Indeed, rather than curb military abuses, Republican forces often responded to people’s complaints with brutal military repression--exactly as if it were a colonial power. As dispatches from the field indicate, some people began to regard the Republic as “worse than Spain.” For those at the receiving end of what appeared like a host of excessive demands, the revolution as represented by its Republican agents seemed no more than a “swindle.” Aguinaldo himself became so despondent at the turn of events that he once drafted a resignation letter, and only Mabini’s prodding kept him from quitting.

Not surprisingly, peasant armies claiming to be revivals of the “true Katipunan” or as millenarian communities awaiting the coming of kalayaan, emerged to fight the Republic. As Reynaldo Ileto showed in his Cornell dissertation, “Pasyon and the Interpretation of Change in Tagalog Society”--completed just a year before Mila’s and a touchstone for her work and many others since--class warfare erupted in many parts of Luzon. These movements fomented decidedly non-liberal versions of the revolution. Rail workers, tobacco workers and domestic servants struck for their rights in Manila. Uprisings exploded in many of the towns in Pangasinan, Tarlac, Pampanga, Ilocos, the Cordilleras, and the Southern Tagalog region. Examples include the Pensacola brothers in Zambales who were famous for their motto: "it was time for the rich to become poor, and the poor to be rich." Peasant groups attacked government offices and burned documents, thinking that by doing so, they could now claim the lands they had been tilling. They harassed and attacked tax collectors, squatted on hacienda lands, and set up communes such as the Guardia de Honor or the Santa Iglesia led by former Katipunero, Felipe
Salvador. Some formed new katipunans and, in the wake of the defeat of Malolos, Macario Sakay formed his Tagalog Republic in 1902 in the mountains of Sierra Madre. There, people lived free from taxes and labor demands under the leadership of self-styled Popes and prophets. Surviving meant praying, while raiding surrounding haciendas for their supplies. Seeing these groups as threats for the radical social changes they demanded, the Republic sought either to curb or crush them.

V

While peasant katipuneros pushed the revolution towards the direction that threatened to upend social hierarchy, the leaders of the Republic pursued their own political agenda. Presiding over the Republic, as Mila points out, were wealthy as well as aspirational ilustrados like Mabini, alongside the provincial elite leadership of the Katipunan. Both agreed on the essentials of a liberal social order. The nation was to be ruled by an “oligarchy of the mind,” as Felipe Calderon famously said, composed of the wealthiest and most learned people, while the place and power of local elites—many of whom owed their position to the Spanish colonial order—would be preserved and expanded.

There was never a question of redistributing wealth or instituting progressive taxation. There was certainly no talk of social leveling, only the protection and enhancement of the privileges and properties of the landed against the usurpation of the poor. Sending out ambassadors to the United States and Europe, the Republic was far more concerned with international recognition than with local legitimation. Again, this
was because the revolution, from the perspective of its leaders, was always about regime change, never about social transformation.

Why then was the revolutionary Republic so politically bold yet socially conservative?

To answer this question, we need to locate the revolution’s social conservatism in relation to its historical conditions of possibility. As we saw earlier, social revolution, understood as the radical transformation of society, was brought about not by the revolution of 1896-1902, but by the liberalizing reforms of the Spanish colonial government. From the end of the British Occupation in 1764 to the introduction of the Maura Law of 1893, wave upon wave of innovations washed onto the archipelago’s shores. An abbreviated list includes the following: the liberalization of trade and the opening up of Manila to European and American merchants; the commercialization of agriculture; the expansion and rationalization of the bureaucracy; the introduction of a new penal code that instituted civil law; the centralization of military forces in the form of the Guardia Civil; the educational reforms that led to increased literacy in Castilian and the rise of trade schools in navigation, art and music; the introduction of new infrastructures such as steam ships, railroad, telegraphy, telephony, water works, street lighting and the like; the growth of secular publishing, theater, and even Freemasonry, all of which had the cumulative effect of enlarging and secularizing the colonial public sphere. Finally, there were renewed attempts to conquer vast areas that had long laid outside the Spanish grasp, chiefly Muslim Mindanao and the non-Christian Cordilleras. These imperial projects, as uneven as they were destructive, of seizing non-Christianized
areas would continue through the American colonial and post-war Republican periods, clear up to our present day.

These and other changes uprooted and revolutionized colonial society, which had been, till the late eighteenth century, dominated by the older technologies, bodily disciplines and reified social hierarchies of Catholicism and friar power. Successive reform efforts imposed by the Bourbon monarchy and later by the liberal Cortez—reforms which intensified after the loss of the Spain’s American empire in 1820 and the revolution of 1868 as Spain sought to save its empire—had the effect of radically transforming Philippine colonial society from the ground up, bringing “Madrid closer to Manila.” This colonial social revolution was obviously meant to benefit the Spanish empire by rationalizing exploitation and maximizing military power to fend off threats from within and outside of the colony. That such a powerful State apparatus was deemed necessary in the first place was precisely the result of new challenges that came from unleashing economic and political forces in the archipelago.

The contradictions that Mila delineates in her book are rooted in this period of massive social, economic, and technological changes. As we have seen, the ilustrados and the “middle sectors” that benefited from these reforms where also those who felt their negative effects most acutely. Hailed to become integral parts of an expansive colonial machinery, they began to absorb its liberalizing logic, even as they found themselves racially discriminated and excluded from enjoying its benefits. When they waged the revolution, they were in a sense seeking to collect the wages of political power they felt was due to them. And doing so was something they could not have imagined save for the profound social transformation of the last century. Caught up in these changes, they thus
emerged as modern liberal subjects of a social revolution that, for various reasons, lurched, then stalled, by the later nineteenth century. *Ilustrados* were joined by the *empleados* and *principales* in blaming anti-modern Spanish friars, violent Guardias Civiles, and reactionary government officials for blocking their path to progress by setting stringent limits to their material, cultural and political advancement. In seeking independence from Spain, the revolutionists were attempting not only to consolidate and expand their prior gains. They also sought to unblock the modernizing path that had been laid out for them for over a century.

The revolutionary pursuit of political empowerment through the conservation and expansion of prior social privileges and economic gains should sound familiar to anyone who knows anything about the country’s history. It was exactly the same program—what some scholars have referred to as “colonial” or “official nationalism”—that was pursued by the US occupying forces. Thus the irony: by destroying the Republic and its Katipunan predecessor, the US actually kept them alive, preserving much of their membership and coopting their goals. Seeking Filipino collaboration, the Americans appointed Filipino lawyers to colonial courts and as minority members to the colonial executive body. Re-organizing local governments as a counter-insurgency measure, the US held municipal elections in 1903 through a highly restrictive franchise similar to that of Malolos. They allowed political parties and by 1907 established the first national colonial legislature called the Philippine Assembly. Nearly every member of this body had been part of the Republic. Purchasing the friar lands from the Vatican, the Americans then sold them at bargain prices to the landed elites, thereby completing another key
ambition of the Republic. Under US sponsorship, new monuments to revolutionary
heroes like Rizal were erected in 1912 and to Bonifacio by 1933.

By 1935, a thoroughly Filipinized colonial state was established called the
Commonwealth. Borrowing from the playbook of the Spaniards, the Americans also
established a network of public schools, though with English rather than Spanish as the
language of instruction. They encouraged the growth of private Catholic schools (but
now with American and European priests and nuns replacing Spaniards). The secular
University of the Philippines was established in 1908. Originally staffed mostly by
Americans, the faculty was quickly replaced by a Filipinos, many of whom had studied in
the United States. Indeed, we can think of this project of “Filpinizaton” as the
nationalization of colonial rule, whereby brown men and women were trained to carry the
white man’s burden. Such was possible only because both shared a common liberal
outlook. In the end, of course, Filipinos would unpack the American burden and reclaim
it for their own, slightly modified ends.

This brings us back to the question that we broached and that everywhere is
present in Mila’s book: just how revolutionary was the revolution?

VI

Filipino nationalists in the Propaganda Movement, the Katipunan and the
Republic were clearly inspired by Spanish liberalism rather than anarchism, much less by
European socialism. Against the racist regime of Spain, they were propelled by the desire
to unite and rule the country for their benefit, which they assumed was identical to the
rest of the country. What was good for the elites, they insisted, was good for the rest of
the nation regardless of their class, gender or ethnicity. This meant, above all, the rule of private property alongside formal legal and racial equality with the Spaniards, then later with the Americans. It did not mean socio-economic equality with those below them whose value lay, as far as elites were concerned, in knowing their proper place at the service of those above.

The Philippine Revolution was thus nothing like the French Revolution. There was neither regicide nor mass slaughter of Spaniards. To my knowledge, only a tiny handful of friars, the real "kings" of the country, were ever executed, and usually to the great reluctance of both leaders and common people. It was certainly not like the Russian or Chinese revolutions with their emphasis on social leveling (though keeping the Party on top). Such entailed the break-up of large landholdings and the collectivization of labor and production through a highly centralized State apparatus that did not hesitate to use brutal means and exact great human costs. By contrast, there was in the Philippines considerable continuity between the Filipino colonial elites and those who fought, then governed in the Revolutionary era, as well as under US occupation. With few exceptions, they shared in the unshakeable belief that they were the only ones capable of truly ruling the nation. They were convinced that their interests-- predicated on liberal ideas of legal equality among propertied individuals that placed non-propertied peoples as dependent others; on patriarchal benevolence that kept women at the bottom; and on a Christianized and Hispanized culture that excluded non-Christians and other “heathen foreigners” such as the Chinese—were constitutive of the nation’s. Hence, they were deeply invested in their own survival and progress, which they saw to be tantamount to that of the country. Conversely, they regarded any challenge to their authority to
command and rule, especially from those below, as nothing less than an existential danger to the nation.

The modernizing and liberal basis of the Philippine Revolution makes it analogous to the liberal revolutions of the Americas rather than, say Southeast Asia. Comparatively speaking, Filipino nationalism resonates with the creole nationalism of both North and South America. We can see it as the earliest example of anti-colonial nationalism in Asia only to the extent that it was also a belated manifestation of creole nationalism across the Pacific. Like the wars of Independence in the Americas from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century, the Philippine Revolution was led by men who identified upwards with the Spaniards and the English, speaking their language and seeking to become their legal and political equals, inasmuch as they had long contributed to the material and military growth of their empires. Like the Americanos, the elite Filipinos had, in time, become the cultural equals, if not the betters of their colonial masters. Yet they kept running up against the entrenched structures and recurring experiences of racial exclusion that fed animosities even as it nurtured communities based on common resentments and aspirations.

In addition, they were also driven to deal with those below them: African slaves and Indian peoples, on the part of the Americanos; peasants, workers and non-propertied peoples, as well as “Chinese” and non-Christian-Hispanized peoples, for the Filipinos. For both, revolution was a gendered affair, generating discourses of fraternity at the expense of sorority, keeping women at the periphery of national struggles. Faced with unbearable pressures from above, creole nationalists across the Pacific were also compelled to contain and domesticate threats from below. To do so, both resorted to
Republican forms of government that necessarily made property, literacy and—in the North America case, whiteness—conditions for political representation and legal equality. These criteria for liberal citizenship in new nations underwrote the preservation of hierarchy characteristic of colonial social relations. This story is by now familiar. Nationalist modernity reassembled imperial structures—beginning with the territorial borders of the nation, its bureaucratic, military, racial, linguistic, class and gendered orders and much of its legal architecture—even as it rejected its colonizing hold.²⁸

Take, for example, the North American Revolution. In 1776, a group of largely conservative white men, many of whom owned slaves and a number of whom had fought for the British imperial army, got together and decided to overthrow their British overlords so that, in the words of John Adams, "we could have an empire of our own." This “empire of liberty” was predicated on the state-sanctioned accumulation of property. It emerged through the trans-continental theft of Indian lands and the genocide of their native inhabitants. The American revolutionaries freed themselves from the onerous taxes and military occupation of the British. But in so doing, they also freed themselves from any constraints in dealing with the Indians.

To preserve the unity of the Republic, they also kept slavery—one of the most crucial elements in the capitalist development of the US— at least for another 150 years. It required another revolution—the Civil War—to end slavery, and at least two episodes of Reconstruction—from 1865-1877, then again from the 1950s to the 1970s—to close the gap between the political and the social revolution of the US. And even then, that gap remains a gaping wound. The empire of liberty thus entailed the recurring exploitation and sacrifice of black lives and the permanent dispossession of Native American lands.
and lives in order to create a Republic where all white males would be legally equal to pursue liberty and happiness indissociable from the accumulation of property.\textsuperscript{29}

While the wars of Independence in Catholic South America were markedly different--they took longer than the wars in the Protestant North, were much bloodier, and resulted, for all sorts of complicated reasons, not in a unified continent but in a series of smaller states--it is not difficult to see similar processes at work. In the end, elite nationalists triumphed over more radical challengers. Slavery was abolished at much more staggered phases, some earlier, others much later, to preserve the economic advantages of former slave owners. Like the North, the South retained an enduring suspicion of what had been the most radical revolution yet in the Western hemisphere, that of the great slave uprising in Haiti. They sought to quarantine Haiti lest its social revolution spread to other parts of the Western hemisphere, even as the first successful slave revolution chased Napoleonic France out of the Americas. The emergent republics came to be ruled by military \textit{caudillos} as racial regimes tended to be more flexible while class divisions, especially along racial lines, hardened.\textsuperscript{30}

What would it mean to consider the Philippine revolution as something like the liberal revolutions in North and South America--led by creole elites aiming at "unity" and "homogeneity" in order to preserve the structures of hierarchy deeded by colonial rule? What would a more \textit{comparative} consideration of the revolution allow us to see that might otherwise remain invisible? Would it, for example, require us to re-think the meaning of revolutionary heroism? Would it lead us to ask what it would mean to be a nationalist today in view of the liberal-colonial foundations of the nation based on enforced social inequality in the name of the sanctity of private property? When we
celebrate the revolution and its heroes, what and who are we exactly celebrating? And who, exactly, is this "we?" Who does it include? Who does it exclude? What sort of amnesia must we cultivate so that we can be proud of being what we proclaim ourselves to be when confronted with the contradictory legacies of the revolution?

It is precisely the unfolding of these contradictions, their genealogy and their effects, the conflicts they triggered and the wars they unleashed, not once, but again and again, that Mila Guerrero’s book brings forth. By giving us this marvelously realized and carefully crafted history of the First Republic, *Luzon at War* also forces us to confront yet again the most enduring trope in Philippine history: that of the “unfinished revolution.” As Nick Joaquin wrote, we need to ask when confronted with this trope: “which revolution?” The political, whose victors never cease reasserting themselves in the life of the nation? Or the social, where the battle lines are always shifting, the terms of engagement and identities of the protagonists always fluid, and the outcomes far from certain and never final? It is the singular accomplishment of Mila’s book not only to raise these questions, but also to furnish us with the basis for exploring their comparative extensions and contemporary relevance. Like all strong historical works, it returns us to the past not in the mode of nostalgic longing for what has been lost, but as the history of a future that never ceases to arrive.

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Notes

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1 Teodoro Agoncillo and Milagros C. Guerrero, History of the Filipino People, Quezon City: R.P. Garcia Publishing Co., 1977. The first edition of this book appeared in 1960 with Agoncillo as the senior author and Oscar Alfonso as junior author. In 1970, for reasons too complicated to narrate here, Agoncillo replaced Alfonso with Milagros C. Guerrero as his co-author. She remained as such until the seventh edition in 1986. Disputes with the heirs of Agoncillo, in part stemming from Mila’s gentle criticism of his assertion that there was no Philippine history prior to 1872, that is, before the emergence of nationalism, led to her name being dropped from the eight edition. For a history of the History that relates the personal politics and material conditions surrounding the making of this textbook, see Vernon R. Totanes, “History of the Filipino People and Martial Law: A Forgotten Chapter in the History of a History Book,” Philippine Studies, vol. 58 no. 3 (2010): 313–348. See also Ambeth Ocampo, Talking History: Conversations with Teodoro Agoncillo, Malate, Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1995.

2 I thank Mila Guerrero for this and other stories relating to the writing of her dissertation. I also want to acknowledge the help of Profs. Merce Planta, Oscar Evangelista, Von Totanes and Nita Churchill for answering some of my questions.
about UP in the 1960s-1970s. I am especially grateful to Lila Shahani for her valuable help in revising this essay and making many useful suggestions for its improvement.


5 Michael Cullinane, personal communication, May 30, 2015. This was also confirmed by Norman Owen, personal communication, June 3, 2015.


9 See Isabelo de los Reyes, *La sensacional memoria sobre...la revolucion Filipina de 1896-1897*, Madrid: Tipografia de J. Corrales, 1899.


My remarks on the Katipunan are based on the documents and commentaries in Richardson, *The Light of Liberty*, especially chapters 1-3; and Appendix A, 399-415.

Richardson, ibid.

Richardson, ibid.

This dissertation was subsequently published as *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840-1910*, Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Univ. Press, 1979.

See Mojares, *Brains of the Nation*, 381-505; and Rafael, *The Promise of the Foreign*, chapter 1.

I owe this phrase, and the idea that real social revolution came with Spanish colonial reforms rather than with the Philippine revolution to the endlessly suggestive insights of Nick Joaquin. See especially *A Question of Heroes*. See also Josep Fradera, *Colonias para después de un Imperio*, Barcelona: Bellaterra, 2005; and “Reading Imperial Transitions: Spanish Contraction, British Expansion, and


26 A few names come to mind: Isabelo de los Reyes who had organized the first modern labor union in the Philippines and Pedro Abad Santos who were among the founders of the Socialist Party in 1930s. More names can undoubtedly be added to this list. While women were of course involved in nationalist projects, their contributions tend to be seen by nationalist historians as largely marginal. For a critique of nationalist patriarchy, see Denise Cruz, *Transpacific Femininities: The Making of the Modern Filipina*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

27 It was, of course, Nick Joaquin who had earlier argued for the salience of seeing Filipino nationalism as a creole formation analogous to those of the Americas. See *Question of Heroes*, especially 1-23, 65-76, 209-237. See also Mojares, *Brains of the Nation*, 383-418.


Elliott, ibid.