

PRODUCING THE MEANING OF AN ASIANIST REVOLUTION: IMAGES OF REVOLUTIONARIES IN THE 1899 SINO-JAPANESE JOINT AID TO THE PHILIPPINE REVOLUTION

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Introduction

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, activists with ideals of Asianism endeavored to ignite the fire of revolution in China, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, India, and many other places under the Euro-centric category of “Asia” to oppose European colonization and pursue national independence. Although anti-colonialism was a crucial element in Asianism, scholars often find Asianism a Janus-faced term, consisting of ideas, actions, and emotions that emphasize various expressions of Asian solidarity. To Marius B. Jansen, a pioneer in Sino-Japanese intellectual history, Asianism is a problematic set of binary, civilizational discourse that includes a “conflict of the Occidental rule of Might with the Oriental rule of Right.”¹ Apart from this binary interpretation, Jansen highlights how Asianism became intertwined with ideas of national self-determination and affinities among Asian countries, particularly through the case of Japanese Asianists supporting anti-government insurgents across Asia from the 1880s to 1920s.² Prasenjit Duara and Pekka Korhonen, in their respective studies, also highlight how Asianism as a civilizational discourse became the foundation of transnational political activism in Asia.³

In recent years, scholars on Asianism have shifted their focus from an East-West civilizational binary to the diversity and interconnectedness of Asianist ideas. From a conceptual history perspective, Craig A. Smith demonstrates how Asianism conflated different political visions and agendas. He defines Asianism as an “*implied* intention of solidarity of the countries of Asia” which include both “imperialist and anti-imperialist assertions, and it does not differentiate by country.”⁴ In other words, whether Asianism serves domination or resistance requires careful examination of how this rhetoric is situated in its context. Hau and Takeshi, in addition, define Asianism

¹ Marius B. Jansen, *The Japanese and Sun Yat-sen* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954), 211.

² Jansen, *The Japanese and Sun Yat-sen*, 59-81.

³ Prasenjit Duara, “The Discourse of Civilization and Pan-Asianism,” *Journal of World History* 12, no. 1 (2001): pp. 99-130, <https://doi.org/10.1353/jwh.2001.0009>; Pekka Korhonen, “Common Culture: Asia Rhetoric in the Beginning of the 20th Century,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 9, no. 3 (2008): pp. 395-417, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649370802184460>.

⁴ Craig A. Smith, *Chinese Asianism 1894-1945* (Cambridge (Massachusetts): Harvard University Press, 2021), 5.

as a network that “formed through intellectual, physical, emotional, virtual, institutional, and even sexual contacts, or some combination thereof.”⁵ In this network of ideas, Asianism is simultaneously an imaginary, alternative reality and a fantasy that constantly shapes its recipients’ perceptions of reality.⁶

Although many scholars touched upon the issue of print media in the history of Asianism, few of them gave a full account of this dimension. Since many Asianists were prolific writers and energetic propagandists themselves, our perceptions of Asianism today have been profoundly shaped by these activists’ writings.⁷ In this paper, using Smith’s definition of Asianism as a comprehensive network of emotions, ideas, and actions and Hau and Takeshi’s network approach, I demonstrate why and how the print media is crucial to the Asianist network, particularly in terms of recruiting new members, building revolutionary connections, and maintaining social influence.⁸

Revisiting the aborted Sino-Japanese joint aid to the Philippine Revolution in 1899, I argue that Asianist activists created, mutually affirmed, and canonized their images as revolutionaries. By examining (auto)biographies and propaganda material written by Sun Yat-sen of China, Miyazaki Tōten of Japan, and Mariano Ponce of the Philippines during their aid to the Philippine Revolution, I demonstrate the way they created revolutionary images of themselves and each other, thus conferring meanings to their military adventures as embodiments of Asianism. Highlighting the enabling role of print media and the method of literary self-fashioning, I demonstrate how Asianism is a contested field of meaning among activists in China, Japan, and the Philippines respectively.

The issue of print media has been highlighted in this research for it facilitated the circulation of Asianist ideas across Japan, China, India, and many other countries in East and Southeast Asia. In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson powerfully argues that the creation of modern national identities was driven by print technologies. Print capitalism, or “the mass production of print materials to satisfy a reader market for the purpose of making a profit” fostered collective identities among people who absorb the same cultural products, including newspapers, printed books, journals, and

⁵ Caroline S. Hau and Takeshi Shiraishi, “Daydreaming about Rizal and Tetchō On Asianism as Network and Fantasy,” *Philippine Studies* 57, no. 3 (2009): 333. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42634016>.

⁶ Hau and Shiraishi, “Daydreaming about Rizal and Tetchō On Asianism as Network and Fantasy,” 332.

⁷ François Furet demonstrates how journalists, writers, and scholars conferred world-historical significance to the French Revolution by strategically narrating their roles in the Revolution. The Siege of the Bastille, for instance, became a symbol of the revolution as layers of narratives surrounding the event piled onto each other. François Furet, *Interpreting the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

⁸ A full review of the network theory can be found in recent years’ sociological works. Albert-László Barabási, *Linked: the New Science of Networks*, (Cambridge: Perseus Pub., 2014). <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/cornell/Top?id=10460889>.

pamphlets—all mass-produced.⁹ While the print media helped build the foundations of modern nation-states, it also served the circulation of ideas that fostered transnational political engagements. In this regard, modern print media such as newspapers and mass-produced books became vessels of Asianist ideas, helping Asianists build their own “imagined communities” that transcended national borders.

The Joint Aid to the Philippine Revolution

Before analyzing the role of the print media in Asianist networks, it is vital to briefly account for the Sino-Japanese joint aid to the Philippine Revolution and its context. The 1890s were tumultuous years in East and Southeast Asia. Colonialism was at its height: telegrams, steamships, and census investigations helped colonial powers tighten their control over their territories. International order was Hobbesian: Japan, by defeating China in 1895, demonstrated that it could shake off its “Asian-ness” and join the rank of European powers with its military might. Technological advances also intensified the flux of individuals, goods, and ideas, allowing open-minded young people in indigenous societies, who had otherwise little motivation and means of leaving their countries, to travel across oceans for knowledge, wealth, and power. As these young intellectuals familiarized themselves with European discourses of nationalism through newspapers and journals, their demand for national independence and anti-colonial struggles was on the rise.¹⁰

It was in this context that the Filipinos rose against the Spanish colonial authority in 1896. After initial victories and subsequent setbacks, the Filipino revolutionaries ceased fire with the Spanish and retreated to Hong Kong, a British colony at the time. While the United States intervened in 1898 and made the Philippine archipelago their colony, these Filipino revolutionaries in Hong Kong turned to the rising military and industrial power in Asia—Japan—for help.¹¹ The logic was intuitive: to contribute to the revolutionary effort, it is better to ally with the most resourceful country in the region. Japan’s rapid modernization and Westernization, which contributed to its military victory over China in 1895, made it an ideal candidate. More importantly, these Filipino revolutionaries sought help from a particular group of people who shared a strong sympathy with Philippine independence: Japanese Asianists.¹²

Japanese Asianists have long viewed “Asia” as both a geopolitical and civilizational category on which Japan could exert its influence. The idea that Japan should intervene in affairs on the Asian continent existed for centuries, which culminated in its invasion of Korea in the late sixteenth century, but the idea that Japan

⁹ Lin Pei-Yin and Tsai Weipin, eds, *Print, Profit, and Perception: Ideas, Information and Knowledge in Chinese Societies, 1895-1949* (Boston: BRILL, 2014), 92.

¹⁰ Tim Harper, *Underground Asia: Global Revolutionaries and the Assault on Empire* (Cambridge: Bellknapp Press of Harvard University Press, 2021), 23-33.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² William Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), 1-24.

has a unique moral obligation for Asia was a nineteenth-century construct. Since Western colonial discourses designated “Asia” through the Orientalist lens, “Asia” was constructed as the opposite of European modernity.¹³ This dynamic, while accepted and internalized by people in colonial and semi-colonial societies, became the foundation of their resistance to European domination. Japanese Asianists, for instance, equated Japan’s increasing military and economic supremacy in the region to Japan’s leadership amongst other Asian countries. In other words, they defined Asia as a stage on which they could exert influence over other Asian countries, thus demonstrating and consolidating Japan’s status as the most advanced country in the region.¹⁴

With faith in Japan’s obligations to other Asian countries, Japanese Asianists started to offer aid for political dissidents and independence armies among its neighboring countries, which was acutely seized by the Filipinos exiled to Hong Kong. Emilio Aguinaldo, a leading revolutionary figure in the Philippine independence movement, had profound connections with the Japanese. He chose Mariano Ponce, a Filipino doctor who recently returned from Spain, as his delegate to Japan. Through the mediation of Miyazaki Tōten, a noted Japanese Asianist who worked closely with Sino-Japanese Asianists, Ponce went to Japan.¹⁵ In a meeting with Japanese politicians in Tokyo, Ponce spotted Sun Yat-sen, a Chinese revolutionary, who became famous with his autobiography *Kidnapped in London*. “His name aroused a recollection of what I had read in Barcelona about the kidnapping in London,” Ponce recalled.¹⁶ With knowledge of Sun’s revolutionary background, he came to Sun for help. Sun gladly introduced his friends to Ponce, including Inukai Tsuyoshi, the Japanese Minister of Education, who was a staunch Asianist. After a series of negotiations, Inukai managed to secure secret military aid for the Philippine revolutionaries from the Japanese government.¹⁷ To Japanese Asianists like Inukai, the aid for the Filipino revolution demonstrated Japan’s commitment to the independence of Asian countries from Western domination as well as Japan’s moral and political leadership in the region.

The aid, requested by the Filipinos, mediated by the Chinese, and carried out by the Japanese, was finally delivered in 1899. The plan was to bring essential weaponry to Filipino revolutionaries in Hong Kong and knowledge of military operations to Filipino guerrilla forces, thus increasing these independence fighters’ competitive edge over Americans. Miyazaki was in charge of overseeing the voyage of *Nunobiki Maru*, a ship carrying “six million rounds of ammunition” and “ten thousand rifles” to the

¹³ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 3-4.

¹⁴ Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism*, 1-24.

¹⁵ Marie-Claire Bergère and Lloyd Janet Lloyd, *Sun Yat-Sen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 80-81.

¹⁶ Mariano Ponce, *Sun Yat-Sen, the Founder of the Republic of China* (Manila: Filipino-Chinese Cultural Foundation, 1965), 3.

¹⁷ Jansen, *The Japanese and Sun Yat-sen*, 70-71.

Filipino revolutionaries in Hong Kong.¹⁸ Meanwhile, a group of military experts, led by another Asianist Hirayama Shu, arrived at Luzon to join a Filipino guerrilla warfare against the Americans.¹⁹

However, these Asianists' rosy-eyed vision of overthrowing the American colonial existence in the Philippines, as well as the dream of a general revolution against European powers across Asia, swiftly turned into a nightmare. *Nunobiki Maru*, on its voyage to Hong Kong, was sunk by a storm, and Hirayama Shu's guerilla forces in Luzon were dwarfed by the Americans.²⁰ When the frustrated Japanese Asianists tried to use the rest of their weapons stored in China, they came to "a startling discovery" that Nakamura, a lower officer in the Japanese Foreign Ministry, who was one of their comrades, embezzled most of the funds to ease his diabetes.²¹ The Nakamura affair became a final blow to the Sino-Japanese joint aid to the Philippines. Its impact was seismic in the Asianist network, which partially led to the failure of another military operation led by Sun Yat-sen and Zheng Shiliang in Huizhou, China because a large portion of the money Nakamura embezzled was originally reserved for Sun and Zheng.²²

The immediate response to the abortive aid among Asianist circles was frustration. After *Nunobiki Maru* sank, Miyazaki confessed that only wine and women could comfort him.²³ He wrote an autobiography, *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, which accounted for his trajectory as a Japanese Asianist helping Asian countries achieve independence from Western colonial powers. In China, Sun Yat-sen remained silent on the failure. Well-circulated Chinese newspapers run by Chinese constitutionalists and revolutionaries (among whom Sun was a crucial leader) outside of China in the 1900s rarely mention the Sino-Japanese aid to the Philippines. Sun's silence was understandable as he was forced to maintain a low profile under the persecution of the Chinese government. Besides, publicizing the aborted aid would only undercut his revolutionary agenda in China because the Chinese public would find it unacceptable that he was cooperating with Japan, which defeated China militarily. Like Sun, Ponce remained silent on this issue until 1912, when Sun successfully overthrew the Qing Empire and established a republic in China. In a biography dedicated to Sun, entitled *Sun Yat-Sen, the Founder of the Republic of China*, Ponce described Sun's, as well as his and Miyazaki's, involvement in the 1899 aid.

Joining the Asianist Network

How did Sun, Miyazaki, and Ponce join the Japan-centered Asianist network? It is vital to understand that the network's haphazardness in effect "motivated some

¹⁸ Ibid, 71.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid, 72.

²¹ Ibid, 73.

²² Ibid, 74

²³ Miyazaki, *San shi san nian*, 155.

of these people at particular points in history to dream of, fight for, and work toward, a different and better “Asia” and a better world” through “personal emotions and encounters.”²⁴ The circulation of Asianist (auto)biographies and newspapers became mechanisms that drew the attention of radical youngsters in Asia into Asianist networks. In other words, the Asianist network had a stage-like “recruitment” process: the print media its “advertisement,” prominent revolutionaries its “actors,” and fidgeting young visionaries its “target audience.”

The 1896 media bombshell of the anti-Qing revolutionary Sun Yat-sen being kidnapped by members of the Qing legation in London became such a “hook.” Originally covered by newspapers in England, it became the spotlight of many newspapers in Spain, China, and Japan, which immediately brought Miyazaki and Ponce’s attention to Sun. Ponce, an aspiring young Filipino doctor who sojourned in Spain, encountered Sun first in the newspaper:

In October 1896, I was in Barcelona and regularly frequented the Ateneo Barcelones, where I read almost all the Spanish, English and French newspapers in search of reports on the crucial happenings that had started in the Philippines the previous August...One day, I was glancing through the English newspapers at the Ateneo when sensational headlines in the *Globe* and *Times* caught my eye, headlines that ran more or less like this: *Startling Story! Conspirator Kidnapped in London! Imprisonment at the Chinese Embassy!*²⁵

Perhaps, as a patriot concerned about political situations in the Philippines and thus the fate of Asia, Ponce found Sun dear to himself.²⁶ Upon the outbreak of the Philippine Revolution in the same year, Ponce, facing the Spanish authority’s intimidations, “initially escaped arrest in Barcelona...but he was later apprehended and spent a night in jail.”²⁷ Probably knowing that he was not alone in the fight against colonial powers, he quickly “fled Barcelona to Hong Kong by way of Marseilles, leaving on November 1, 1896.”²⁸

In the swirl of the Philippine Revolution, busied with providing essential arms to the Filipino resistance army, Ponce “forgot about the man kidnapped right off a London street.”²⁹ Nevertheless, in 1899, he was sent by Emilio Aguinaldo, the leading figure of the Philippine Revolution, to Japan for foreign aid. This time, he directly came to Sun when spotting the latter at a banquet held by Japanese officials. He recalled that in his first meeting with Sun, he thought Sun a “visionary, a utopian” but “in the course of our almost daily discussions, in which he explained...the details of

²⁴ Hau and Takeshi, “Daydreaming about Rizal and Tetchō On Asianism as Network and Fantasy,” 376.

²⁵ Ponce, *Sun Yat-sen*, 1.

²⁶ Ponce, *Sun Yat-sen*, 1-3.

²⁷ Nicole CuUnjieng Aboitiz, *Asian Place, Filipino Nation: A Global Intellectual History of the Philippine Revolution, 1887-1912* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), 112.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ponce, *Sun Yat-sen*, 3.

his plans, and how the current conditions in his country fitted in with those plans and made them feasible,” he realized that Sun, “far from being a visionary, was a practical observer.”³⁰ Without learning about Sun from the newspaper, Ponce could hardly find Sun or any Chinese insurgents, in the first place. Needless to say, Ponce found Sun’s pragmatic approach to revolutions in Asia convincing.

Similarly, the Japanese Asianist Miyazaki Tōten, with a lifelong dream of starting a revolution in China that may awaken Asia, documented how he came to know Sun in his autobiography *My Thirty-Three Years’ Dream*, first published as serial essays on *Niroku Shinpo* 二六新報 in 1902.³¹ Infused with samurai ethics, Christian humanitarianism, and popular racial and civilizational discourses of the time, Miyazaki viewed China as an ideal testing ground for the Asian revolution.³² After years of futile attempts of finding reliable collaborators, Miyazaki occasionally heard of Sun via another Chinese revolutionary, Chen Shaobai:

Chen told me that the... [head of the revolutionary party in China] was Sun Yat-sen, and showed me a small volume that he said was by that man. This was titled *SUN YAT-SEN, KIDNAPPED IN LONDON*...From this I learned that he was a member of the Rise China (Hsing-Chung hui) Society.³³

Knowing that Sun was an ambitious and well-connected activist, Miyazaki came to Sun and immediately became his loyal friend. He introduced Sun to other Asianists in Japan, including Inukai Tsuyoshi, Hirayama Shu, and Toyama Mitsuru. Newspapers and autobiographies on Sun became a vivid “advertisement,” a rallying call for people with similar ideas about the prospect of a revolution that sweeps across Asia. Even though activists had initially different agendas, the print media disseminating revolutionary images paved the way for joint missions like the 1899 Aid based on a shared ideal of Asian solidarity, however imaginary and fragmentary it was at the beginning.

However, responses to the joint mission did not end in a mixture of frustration, speechlessness, and appreciation. Over the years, the incorporation of the event into heroic images of the three revolutionaries subtly changed the meaning of the failure. The following of this paper demonstrates how images of “Asianist revolutionaries” were constructed by the revolutionaries themselves in parallel with the production of meanings of the revolutionary moment.

³⁰ Ponce, *Sun Yat-sen*, 20.

³¹ Miyazaki Tōten, *San shi san nian zhi meng* 三十三年之梦, Trans. Lin Qiyan (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2011), 270.

³² Miyazaki, *San shi san nian*, 2-43.

³³ *Ibid*, 175.

Creating One's Own Revolutionary Images

The project of aiding Philippine revolutionaries, although a failure, served as powerful propaganda material for the Asianists to strengthen an ideal of Asian solidarity. By constructing images of their own through autobiographies, these activists added positive implications to the abortive aid—a careful, strategic literary intervention. Of this type of self-proclaimed Asianist revolutionaries, Miyazaki and Sun are the most distinguished.

Let me re-examine the initial meeting between Ponce and Miyazaki, which was recorded in Miyazaki's autobiography. Miyazaki confessed that although his revolutionary aspiration “centered on China,” he “was full of sympathy” when Ponce approached him and “couldn't help it” when Ponce asked for Japan's military aid, and soon he “succumbed to this new enthusiasm.”³⁴ It was probably Ponce's humble language and an appeal to Japan's leadership status in Asia that led to a condescending Miyazaki's agreement. Miyazaki—creating an image of himself as a generous, romantic *ronin* who does not even calculate the cost of his sacrifice—implied that as long as the aid had good intentions, the disgraceful failure could be ignored. Furthermore, by moralizing aid to the Philippine revolutionaries, Miyazaki affirmed Japan's obligation to the Asianist network and implicitly acknowledged its domination in Asia. He specifically noted Ponce's comment that Japan was a “chivalrous nation.”³⁵ Later Asianists tracked this line of thinking and transcribed it into the rhetoric that justifies Japan's expansionism in the 1930s, which will be the focus of the last section of my paper.

Interestingly, just over a few pages, Miyazaki downplayed the significance of the aid and his participation in it. He specifically noted that “it became Sun's plan that some of his followers should go to the Philippines in secrecy, join Aguinaldo's army to speed its victory, and then turn to direct their new power to the Chinese interior, establishing a revolutionary army there.”³⁶ We might not need to question that Sun was sympathetic to the Filipinos resisting Spanish and American colonization, but the possibility of transforming the aid to the Filipinos into a rehearsal for a revolution in China is too minuscule to treat seriously. Even Miyazaki did not consider a revolutionary rehearsal in the Philippines could have any real-world implications. After *Nunobiki Maru* departed, Miyazaki “returned to Canton and Hong Kong to continue work on the Chinese situation.”³⁷ By highlighting his moralized, romanticized image and downplaying the failure of the joint operation in *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, Miyazaki strategically narrated the joint mission in a way that solidifies his revolutionary image among the general public and prohibits the failure from contaminating his ideal of Asian solidarity.

³⁴ Ibid, 78, 79.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid, 84.

³⁷ Jansen, *The Japanese and Sun Yat-sen*, 72.

To be sure, this style of literary self-fashioning, which turns an episode of failure into an honorable pursuit, was not exclusive to Miyazaki or any Japanese Asianists. Sun Yat-sen's famous autobiography *Kidnapped in London* is perhaps a precedent. In this short book, Sun documented how agents of the Qing legation in London kidnapped him and attempted to extradite him to China, where he would face the death penalty without a doubt. With the help of his English friends and London journalists who made his name on the front page of major English newspapers, Sun gained public sympathy and left the legation in a few days. The image of Sun in the book was a moderate social reformer, a Chinese converted to Christianity, and a political dissident persecuted by malicious Qing officials. It did not correctly reflect Sun's political attitude (he had developed his conviction in republicanism and the means of violent revolutions before arriving in London), but the image suited late Victorian English ideals of gentlemen: men with motivation, courage, relentlessness, and wit.

More importantly, Sun's image appealed to aspiring young revolutionaries in Asia and created a revolutionary record of Sun even though none of Sun's political agenda came to reality in the 1890s. If Miyazaki demonstrates that purposeful narration attunes the meaning of a failed revolutionary attempt, Sun's autobiography-writing further reminds us that revolutionaries, by telling their own stories with tailored images, can create a meaningful revolutionary trajectory that even predates their actions.

Mutual Affirmation of Revolutionary Images

Miyazaki and Sun were not alone in literary self-fashioning. After the failure of the Philippine mission, Sun, Miyazaki, and Ponce wrote on each other, creating a "web of meaning" that may, from an outsider's perspective, constitute a burgeoning Asian solidarity. It is thus interesting to see that these revolutionaries mutually affirmed revolutionary images of each other. By doing so, they justified their dedication to pan-Asian revolutions, despite the setback of 1899. In this section, I discuss Sun's image under Ponce's pen, Miyazaki under Sun's pen, and Sun's image under Miyazaki's pen.

Many years after the joint operation in 1899 and the Chinese Revolution of 1911, Ponce wrote a biography for Sun, in which he created an image of Sun as a staunch Asianist. He passionately wrote about Sun's vision of Asia:

For Sun Yat-sen the problems found in the various countries of the Far East presented themselves in such form that he could study them together. Many common points characterize these problems. For this reason, Sun was one of the enthusiastic advocates of the group of young oriental students from Korea, China, Japan, India, Siam, and the Philippines.³⁸

³⁸ Ponce, *Sun Yat-sen*, 60.

However, we must read this portrayal with caution because, first, Asianism was no more than one thread of Sun's wide-ranging political agendas. It is understandable that, from a Filipino nationalist's perspective, Ponce's choice of glossing the mission of promoting Asianism among youngsters over Sun suits his own political views, but his writings left us an impression of Sun as entirely committed to the ideal of Asian solidarity. Second, throughout the biography, Ponce did not mention the details of the 1899 joint aid after highlighting Sun's mediating role in it. The omission of the enterprise, particularly the removal of the way it went awry, avoids a stain on the heroic image of Sun and thus bolsters the vision of Asian solidarity from which the Philippine revolutionaries benefited. Third, and most interestingly, Ponce probably wrote this biography of Sun immediately after the 1911 Chinese Revolution, during which Sun and his revolutionaries ascended to power and established China's first republican government in Nanjing.³⁹ The 1911 revolution, to Ponce, was probably a triumphant, yet unexpected, result of years of fruitless struggles on Asian revolutions. In short, Ponce created an image of Sun being a staunch Asianist revolutionary in the remarkable event of aiding the Philippine revolutionaries even though the proceedings of aid were largely skipped.

Sun Yat-sen, according to extant texts, did not write much about Ponce, with whom he only met a few times. But Sun could not help but praise his life-long comrade, Miyazaki Tōten. In the Chinese version of Miyazaki's *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, Sun added a sentimental preface in classical Chinese, creating a heroic image of Miyazaki, an ideal Asianist:

Miyazaki Tōten is our era's knight. He has broad knowledge and high ambitions. With a heart of generosity and justice, he aims to be a savior in today's crisis. He constantly worries about the decline of the Yellow Race and sympathizes with the weakness of China. He visited China many times to look for the talented, hoping to earn world-changing merits through collaboration and to complete the enterprise of reviving Asia... Calling him Qiuranke will not be an exaggeration.⁴⁰

³⁹ I did not find direct evidence that tells us when Ponce wrote the biography exactly, but given that in this biography, Ponce mentioned the 1911 Chinese Revolution, and that Ponce's friend, Teodoro M. Kalaw, wrote a prologue for the book in July 1912, it is probable that Ponce finished this biography on Sun swiftly after the 1911 Chinese Revolution. The 1965 version of the book was also interesting for it was reprinted by the Filipino-Chinese Cultural Foundation during a time when China and the Philippines fought bitterly along the lines of communist and capitalist ideologies. If Ponce's initial writing aims at celebrating a revolution that he equated with Asian solidarity, the reprinted *Sun Yat-sen* in 1965 is perhaps an attempt of pro-China Philippine nationalists in the hope of preserving that memory and speaking to contemporaneous social realities.

⁴⁰ Miyazaki, *San shi san nian*, Preface by Sun Yat-sen. “宮崎寅藏君者，今之俠客也，識見高遠，抱負不凡，具懷仁慕義之心，發拯危扶傾之誌；日憂黃種凌夷，憫支那削弱，數遊漢土，以訪英賢，欲共建不世之奇勳，襄成興亞之大業...方之虬髯，成有過之。”

Sun praised Miyazaki's ambition, virtue, and sympathy for China and Asia in the face of imperialist aggression. He compared Miyazaki to Qiuranke, a legendary Chinese hero in the Tang Dynasty from Dongying 东瀛, an ambiguous geographic metaphor that can signify Japan. In this way, the transnational collaboration between Chinese and Japanese Asianists, under Sun's pen, implies a continuation of Asian, particularly Chinese, chivalrous traditions and serves the goal of “reviving Asia.” Therefore, despite his Sino-centrist cultural perspective, Sun's preface echoed Miyazaki's self-portrayal and affirmed his image as an Asianist revolutionary.

Miyazaki, as we may expect, sketched a glorious revolutionary image of Sun. In *My Thirty-Three Years' Dream*, he recorded Sun's exact words in his first meeting with Sun:

I firmly believe that heaven will help our cause—for the sake of the Chinese masses, for the sake of the yellow race of Asia, and for the sake of humanity throughout the world. I am buoyed in this conviction by the fact that you have come to me to participate in our work. You are an omen. Now it is up to us to exert ourselves in order not to fall short of your expectations. And you, in turn, must do your best to help us gain our objectives. The way to help the four hundred million of China's masses, the way to wipe out the insults that have been heaped on the yellow peoples of Asia, the way to protect and restore the way of humanity throughout the universe—all this can be done only by helping our country's revolution. When this one cause succeeds, all other problems will find solution quickly.⁴¹

Markedly, Miyazaki recorded Sun's lengthy explanation of his revolutionary vision in detail, and Sun's torrential passion, even filtered by Miyazaki's narration, is astonishing. Sun, for sure, focused on problems in China, but he was equally concerned about Asia and the world, and he saw a Chinese revolution as a cure to problems larger than China: colonialism, racial discrimination, and a ruthless international order. Therefore, Miyazaki's mentioning of Sun's proposal of aiding the Philippines as a rehearsal of the Chinese revolution conferred world-historical meaning to the Philippine Revolution—if the revolution in the Philippines became a success, it can bolster a revolution in China, Asia, and finally in the world. This logic of revolutionary chain reaction was implicit in Miyazaki's justification of the aid to the Philippines, and by recording Sun's words verbatim in his autobiography, Miyazaki circuitously affirms his expectation of Asian revolutions.

Writing biographies of collaborating revolutionaries, thus, can create a “web of meaning” that bolsters each other's revolutionary determination and the perception of solidarity from an outsider's point of view. Perhaps this is the reason why Edgar Snow's *Red Star Over China* meant so much to Chinese communists and George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* to Euro-American anarchists. While a single

⁴¹ Miyazaki, *San shi san nian*, 102.

revolutionary's political agenda can be nothing but whimsical ideas, a meshwork of revolutionary ideas can be much more meaningful than adding them up individually.

A Pantheon of Asianist “Revolutionaries”

An unexpected and ironic result of the image-making of Sun, Miyazaki, and Ponce in their respective biographies was later Japanese Asianists' exploitation of these images in the 1930s to justify Japanese military expansion. Yoshihisa Kuzuu and his fellow editors picked up the aura of the “Asian solidarity” among Sun, Miyazaki, and Ponce, integrating it into their construction of a pantheon of Asian revolutionaries in *Tōa Senkaku Shishi Kiden* (TSSK). TSSK was first published in 1935, at a time when Japanese military expansionism completely wiped out the Miyazaki-styled romantic collaboration among Asian countries. Uchida Ryohei, who participated in the aid to the Philippines in 1899, became the head of the *Kokuryūtai* 黒龍會, an intelligence and mafia society based on mostly the same Asianists at the turn of the 20th century. The change of winds turned these former Asian internationalists into supporters of Japan's unilateral expansion.

Chronologically structured, TSSK preserved an array of Japan's expansionist missions and images of “Asianist heroes” from the late 1860s to the mid-1900s. It highlighted watersheds of Japanese expansion to which civilian Asianist societies contributed, including the First Sino-Japanese War, the annexation of Korea, and the Russo-Japanese War. It aimed to “look forward into the time of the *shishi*'s activities” and “promote the Japanese spirit.”⁴² The “pantheon” included many prominent Japanese Asianists or advocates for Japan's expansion in Asia, such as Saigo Takamori, Toyama Mitsuru, and Hirayama Shu. But it equally included many non-Japanese and labeled them as Asianists—mostly Koreans and Chinese—including Kim Ok-guyn and Sun Yat-sen. It even dedicated an entire chapter to the 1899 Philippines enterprise, titled “Japanese-Chinese *Shishi* and the Army of Aiding the Philippine Independence 日支志士と比律賓獨立援助軍.”⁴³ The chapter began with the eruption of the Philippine Independence War and Mariano Ponce's request for military aid from Japan. It then recorded Sun Yat-sen and Miyazaki's mediating roles, which were similar to what Miyazaki and Ponce wrote in their biographies. The chapter also contains many euphemistic titles and nicknames for the activists in the aid, such as “revolutionary *shishi* of China 支那の革命志士,” “sword-bearing knights 劍俠” and

⁴² Yoshihisa Kuzuu, *Tōa Senkaku Shishi Kiden* 東亞先覺志士記傳 (Tōkyō: Kokuryūkai Shuppanbu, Shōwa 10-11 [1935-1936] 東京: 黒龍会出版部, 昭和 10-11 [1935-1936]), 3..

“志士活動の時代的展望” “日本精神の發揚” “志士” or *Shishi* can be roughly translated as visionaries or revolutionaries, but none of them perfectly suits the context that the Japanese *shishi* were mostly lower-class samurais who precariously worked for anyone who hired them from the late 19th to the early 20th centuries. The multi-volume book will be abbreviated as TSSK in the following notes.

⁴³ TSSK, 627.

“young *shishi* 青年志士.”⁴⁴ Without a doubt, the *Kokuryukai* authors tried to conflate Japanese military expansion with Asianist international collaboration for national independence.

Interestingly, in the *TSSK* narrative of the aid to the Philippines, the Chinese, and the Philippine revolutionaries disappear after the sinking of *Nunobiki Maru*. The rest of the chapter (13 out of 20 pages) focused on the fighting between Japanese military experts and the American army in Luzon, including an anecdote of Hirayama Shu miraculously escaping from the Americans’ siege. The euphemistic titles for the Asianist revolutionaries, this time exclusively dedicated to the Japanese, changed accordingly: “ambitious Japanese 日本有志家” and “three champions 三豪傑” which refers to Miyazaki Tōten, Kyofuji Koshichiro, and Hirayama Shu.⁴⁵ The “three champions” is perhaps a reference to Meiji political activist and novelist Nakamura Chomin’s archetypal literary figure “Mr. Champion,” an ambitious, self-aggrandizing advocate for Japanese military adventurism on the Asian continent.⁴⁶ Similar images of self-sacrificial Japanese “champions” are vivid illustrations of the ideal “Asianist” the *Kokuryukai* endeavored to propagandize. Chinese and Korean Asianists, in this narrative, had only servile roles.

We may thus say that Sun and Ponce’s fleeting, bland images in the *TSSK* chapter on the aid to the Philippines are the *TSSK* editors’ narrative strategy to highlight the brush-stroked, fearless images of Miyazaki Tōten and Hirayama Shu. The sinking of *Nunobiki Maru* and the Nakamura embezzlement were indeed unfortunate, but the *TSSK* narrative circumvented such disgraceful records by focusing on the heroic fights of the Japanese *shishi*. If my analysis of Sun’s, Miyazaki’s, and Ponce’s writings demonstrated an attempt of creating positive meanings for the Philippine enterprise and thus alluding to warm feelings of Asian solidarity via revolutionary images of oneself and each other, the *TSSK* narrators intercepted these images which had already circulated in Asia and transformed them into testimonies of the “Japanese spirit,” and thus Japanese expansion in Asia.

A final remark on Marius Jansen’s use of the *TSSK* should be made. Jansen frequently consulted with this volume in his seminal work *The Japanese and Sun Yat-sen*. He used *TSSK* at least 55 times throughout the work and six times in the chapter about Sun Yat-sen, Miyazaki, and Ponce.⁴⁷ I did not find any explanation of the narrative structure of the *TSSK* and its difference from other sources he used in the work. Perhaps his imprudent over-reliance on *TSSK* imparted him a sense of Asian solidarity in the first place. Departing from this biased assumption, he could find ample evidence from the three activists’ writings.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 627-632.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 632, 646.

⁴⁶ Nakamura Chomin, *A Discourse by Three Drunkards on Government* (Boston: Weatherhill, 2015), 89-120.

⁴⁷ Jansen, *The Japanese and Sun Yat-sen*, 232-264.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Sun, Miyazaki, and Ponce's respective writings on their own and each other's participation in the 1899 Sino-Japanese aid to the Philippines Revolution became a moment they defined Asianism in action. This "Asianist" character was authored by neither contemporary journalists nor historians in retrospect, but mostly by these Asianists themselves and their followers. The most striking, and perhaps abhorred, example of this kind of retrospective mode of image-making and thus narrative production is the *TSSK* of the *Kokuryukai*. Although it is an extremely well-tailored collection of the so-called Asianist revolutionaries, it casts Japan's military ambition in Asia onto Sun, Miyazaki, and Ponce's 1899 campaign, which, although associated with Japan's ambition in the region, was not compelled by Japanese military expansionism at all. None of them could have supported the *Kokuryukai's* expansionist agenda in the 1930s during the 1899 mission.

Highlighting the dimension of print media, particularly with examples from (auto)biographies, newspapers, and propaganda material in the study of Asianism, I demonstrate how different Asianists defined their transnational military campaigns in divergent contexts. While Miyazaki was vocal about his assistance to Filipino revolutionaries to demonstrate Japan's moral supremacy and political leadership in the region, Sun and Ponce remained silent in the ensuing years of the event because unveiling their association with Japanese Asianists was not politically received in their respective societies. The images of Asianists as selfless transnational warriors, retrospectively speaking, were created and reinforced by the three men's writings on each other. Japanese Asianists affiliated with the *Kokuryukai*, furthermore, utilized these images and reinforced Miyazaki's role in the 1899 campaign to facilitate Japan's military expansionism in Asia in the 1930s. The print media, in other words, was inseparable from the creation of Asianism as a network of contested ideas.

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