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Asian Place, Filipino Nation: A Global Intellectual History of the Philippine Revolution, 1887–1912. By Nicole CuUnjieng Aboitiz. New York: Columbia University Press, 2020. 272 pp.

Nicole CuUnjieng Aboitiz’s book examines the intellectual origins and key concepts of the Philippine Revolution, centring them within the vibrant transnational political contexts of Southeast and East Asia. Aboitiz’s account is an innovative break from prior scholarship on the Revolution, which situated the upheaval in the Philippines at the turn of the century within a national context and along the axis of East-West relations. By situating the anti-colonial ideas of the Filipino revolutionary leaders in the broader transnational context of pan-Asianism, Aboitiz recovers the Philippines as an Asian place from which it has been largely historiographically excluded for over a century.

Asian Place, Filipino Nation brings together in a single narrative, under the concept of ‘Philippine Revolution’, the intellectual origins of anti-colonial nationalism in the colony, the revolution against Spain, the short-lived Philippine Republic, and the war of resistance against the American empire. Chapter 1, “A Transnational Turn of the Century in Southeast Asia”, reconstructs, through the evocative juxtaposition of intellectual developments throughout the region, a sense of the excitement of pan-Asianism, which constellated, above all, around the emerging imperial power of Japan, and was the context in which the ideas of the Philippine Revolution formed. Chapter 2, “Constructing Asia and the Malay Race, 1887–1895”, explores how the anti-colonial thought and national concept of the *ilustrados*, the educated elite, was born out of an attempt to construct an Asian identity and a sense of Malayness. Chapter 3, “The Philippine Revolution Mobilizes Asia, 1892–1898”, demonstrates that the Philippine revolution did not merely respond to its transnational Asian context but shaped it as well. Aboitiz usefully distinguishes between core and peripheral pan-Asianism, the latter circulated

by the still-colonized Southeast Asians often through the hubs of Yokohama and Hong Kong. The chapter reveals how the Philippine Revolution shaped this peripheral pan-Asianism, tracing in particular its connections to Vietnam. Chapter 4, “The First Philippine Republic’s Pan-Asian Emissary, 1898–1912”, traces the career of Mariano Ponce, emissary of the Philippine Republic to Japan, and explores the depth of his “personal pan-Asianism” (p. 130). Chapter 5, “The Afterlife of the Philippine Revolution”, traces the echoes of the Philippine Revolution in peripheral pan-Asianism, exploring its impact on China and Indonesia, and outlines the role of pan-Asianism in the thinking of layers of the Philippine elite who collaborated with the Japanese occupation during the Second World War.

Aboitiz’s book is an intellectual history of a revolution, and this necessarily implies certain limitations. A revolution, as Trotsky remarked about the events in Russia in 1917, “is the direct interference of the masses in historical events” (Trotsky 1937, p. xvii). The ideas that emerge in a time of revolution take shape out of a rapidly altering socioeconomic landscape and strain to give political form to a mass movement. The heady transnational pan-Asianism, so vividly described in this book, floats above both the global circuits of capitalism and the struggle of the masses in the Philippine Revolution, its sociological moorings never fleshed out. Aboitiz acknowledges these limitations, characterizing her work as “a more elite-driven intellectual history” (p. 149) that was “not directly engaged with the role of global capitalism in the emergence of modern anticolonial nationalism” (p. 150).

I suspect that greater attention to the development of global capitalism would demonstrate how the semi-autonomous peripheral pan-Asianism in the Philippine Revolution, highlighted by Aboitiz, was subsumed to the core pan-Asianism of rising Japanese militarism. The social function of the pan-Asianism of Jose P. Laurel and Sukarno during the occupation, whatever its rhetorical resemblances, had lost all traces of its peripheral ancestry. While Aboitiz quotes Laurel’s pan-Asianist presidential speeches during the Japanese occupation,

she does not delve into his family's deep economic and political connections to Japan that long predated 1941. Laurel's son, Jose Laurel III, for example, was trained as an officer in the Japanese military in the 1930s and was deployed to Manchuria in 1937.

While Aboitiz's account breaks the intellectual history of the revolution free from an earlier, comparatively parochial, historiography, the great majority of those who fought in the revolution are still consigned to local and national histories. She writes that "[a]ssessing the Philippine Revolution's regional reverberations has required me to focus on the intellectual impact of the elites who thought, and possibly exerted influence in other colonies in the region, unlike the particularistic, localized, religiopolitical, and often anti-statist communities that voiced discontent only within the Philippines" (p. 29). The perspective of localized and particularistic voices of discontent cannot account for the simultaneity of the uprising that launched the Philippine Revolution, or for why there was a substantial mass base that the elite attempted to channel behind their pan-Asianist-inflected nationalist conceptions. I would suggest that the same global economic pressures that inspired the pan-Asianism of a section of the Philippine intelligentsia ruptured the conditions and routines of life for the working masses in the colony, as well as for their counterparts in colonies throughout the region. The revolution seen from below requires a transnational rewrite as well.

These are real limitations, but they are limitations to a book that has broken critical new ground. To point them out is less to criticize Aboitiz's work and more to point to the future research that is required to explore the vistas that have been opened up by her scholarship. For a century, the dominant trend in historiography has allocated the Philippines to a limbo between Southeast Asia and Latin America, between East and West, a fringe only partially conversant with the rest of the region. Aboitiz's book allows us to see the Filipino nation as an Asian place, integral to its developments. It is a salutary achievement.

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Censorship in Colonial Indonesia, 1901–1942. By Nobuto Yamamoto. Leiden: Brill, 2019. viii+294 pp.

This book describes the methods used by the colonial government to censor the press during the last decades of Dutch rule in Indonesia. As Yamamoto shows, colonial officials were concerned that newspapers, above all vernacular newspapers, could be used to foment opposition to foreign rule and undermine the calm, orderly society that the Dutch prided themselves on maintaining. This was plainly a danger with the nationalist and communist press that emerged in the 1910s and 1920s. Dutch officials were also wary of the political content of Islamic newspapers and the Chinese press in Indonesia. In the 1930s, a new source of anxiety emerged, as officials fretted that the hostility towards Japan expressed in Chinese newspapers would anger the Japanese, whom the Dutch could not afford to provoke.

To combat the perceived danger of the press, the colonial state monitored newspapers, publishing a weekly summary of the Indonesian press (*Overzicht van de Inlandsche Pers*) from 1914 onwards, which was read by government officials. It also promoted “improving” vernacular literature, such as translations of European novels, through the Balai Poestaka (Bureau for Popular Literature), launched in 1908, in an endeavour Yamamoto calls “constructive censorship” (p. 72). For repressive purposes, the colonial state created two legal instruments: the *persdelict* (press offences) law introduced in 1914, and the *persbreidelordonnantie* (press curbing law) introduced