

Sakdalistas' Struggle for Philippine Independence, 1930-1945. Motoe Terami-Wada. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2014, 348 pp., ISBN 978-971-550-679-3.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN the Makapili (*Makabayang Kalipunang Pilipino*) movement, a Japanese-sponsored paramilitary organization during the Japanese occupation, and the Sakdalista movement during the 1930s remains largely unknown to Filipinos. The Makapilis are popularly known as a notorious group which collaborated with the Japanese to prosecute suspected guerrilla elements in the Philippines. Hence, the people who have been involved in the organization were treated as traitors by their communities. Some of them were tortured or killed by ordinary Filipinos after World War II.

Essentially, the prosecution of suspected guerrilla elements was not the sole purpose of the Makapili. Their activities during World War II should be examined in relation to the Philippine revolution against Spain in the late 19th century. This book is written not only for historians of the Philippines but also for ordinary Filipinos who wish to be informed about the Sakdalista movement.

This book consists of nine chapters, including the introduction which chronologically discusses important points about the movement. The discussion begins with the movement's origin in the 1896 Philippine Revolution, and moves to its subsequent development under Benigno Ramos, culminating in the May 1935 Uprising. Using Japanese sources, Terami-Wada also tries to uncover Ramos's personal contact with the Japanese who advocated the cause of the movement, including the connections of ultranationalist Japanese to such Filipino nationalists who were, and still are, often labeled leftists in the Philippines.

In the prologue, Terami-Wada stresses that "to label the Makapili soldiers simply as pro-Japanese exhibits a lack of understanding on the

part of the organization” (xiv). Laying emphasis on the necessity of understanding the real characteristics of the Makapili, she points out that the socioeconomic problems in Philippine society are the fundamental cause of the Sakdalista movement during the 1930s. In line with this, Terami-Wada further argues that “what is entirely missing from past studies is an examination of the movement’s ideology that united the poor, the rich, the uneducated, and the intellectuals” (7). Explaining the nature of the Sakdal uprising in May 1935, she tries to find out the implication of the Sakdalista movement on Philippine history, stating that “The Sakdalista uprising was an attempt to fulfill the aims of the 1896 Revolution and subsequent Philippine-American War of 1899” (7).

Terami-Wada’s dedication to this topic resonates with what most Filipino historians have done in their previous studies. Utilizing numerous primary sources in English, Tagalog, and Japanese, such as manuscript collections and Sakdalista movement-related documents, she successfully presents a vivid picture of their activities in colonial Philippines to prove that this movement was truly connected to the “unfinished” 1896 Philippine Revolution led by the Katipunan. More importantly, she utilizes a number of newspaper articles, such as those in the weekly *Sakdal* (1930-1938), to examine the characteristics of the Sakdalista movement during the 1930s. Apart from these, she also interviewed people who were involved in the movement. I am certain that this book will be widely read and considered as one of the most important contributions to Philippine historiography that all the historians of the nation must read.

Although it is quite a distinguished historical work, the question on how the concept of “revolution” was conveyed to the Filipino populace after the 1896 Revolution was aborted remains unanswered. After 1896, majority of the Filipino masses seemed to have no concept of the word, “revolution”—except for some who were enlightened by the novel *Noli Me Tangere* by Dr. Jose Rizal. The Filipinos then used the term *paghihiganti*—which can be translated as “revenge” in English—when they rose up against colonial authorities. It can be inferred that “revolt” or “revolution” was just a concept monopolized by Filipino

elites. Following Terami-Wada's discussion, we may assume that it was not until the 1930s that the poor began to appreciate the concept of "revolution," which gradually replaced *paghihiganti*. Ironically speaking, had it not been for American colonial rule, there could have been no Sakdalista movement. For it was during the American colonization period that the concept of "revolution" eventually spread among the populace. If the anticolonial sentiments from the 1896 Philippine Revolution were understood by the poor during the American time, how were these conveyed to them? As Reynaldo Ileto (1999) inquires, was it done through the American style of history education for the whole populace in the country, including the poor?

Terami-Wada does not deal with this process. If the Sakdalista movement was a holistic, popular resistance comprised of all the classes of Philippine society—the rich and the poor, the literate and the illiterate—there must have been some factors that had enlightened the poor and the illiterate about the concept of "revolution," aside from religious factors that Ileto (1979) expounded on his book, *Pasyon and Revolution* in relation to the late nineteenth-century revolutionary movement. Searching for this factor could give us the clue to how the rich and the poor could find a common ground in advancing Philippine independence, and to why such movement is yet to become pervasive in a country where the gap between the rich and the poor remains wide.

References

- Ileto, Reynaldo C. 1979. *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movement in the Philippines, 1840-1910*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.
- . 1999. "The Philippine Revolution of 1896 and U.S. Colonial Education." In *Knowing America's Colony: A Hundred Years from the Philippine War*, pp. 1–18. Honolulu: Center for Philippine Studies, School for Hawaiian, Asian and Pacific Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa.

Satoshi ARA
Fukushima University