THE FIRES OF REVOLUTION: SHARED HISTORY, SHARED DESTINY*

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ABSTRACT

This lecture underscores the mutual help and support that existed between the Chinese and the Filipinos as early as the 19th century. Chinese records, for example, are replete with writings of Chinese revolutionaries in praise and admiration of the Filipino revolutionaries who dared to fight not just one but two foreign white colonizers. This shared history reflects even more clearly the close-knit relations between the Filipinos and the Chinese as well as the common history and a common destiny they shared.

Keywords: Chinese mestizos in Philippine revolution, Chinese revolutionaries, Philippine-Chinese history

* This lecture was delivered on September 14, 2012 at the Ateneo de Manila University Social Development Complex Conference Hall.
The mid-19th to early 20th century was a period of vast, rapid and far-reaching changes in every aspect of life – society, economy, politics, and culture. Many of the events that happened within and around each country had great impact on other countries.

In Asia, the Chinese and the Filipinos were among the earliest people to aspire for freedom. The reform and the revolutionary movements that brought an end to China’s Imperial Dynasty and ushered in the Republican period had significant impact on Southeast Asia, including the Philippines. On the other hand, the Chinese revolutionaries looked up to and were inspired by the Filipino revolutionaries who they lauded for daring to fight not just one but two white foreign colonialists. Dr. Sun Yat Sen had close relations with the Filipino independence movement leaders.

The revolutionary outburst of 1911 in China acted as a powerful stimulus to national and political awakening among the Chinese in the Philippines. Compared with the old imperial regime, the new republic paid more attention to the situation of the Chinese communities overseas. Events in China were monitored attentively, and the grievances of China were immediately reflected in public opinion and discourse among the Chinese in the Philippines (Tan, 1988).

Beyond the impact on the Chinese community, most important and significant was the mutual help and support given by the Filipino revolutionaries to Chinese revolutionaries and vice-versa. Chinese records are replete with writings of Chinese revolutionaries in praise of the Filipino revolutionaries who dared to fight foreign white colonizers.

This period in history reflected the close relations between the Filipinos and the Chinese, and the common history and destiny.
they shared. Mass migration from China happened during these periods of turmoil.

Early uprisings against Spain

If the first folk hero of the Philippines is Lapu-Lapu who in 1521 led the first anti-Spanish revolt and killed Ferdinand Magellan, then P’an Ho Wu who revolted against and killed Governor General Luis Perez de Dasmariñas in 1593, 72 years later, is a Chinese folk hero and a Filipino hero.

P’an was the captain of more than 250 Chinese galley rowers conscripted by Spanish authorities. The rowers, not being trained, could not synchronize their rowing. They were flogged brutally and kept at their oars without rest with little food so that several died. Upon learning that the ship was actually on a military expedition to conquer the Moluccas, P’an thought: either we die from the atrocious ship conditions or we will be fed as “cannon-fodder in a battle not their own.” He passed the word on to his comrades: “Should we submit to scourging unto death and suffer an ignominious death of this kind? Ought we not rather die fighting and try to save our lives?” (Guerrero, 1966; Bernal, 1966).

This uprising against the governor general is one of the many Philippine revolts in the more than 300 years of Spanish rule.

There are at least six incidents of massacres of the migrant Chinese in the more than 300 years of Spanish rule in the Philippines. These massacres, like those in 1603, 1639, 1662, 1686, and 1762, were also called “Chinese uprisings” in historical chronicles. In truth, the massacres were in retaliation against the Chinese who rebelled against Spanish oppression. (“Ming Annals,” 1966; McCarthy, 1971).
The 1639 massacre, especially, was carried out to quash a people’s revolt against the Spanish colonialists’ harsh treatment and persecution of the conscripted Chinese laborers of Calamba, Laguna. In the first few months alone, more than 300 settlers died, painfully ravaged by malarial fever. Driven to desperation, the settlers armed themselves with crude bolos, bamboo poles and farm implements and killed Don Luis Arias de Mora, the heartless, cruel, and extortionist alcalde-mayor. The revolt, called premeditated treason or rebellion in Spanish accounts, led to the slaughter of more than 25,000 Chinese (McCarthy, 1971).

The history of the Chinese in the Philippines during Spanish times, just like the history of the Filipinos then, was one written with blood and tears. The six massacres claimed nearly a hundred thousand lives. The series of mass expulsions, restrictions in movement through the travel pass, excessive taxation, legal discrimination and persecution, forced labor, and other anti-Chinese racist policies of the colonial government brought untold suffering, oppression, and humiliation to the Chinese migrants during the 300 years of Spanish rule (Alfonso, 1966).

Revolution against Spain

Even during the 1896 revolution, the Chinese were not spared from Spanish rampage and destruction. The May 1896 issue of Star Paper in Lun Zuo Huei reported the arrival in Cebu of a Spanish military expedition sent to quell the Cebu revolts:  

The Cebu ethnic Chinese suffered a great tragedy. The Spanish governor general ordered the soldiers to torch all the native houses. The Chinese stores were completely gutted. However, all the other merchants of other nationalities were protected by their consuls
with the exception of the Chinese who had no protection at all. They ran hither and thither, each one trying his own escape. Some died in the fire, some died from the enemies’ fire power, and some were killed outright by the soldiers. The whole town’s Chinese residents, numbering almost 900 people perished, with only two able to escape. I could hardly bear to read the accounts of such a tragic massacre. (Translated from Chinese)

Under such persecution, the Chinese could not just stay docile. Four thousand Chinese migrants, for instance, helped and supported the natives of Jolo in their struggle against Spain by organizing a contingent to fight the Spaniards. These Chinese migrants in Jolo were actually expelled by or escaped from the atrocities of Spanish authorities in Manila in 1758 (Blair & Robertson, 1903).

In his paper “Gen. Jose Ignacio Paua and his role during the Philippine Revolution,” Dr. Luis Dery (1989) described why the Chinese joined the revolution:

It is certain that he [Paua] learned the plight of his fellow Chinese through his connections with some Katipuneros. Hence, his sympathy for the Filipino causes. By this time, he had come to realize that for the Chinese inhabitants in the Philippines to be freed from the oppression of Spanish rule, a radical solution was necessary. To Paua, this solution was revolution against Spain, which meant joining hands with the Filipino separatists. His close ties with the Katipuneros showed this conviction, and his rejection of the peaceful, often opportunistic solution taken by
other fellow Chinese, headed by Carlos Palanca Tan Quien-sien, who sought the establishment of a Chinese consulate in Manila to protect the Chinese interests in the Philippines. To Paua, the former solution was the best under the existing conditions for it meant the end of Chinese and Filipino sufferings under Spanish rule. (p. 21)

P’an’s mutiny against Governor Dasmariñas and the Chinese uprising in Calamba mirrored the hundreds of spontaneous and sporadic Filipino uprisings before the 1896 national revolution. They may be isolated, localized, or parochial, being limited in effect compared to the national revolution led by the entire population to achieve independence, but they were all carried out to resist colonial domination and abuse (Londres, 1923).

These packets of regional revolts sparked the flame that lighted the national conflagration, leading to the final revolution that ended Spanish rule. In the same vein, all the other “Chinese uprisings” were also part of this long history of revolts that finally led to Philippine independence.

The Chinese Mestizos

According to Tan (1988), “By the late 1860s, as a result of the Educational Decree of 1863, which gave the Indios and mestizos access to higher education, a few people, mostly wealthy natives and Chinese mestizos, had the opportunity of getting college education. In the 1870s, more families were able to send their children not only to Manila but also to Spain and later to progressive European countries like France, England, Austria, and Germany where they imbibed the liberalism of the west.” These people “played a significant role in the formation of the Filipino
middle class, in the agitation for reforms, in the 1896 revolution, and in the formation of what is now known as the Filipino nationality. In contemporary times, their role in nation-building continues” (p. 2).

With formal education and influenced by the liberal ideas prevalent in Europe, these mestizos became politically conscious and began to think of national concerns (Tan, 1988).

The ilustrados played a crucial role in the formation of the Filipino nationality. They were the first to awaken Filipino consciousness national identity.

Earlier in 1841, Sinbaldo de Mas, in a secret report to the Madrid government, already suspected the Chinese mestizos as a potential nucleus around which the Indio insurrection might be organized, and predicted that the Chinese mestizos would in time dominate public opinion. He then recommended that should Spain decide to keep the Philippines as a colony, “race hatred between the Chinese mestizos and natives” must be developed and the two classes must be “separated and at sword’s point” in order that the native class, which was “strong through its number,” and the “mestizo class,” through its intelligence, activity, and wealth, “may never form a common mass or public spirit” (Schumacher, 1973, pp. 18-25).

But the Chinese mestizos were inclined to identify themselves with the Indios culturally and socially, and they were starting to gravitate toward each other politically due to common grievances. Captain John Roger M. Taylor, in his work on the Philippine Insurrection against the United States (1971), also elaborated on this point:

Chinese mestizos, the descendants of Chinese, in many cases educated in Spain and in other parts of
Europe, are the leaders in the islands in wealth and in intelligence. They are the men who were chiefly instrumental in overturning the power of Spain and they are the men who, with the loudest voices, arrogate to themselves the right of speaking for the people of the Archipelago. It is not always easy to identify them, they are not, as a rule, proud of their Chinese descent, but prefer to call themselves Filipinos or to speak of their Spanish ancestry: but of the 164 men who were sufficiently important to require separate index cards in classifying the papers of the insurrection in the Philippines against the United States, 27 seem undoubtedly of Chinese descent, and probably, a more careful investigation would increase the number. Aguinaldo is one of these 27, and so are two of the members of his cabinet, nine of his generals (one of them was a pure-blooded Chinaman), one of the two heads of his cabinet or council of government and his principal financial agents (pp. 31-33).

Aside from the mestizos who were active in the propaganda and the revolutionary movement, other Chinese mestizos often mentioned in historical sources to be among the financial supporters of the revolution include Roman Ongpin, Luis Yangco, Mariano Limjap, and Telesforo Chuidian. In Francis St. Clair’s Katipunan (1902/1991), other Chinese mestizos who supported the “separatist movement” were Pedro and Francisco Roxas, Antonio and Juan Luna, and Eduardo Litonjua.

Brothers Mariano and Jacinto Limjap donated a staggering ₱1 million for the Manila battalion volunteers a day before they were
arrested (Burguete, 1902). Ongpin was reported to have secretly collaborated with the insurgents by furnishing the revolutionists with funds, foodstuff, and other supplies. His store became an outlet for propaganda materials. Of the indemnity paid by an insurance firm after his store was burned on February 6, 1898, he gave 90% as his contribution to Aguinaldo. Ongpin was so embittered against the Americans who imprisoned him because of his revolutionary activities that he was reported “never to have sold any item to the Americans and he urged his children not to receive any single centavo from them.”

The following vignettes in Philippine revolution further elaborate the Chinese mestizos’ ties to Philippine revolution:

- Dr. Jose Rizal formed the La Liga Filipina in 1892 in the house of the Chinese Doroteo Ongunco in 176 Ilaya St., Binondo, Manila. Among the financiers of the La Liga Filipina were Chinese mestizos Pedro and Francisco Roxas, Mariano Limjap, Telesforo Chuidian, Luis R. Yangco, Eduardo Litonjua, Antonio and Juan Luna, Felipe Zamora, Marcelino de los Santos, Maximino Paterno, Isaac F. Rios, and Nazario Constantino (Sexton, 1944).
- The revolutionary news organ of the Katipunan, Ang Kalayaan, was printed in the house of Chinese mestizo Pio Valenzuela in No. 35 (later no. 408) Lavezares St., San Nicolas, Manila (1978).
- The three martyred priests of Cavite, Jose Burgos, Jacinto Zamora, and Mariano Gomez, were all of mixed Filipino and Chinese ancestry (Reverter, 1897; Tan, 1988). The renowned trece martires (13 martyrs) of Cavite were all Chinese mestizos (Medina, 1995).
• Julian Felipe, composer of the “Himno Nacional,” the national anthem played during the flag-raising ceremony on June 12, 1898 in Kawit, Cavite, was a Chinese mestizo (Medina, 1995). The Banda de San Francisco de Malabon which played the national anthem in the 1898 declaration of Independence Day was owned by a Chinese mestizo (Medina, 1995).

• 90% percent of the richer revolutionists were Chinese mestizos (St. Clair, 1902/1991).

• In the national conference on the “Ethnic Chinese as Filipinos” held at the University of the Philippines on November 10-11, 1995, two UP historians, Dr. Isagani Medina and Dr. Jaime Veneracion, gave papers on the Chinese of Cavite and the Chinese of Bulacan, respectively. Both described fully how the ethnic Chinese and the Chinese mestizos took part in the struggle for independence in the two most prominent cradles of Philippine revolution: Cavite and Malolos.

Medina (1995) cited voluminous church records to show that the leaders of the revolutionary movement in Cavite were mostly of Chinese descent. Veneracion (1995) described how the ethnic Chinese played a crucial role in the urbanization of Malolos, and how in time, Malolos rivaled the cities of Bulacan and Calumpit in prominence such that it was chosen to be the place where the Philippine Independence was to be declared and where the first Philippine Congress was held and the Malolos Constitution was born.

Undoubtedly, the depth and extent of the ties of the ethnic Chinese as well as Chinese mestizos with these two shrines in the
history of Philippine revolution could not just be accidents of history (Medina, 1995; Veneracion, 1995).

These vignettes of historical truths and other materials on the Chinese mestizos are not meant to exaggerate the Chinese ancestry of our national heroes or to claim their heroism as a product of their mixed blood.

The truth is that these mestizos recognized themselves as Filipinos and fought the revolution not as mestizos but as Filipinos. To them, being of Chinese descent or mestizos was secondary. Some would even deny or refuse to recognize their Chinese blood. In *Filipinas por Espana*, Reverter wrote that in 1896, when Rizal’s death sentence was announced, he proclaimed: “I do not agree. This is an injustice. Here it is said that I am a mestizo and that is not true. I am a pure indio” (Reverter, 1897, p. 48).

**The full-blooded Chinese in the revolution**

The “Chineseness” and participation of the Chinese mestizos in Philippine revolution would be tangential to the participation of the full-blooded Chinese.

General Jose Ignacio Paua (Liu Heng Po or Hau Pao in Hokkien), the only pure-blooded Chinese general in the Philippine revolution, is described as “more Filipino than many Filipinos” (*Kaisa para sa kaunlaran monograph*, 1989). Paua was responsible for building a munitions factory in Imus, Cavite, and raised from among his fellow Chinese 400,000 Mexican dollars that were needed by the depleted revolutionary coffers. He also risked his life and led his men in the actual battlefield (“Philippine Revolutionary Records” as cited in Dery, 1989).
Aguinaldo’s own description of Paua, as recounted to a Chinese, Liu Yuan Yan, and cited in the 1935 Philippine Chinese Yearbook, reads:

1897: the revolutionary army fought the Spaniards in Cavite. Many Chinese sympathized with the cause of Philippine revolution, not a few also joined the revolutionary army and carried arms. Many of them had their homes in Cavite. Jose Paua and Benito Ilapit [Hapit - sic] were the right hand and left hand [commanders]. Their wives were related to one another. They were young, and they proved themselves equally in their ranks. Paua’s bravery touched and amazed the soldiers. He was at the forefront in every battle. When the two armies are locked in battle, many soldiers would hide and wait but not Paua, he would even run where nobody else dared to tread... In the Battle for Bacoor, our army encountered the Spanish troops led by Aguirre and in Zapote, Paua was hit by bullets in the left chest. His wounds were grave and the army was rattled, thinking that Paua could not rise again; but he did, as if nothing happened, and continued to lead until the enemy was defeated. When they saw Paua, the enemies were terrified. Hence, people thought he had mystic powers and the belief that he couldn’t be harmed by bolos or bullets started there. [Translated from Chinese] (p. 17)

Harper’s *History of the War in the Philippines* recorded that the first encounter Paua had with the Spaniards was in Imus, Cavite. He and Pio del Pilar had only 27 men but they forced a regiment
commanded by Colonel Salcedo to retreat from their stronghold. In the Battle of Binakayan on November 10, 1896, Paua headed a group of bolo-wielding men who engaged the Spanish riflemen in hand-to-hand combat and succeeded in forcing the Spanish troops to retreat (as cited in Dery, 1989).

As a pure-blooded Chinese who rose from the ranks of a lieutenant to a brigadier general because of his military exploits and who dedicated his life for the cause of the Philippine revolution, Paua’s contribution to the revolution cannot be over-emphasized. Paua was also one of the 52 signatories of the 1897 Biak-na-Bato Constitution (“Philippine Starweek”, 1995).

Chinese participation in the revolution

If few people know about Paua and his significant contributions to Philippine revolution, then even fewer people know about the many more ordinary Chinese who participated, supported, and joined the revolution more than a hundred years ago.

From the voluminous archival materials on the Philippine revolution, Chinese contributions to the cause can be divided into direct participation, financial assistance, and material resources procurement or assistance.  

Direct participation. The list of Chinese who directly participated in the Philippine revolution more than a hundred years ago and stood shoulder to shoulder with other revolutionists includes not only Paua but also another Chinese who served as Paua’s assistant when he built the arsenal and foundry in Imus, Cavite. Likewise, in “General Jose Paua’s biography,” an article written by Shi Gong (1977) which appeared under the biographies section of Singapore Nan-An Village Associations’ 1977 Journal, there was mention of 3,000 Chinese revolutionists recruited and led by Paua.
Other forms of direct Chinese participation in the revolution were mentioned in the following sources:

- PRR microfilm reel 79, Revolutionary Leader-1899: The Chinese were considered by the Filipino revolutionists as their allies in the common fight for freedom.
- Burguete: “[I]n looking for the roots of the Philippine revolution, the authorities traced it to many Chinos who were a part of the revolutionary movement” (1902, p. 435). Aguinaldo said, “the Chinese who supported the Philippine revolution are many and those who directly joined the ranks of soldiers are also numerous” (Reverter, 1897, p. 132).
- Historian Rafael Guerrero: “Calmly, Chino Osorio [one of the 13 martyrs of Cavite was Francisco Osorio, son of a prominent Chinese merchant] did not weep even up to his execution” (1897, p. 270 and p. 252; Nava, 1995, pp. 15-16, p. 20 and p. 24).
- PRR reel 21, citing Isidro Torres’ report on a Chinese spy, Wenceslao Lim, working for the revolutionists.
- PRR reel 81 mentioned the list of those implicated and captured Filipino revolutionaries. The list includes 160 names of Binondo, Tondo, San Nicolas, and Quiapo residents, among whom were Gregorio Sy Quia, father-in-law of the late President Elpidio Quirino.
- PRR reel 72-1, January 23, 1899, mentioned the organization of a regiment in Binondo.
- PRR reel 209-36, September 13, 1898, reported that some ammunition was discovered in the Binondo cemetery. This is supplemented by Edwin Wildman.
(1901): “From time to time, our police unearthed small native and Chinese shops, where in inconspicuous and inaccessible back rooms, bolos were being made and insurgent uniforms manufactured” (pp. 50-69). PRR reel 55, Historia Civil de Filipinas Tomo 11 Cartas de P.P. Dominicanos sobre la Insurrection de 1898 also mentions: “A Chinese in Pampanga supplied ammunitions. Each Mauser rifle had 200 bullets and the others, probably locally-made rifles, had 100.”

- There is a house made of stone in Cagayan de Oro called Balay nga Bato. This house was built by the Chinese, Insik Ygua, from two boat loads of bricks shipped from Amoy (now Xiamen). During the revolution, a number of Filipino revolutionists were killed by the Americans in that house and were buried in its backyard. Up to now, during All Saints Day, there are still people who light candles around the house to commemorate the death of these soldiers (Demetrio, 1995).

Financial assistance. Chinese financial contributions to the Philippine revolution were largely solicited by Paua. The money he was able to solicit was recorded meticulously. The names and amounts show the contributions brought in by the Chinese. Other accounts of Chinese financial contributions are as follows:

- John Taylor’s Philippine Insurrection: “Voluntary contributions from a number of provinces show that the Chinese contributions always come up to twice the amount contributed by anybody in the town” (1971, pp. 212-213).
In November 1898, Aguinaldo ordered the release of ₱20 million worth of public bonds. With Paua’s efforts, the Chinese in Nueva Caceres bought 100,000 worth of these public bonds. On June 21, 1899, Paua also invited the Chinese in Albay and Camarines to voluntarily contribute ₱44,790.00 to the revolutionary coffers. On October 28, 1899, he reported to Aguinaldo that as the special emissary in Southern Luzon, he had personally solicited for the revolutionary coffers ₱220,000 (Taylor, 1971). From May 18 to October 28, 1899, Paua delivered to the national treasury a staggering 400,000 Mexican dollars.

Zaide, in his *Paua Monograph* (1989), said that “in Bicolandia alone, historical records reveal that the amount Paua collected was ₱386,000, the largest cash sum ever collected by an authorized agent of the Philippine Republic” (p.11). Zaide (pp. 11-12), also recounts that “in October 1899, Paua solicited 160,000 silver dollars” and was travelling through the Ragay Gulf toward the Tayabas Coast when he encountered American gunboats which pursued them. He almost lost his life then but was fortunately able to maneuver to the shallow waters near the banks where he dumped all the silver coins. The Americans ceased their pursuit and Paua retrieved the coins the next day (as cited in Taylor, 1971).

- Edwin Wildman (1901): “The rich Chinese in Manila and everywhere else in the island, were urged to give huge financial contributions to the revolutionary cause…. its main source of contribution came from the rich mestizos and the Chinese merchants.”
- In the list of those who gave monthly contributions to the revolutionary coffers were: Tan-Cao, Tao-Chien,
Material resources. Supplying materials that were needed by the revolutionaries appear to be the more prevalent form of assistance given by the Chinese.

General Santiago Alvarez, in his work on the Katipunan, recounted that on August 26, 1896, after Bonifacio led the Katipuneros to signal the start of the revolution in Balintawak, they moved to Mandaluyong where they were given by two Chinese stores: “two packets of La Insular cigarettes, two boxes of matches, five cans sardines, and P5 in cash” (Alvarez, 1992, p. 22). Other recorded forms of Chinese support follow:

- PRR mentioned that the Chinese supplying material resources were recorded in Angeles, Malolos, Tayug in Pangasinan, Catmon in Cebu, Ilocos, Vigan, San Fernando in Pampanga, Samar, Iloilo, Masbate, Iba in Zambales, Tarlac, Apalit in Pampanga, La Union, Calumpit in Bulacan, among others. Aside from cash contributions and other donations, contributed materials included rice, oil, salt, dried pork, carabaos, and other food. In some cases, the Chinese helped solicit gunpowder, matches, pen and paper, clothing and hats, and medicine. There were also Chinese who helped transport the revolutionaries’ goods.

- Guerrero (1897, p. 286): “[T]he Chinos have supplied the separatists with falsified stamps and seals of the government. The separatists have much to thank the Chinos.” The underground manufacture of
government paraphernalia was apparently uncovered when a Chinese warehouse was raided.

• Mariano Trias, secretary of the Treasury, in a letter sent to the governor of Ilocos Sur on January 3, 1899: “Considering that the Chinese in the country pay various contributions, especially the capitation tax, by which act they are assimilated with the natives of the country, a circumstance which excludes them from the obligation of requesting authority to exercise any industry, provided they pay the proper license” (as cited in Taylor, Vol 3, 1971, p. 581, original in Spanish). The letter ordered that the Chinese be exempted from paying “war tax” required of other foreigners in order to conduct business.

• Letter from Quesada on March 11, 1899 to the provincial governor of Pangasinan and some local government officials: “By order of the Honorable President, you will see that the Chinese residing in the towns under your command who have sympathized [sic] with our cause and continue making contributions for the needs of the war, shall not be annoyed by our brothers and that they be defended from the aggressions of an unjust character of which they are the object” (as cited in Taylor, Vol 4, 1971, p. 771).

Support from Chinese revolutionaries overseas

Because of historical conditions and government policies during the Philippine revolution, the Chinese in the Philippines were actually all Chinese citizens, subjects of the Manchu (Qing Dynasty) government of China. Hence, at this point, a look at the
Chinese people’s (in China) connection to the Philippine revolution is also appropriate and necessary. This will certainly make our exploration and exposition of the role of the Chinese in Philippine revolution more complete.

Following are quotations (translated into English from the original Chinese) from the paper of Beijing University’s historian, Prof. Zhou Nanjing, on “The Philippines’ struggle for independence and the Chinese people” (Zhou, 1993, pp. 33-46).

- Liang Chi-chao, (as cited in Zhou, 1993) one of the famous leaders and key movers of the self-renewal movement (sometimes also known as the Reform or Renaissance Movement) in China:

  The Philippines, in evicting the Spaniards and fighting the Americans, is the vanguard in the struggle for independence in Asia. The victory of the Philippines will also help us, the yellow race, in our fight and put fear in the hearts of the white race. The incumbent President has relations with China (Aguinaldo’s maternal grandmother is a Chinese). Among his military officers are many Chinese also. The Philippine independence is watched closely by the Chinese because its influence on China will be great. Philippine independence can help China in its bid for independence. Our relations are interconnected (p. 35).

- In June 1898, Philippine representative to Japan Mariano Ponce met China’s leader, Dr. Sun Yat Sen, in Yokohama and requested him to help the Philippine
revolutionists acquire military arms. Sun agreed and helped in procuring two shipments of arms. Sun also agreed with Ponce to send some members of his revolutionary party to the Philippines to help in the struggle against the American invading army. After the Philippines gained its independence, they agreed then it would help China in its own struggle. When the Philippine revolution failed, Sun changed his strategy and concentrated on succeeding in China’s own struggle for independence so that China could help the Philippines achieve hers later. He said: “There’s no first or last in this big struggle. Our party decided to establish its revolutionary army and pursue its own task. When we succeed in our objective, then we can also look into the cause of Philippine independence” (Peng, 1936 as cited in Zhou, 1993; as cited in Quirino, 1963, pp. 267-268).

- The Chinese revolutionary paper, *Min Pao*, published in Japan printed a picture of President Aguinaldo in its ninth issue on October 1906. Another paper, the *Xin Min Cong Pao*, in its eighth issue in 1902 called Aguinaldo, “a great man in contemporary times.” Liang, in his treatise on “How to annihilate a country,” said: “The Philippines, our brothers from the same continent and race, struggled with the white men twice already without losing hope in their defeats. I look toward the south [the Philippines]—and go down on my hands and knees [prostrate myself] to kowtow to them” (as cited in Zhou, 1993, p. 37).
• Au Ji-jia, in his article, The Independence of the Philippine islands:

   Alas, looking at the Philippines, we have a lot to learn and gain. We should closely observe and watch it. First, the Philippines is such a small country but can become independent and roust the U.S. China is big so it should also achieve its independence, continue the spirit of struggle without fear of death, without bowing down to the strong, not afraid of outsiders nor the enemies. Secondly, the Philippines has a small population, but they could fight for freedom, even fight the U.S. China has a big population and can also fight for freedom, let people have freedom of thought, freedom of speech, spark the spirit of nation-building, help the country, reform politics. If every citizen has thoughts about his country’s political future, then there will be survival even in the face of death, victory in the face of defeat…. China is big but is afraid of the small while the Philippines is small but fighting the big. The [fighting] spirits of these two peoples are as disparate as heaven and earth. The people of our country must therefore not despair, quickly follow the Philippines to achieve victory (as cited in Zhou, 1993, p. 37).

• Another Chinese revolutionary, Zhang Ping-lin, in his “A treatise on five nothings” reported: “The archvillain McKinley [referring to U.S. President McKinley], using
his own tactic, on the pretext of extending help to the Philippines, is actually bent on extending territory, such actions must be condemned and cannot be forgiven” (pp. 43-44). The author castigated the U.S. for its shameful and imperialistic designs on the Philippines in the guise of aiding the country (as cited in Zhou, 1993, p. 37).

Although most of the events mentioned above and in the following section are mainly focused on the Filipino-American war after the 1896 revolution, they nevertheless touch on the main topic of how the Filipinos and the Chinese found common cause in their respective struggles for independence.

**A shared destiny**

In 1521, Spain colonized the Philippines because it desired to use the country as take-off point to evangelize or christianize China. In the same vein, in 1899, when the U.S. annexed the Philippines, the intent was also to use the country as jumping board to penetrate the rich Chinese market, invade its territory, and eventually conquer China.

This is most convincingly discussed in Republic or Empire: American Resistance to the Philippine War, which revealed that McKinley’s final decision to colonize the Philippines was actually motivated by America’s ambition to conquer China. This shows even more clearly how the destinies of the Philippines and China are indeed closely intertwined.

From early times, when the Chinese immigrants were forced to leave China because of famine, poverty, and political unrest up to the time when they finally settled and built their homes in the Philippines and raised a new generation of Philippine-born and
Filipinized offspring, Philippines-China relations indeed have been “as close as the lips and the teeth,” to use a Chinese expression, or “tied together in one umbilical cord,” to use a Filipino expression.

To further illustrate this point, at the end of the 19th century, the Philippines was struggling for independence from the U.S. and China was fully occupied with putting down the Boxer Rebellion. Both events necessarily involved U.S. military troops in the Far East. The U.S. faced the big dilemma of whether to concentrate the troops in putting down the Boxer Rebellion or to quell the Philippine revolution.

In mid-July of 1900, the U.S. planned to send 10,000 soldiers to China to stifle the Boxer Rebellion but the Filipino-American war intensified and the U.S. was forced to retain these soldiers in the Philippines to combat the Filipino revolutionaries. The commander-in-chief of the U.S. Armed Forces, General Arthur McArthur, reported: “If we pull out even just one battalion from the Philippines, there is grave danger of losing the entire island. However, the U.S. also recognized the grave importance of putting down the Boxer Rebellion. Hence, we decided to pull out part of our Philippine troops to China. But, in early August, since the Boxer Rebellion has weakened, the U.S. need not pull out more troops from the Philippines” (Zhou, 1993, p. 38).

On July 4, 1901, after the military commander General Arthur McArthur went back to the U.S., Major General Adna R. Chafee, who had taken over, had just returned from his tour of duty in China after routing the Boxer Rebellion. Other American soldiers in China also returned to the Philippines. As U.S. Colonel William Thaddeus Sexton described it: “The 9th Infantry had but recently returned from the China expedition. It had performed signal service there, had taken part in the capture of Tientsin and had
been among the first to rush the walls of the Imperial Court of Peking. With the cessation of the Boxer activities in China, it had returned to the Philippines and had been scattered in small garrisons throughout the islands” (Sexton, 1944, pp. 229-230).

Lastly, Captain Taylor, who compiled the five-volume *Philippine Insurrection against the United States*, was also part of the military contingent sent by the U.S. to quell the Boxer Rebellion. He was sent to the Philippines to gather military intelligence documents (Introduction, 1971).

These point to one of many historical conundrums — if the United States had pulled out a bigger contingent of soldiers from the Philippines to be sent to China, would the Philippine revolutionaries have succeeded in the Filipino-American war?

**Conclusion**

During the entire period of the Philippine revolution, the Chinese all over the country were also adversely affected and like the Filipinos, also suffered great damage and personal loss.

There were Chinese who admittedly must have remained conservative, apolitical, neutral, and worked only to protect themselves. There were also some who escaped from the upheaval to Hong Kong or China. All of these are normal occurrences in revolutionary struggles but they are secondary. We do not need to hide them or highlight them, but, we need to mention the truth that like the Filipinos, the ethnic Chinese also paid a heavy price during such periods of unrest in the country.

For four centuries, our colonizers—the Spaniards, British, Americans, Japanese—unfurled their imperialist ambitions to conquer our country. The Chinese, who came to the Philippine shores looking only for a chance to better their lives, suffered as the
Filipinos suffered, under colonial rule. Contrary to certain perceptions that as a people, the Chinese would rather docilely accept their fate, no matter how untenable, the ethnic Chinese had their moments of dauntless defiance. We do not intend to lay claim to the glory or recognition of the role the ethnic Chinese played in the revolution. We only want to emphasize that one hundred years ago, in the country’s struggles against three centuries of Spanish colonialism, oppression, and abuses, the Chinese, together with their Filipino brothers, also gave a bit of their strength, also suffered, and also poured their blood for the revolutionary cause. The red color for bravery in the Philippine flag also has some drops of ethnic Chinese blood on it.
References


**About the author**: Ms. Teresita Ang See has been a social activist throughout her adult life as an advocate for reforms in the criminal justice system and one of the prime movers behind the Citizens’ Action Against Crime (CAAC). She is the founding President of Kaisa Para Sa Kaunlaran (Kaisa). Ang See has written and co-authored more than 16 books, mostly on the Chinese in the Philippines. Among her numerous awards were the TOWNS (Ten Outstanding Women in the Nation’s Service) award in 1992 and the Public Service award from the Ateneo de Manila University in 2001.

**Notes**


Because of the volume of materials in the National Library which are not even indexed, we were able to go through only a portion of the Philippine Revolutionary Records. There is a need to continue and expand this work to include other archival materials like those reposited in the University of Sto. Tomas archives and the Jesuit archives at the Loyola House of Studies of the Ateneo de Manila University.

Rafael Guerrero, Cronica de la Guerra de Cuba y de la Rebellion de Filipinas —1895-1896 (Barcelona: Publisher and date unreadable, the library puts the date as probably 1897), p.270 and p. 252.

Philippine Revolutionary Records from various provinces.