

# An Asian angle on indigenous resistance

(or: An indigenous Asian arkipelagic inhabitant angle on resistance)

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(This article is the first of two parts.)

*Mga Vinta sa dagat and longtime contact and commerce (by sea) with other people of color. The Great Rice Terraces of Banawe (one of the Wonders of the World). Exquisite weaving with abaka, pina, and other fibres. Kawayan (bamboo)- and woodcraft manifested in appropriate architecture (and original weapons like the yo-yo). Fine metalcraft (including an array of fine blades and suivel-mount canon). Highly developed martial arts systems. Mga Hilot and other kinds of healers and approaches to healing. Baranganic societies interlinked by trade and intermarriage. Ang Alibata and other forms of written communication.*

The peoples of Palawan, Sulu, Mindanao, the Visayas, Luzon, and other islands in the region, had these and other great attributes and achievements long before European imperialists imposed their distorted versions of Asiatic (Afrikan and Asian) sciences and civilizations.

In fact, our peoples in the Arkipelago (you know, the islands the Spanish invaders named for their monarch Philip) had been interacting for centuries with peoples from East Afrika to Northeast Asia and even across the Pacific Ocean. There are even some indications that contact was already occurring with cultures on The Great Turtle Island (aka America).

## Colonization: Myth vs. Motive

So why should it matter that Pilipinos (or any other Asiatic people) had been in contact with people here? My friend Joseph

Wanzala pointed out (in a conversation regarding the work of scholar Ivan Van Sertima about the Pre-Colombian Afrikan presence on The Great Turtle Island) that: Columbus and the Spaniards were not unique so much in contacting peoples of The Great Turtle Island, as they were in their attitude, intentions, and actions. Asiatic people, on the other hand, were not sailing to The Great Turtle Island to enslave the Brown Nations there and steal all they could from them. We were, for the most part, peoples who give respect to Mother Earth/Nature/Creation. We have different cultures and languages, but we still give thanks.

Despite all the hype that we've been inundated with by the Eurocentric system, the simple fact is that Europeans were not the first to contact our peoples, nor were they the ones to bring civilization. How could they, when they had to learn about civilization from our peoples?

One thing unique about the European imperialists is that they operated with a degree of coordination. The Papal Bull, which carved up lands of peoples of color for exploitation, is definite evidence of a masterplan for white domination of the world.

Material wealth was the motive, and trickery, terror, and racist mass murder were techniques used to their fullest extent by Columbus, Magellan, and their ilk.

## Lapu Lapu Defends Mactan Against Magellan

When Datu Lapu Lapu made his decision to defend Mactan against Magellan's invasion in (Gregorian calendar year) 1521, he hadn't been told of the genocidal enslavement of the Taino/Arawak people which had been going on for nearly three decades under Gover-

nor Columbus and others for the interests of the Spanish Crown and the Roman Pope. Who in the Visayas could have known that Columbus thought he was enslaving and killing people on islands off of Asia?

Surely, Humabon, Datu of Cebu, would not have welcomed Magellan, much less made a pact with him, if he had been aware of the holocaust of the Tainos/Arawaks after they had welcomed Columbus, or of the fate of the people of Guam after they had allowed Magellan and the European Imperialists onto their land.

Datu Lapu Lapu refused to become a vassal of Spain and the Vatican. Magellan sailed toward Mactan to force the people to pay tribute. The people of Mactan tried to warn his vessel away with musical instruments and noisemakers. The Portuguese mercenary responded by firing cannon at them. Datu Lapu Lapu brought his warriors to the beach, and attacked the invaders before they could get ashore. Magellan died in knee-deep water. His surviving crew fled, no longer welcomed by Datu Humabon. Datu Lapu Lapu led the people of Mactan to the first victory against European aggression in the Arkipelago.

## The Sword and The Cross

A few decades later, the Spaniards returned in force to begin what turned out to be over three centuries of colonial exploitation. Using false (white) images of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and the prophets, along with highly effective "divide and rule" tactics being used elsewhere, Spain managed to conquer and convert key lowland areas in the Visayas and Luzon.

But the Spaniards never could conquer the Igorot peoples of Kaigorotan (the Kordilyera mountain range) in Northern Luzon or

the Muslim (called "Moro" by the Spaniards) and Lumad peoples of Sulu, Palawan, and Mindanao. The Vinta sailing vessels were not only often beautiful to behold, they were also more maneuverable than the Spanish vessels, and were used quite effectively in raids and in combat. In addition, resourceful leaders like Datu Dabaw of the Manobo (one of the Lumad peoples, who up to the present day, continue to defend the rainforest and the Sacred Earth) and Sultan Kudarat (who united Moro peoples in the southern region) made sure that the resistance in Mindanao, in particular, would continue.

Over 200 armed revolts were reported under the Spaniards. Many were relatively short-lived, crushed by the Spaniards, who often relied upon informants and mercenaries. But on Bohol, in the Visayas, Dagohoy led Boholanos to set up new upland communities which repelled Spanish and mercenary attacks for over seventy years.

## Ang Katipunan: Organization The Key

But it wasn't until 1892 (one-hundred years ago from the time of this writing) that a Tagalog fellow named Andres Bonifacio organized an underground organization called the Katipunan. The Katipunan started as a mainly Tagalog thing, but soon gained allies and adherents throughout the Arkipelago. Despite a lack of firearms and numerous setbacks, the Katipuneros, Pulahanes, and other revolutionaries defeated the Spaniards in most regions of the country within six years, isolating Spain's forces in a few fortifications—the largest of which was Fort Santiago in Manila.

It was 1898, and the Euro-Imperialists had some more cruel

tricks up their sleeves. The United States of America, which had just taken over Puerto Rico and Cuba from Spain, was ready to expand its empire across the Pacific into Asia.

# Ang Bayan Ko: HERITAGE OF

## part two: the US Invasion of the Philippines

akda ni Kayumanggi Kaloy

Indigenous resistance to invasion and exploitation has been of central importance to OUR story (versus His-ang puting lalaki's story) as people of Pilipino ancestry for five centuries now. Throughout the Arkipelago, our peoples manifested resistance to European aggression in a multitude of creative ways, from martial arts and dance to literature and other cultural expressions.

Datu LapuLapu of Mactan defeated Magellan in combat despite the Spaniard's firearms, but decades later- the puti invaders returned in force. Though they converted powerful datos in certain lowland and coastal areas in the Visayas, many Lumads, Moros, Igorots, and others, were never conquered. The challenge to their imperial plan from the southern region was so intense that the Spaniards moved their colonial capital to Manila (the largest Islamic barangay in Luzon, which fell due to a design flaw in the fortifications). But the colonization process was not all smooth. Over 200 reported armed revolts occurred before a Pilipino *Rebolusyon* was initiated by a Tagalog from Tondo named Bonifacio.

The Katipuneros inspired, affiliated with, and even helped organize Rebolusyonaryos throughout Luzon and the Visayas. Dialogues were going on, as well, with peoples of Mindanao regarding the struggle for the new Pilipino Nation. This was just four or five generations ago!

When state repression forced the Katipunan into open armed struggle in 1896, they had had barely four years to organize. Yet, mainly with firearms captured from colonial military and police, our people had run the Spaniards out of most of the country by the time the United States arrived in late 1898.

The Euroamericans had just finished the American Indian Wars, militarily crushing the indigenous peoples' proud resistance within the US colonial borders on The Great Turtle Island (Eurocolonial name: America), having stolen enough of Aztlan (Mexicano land) to have consolidated their new colony from the eastern coast to the western seaboard. Now the US was expanding its empire southward into Puerto Rico and across the ocean westward into Hawai'i, other Pacific Island Nations, and, eventually the Philippines.

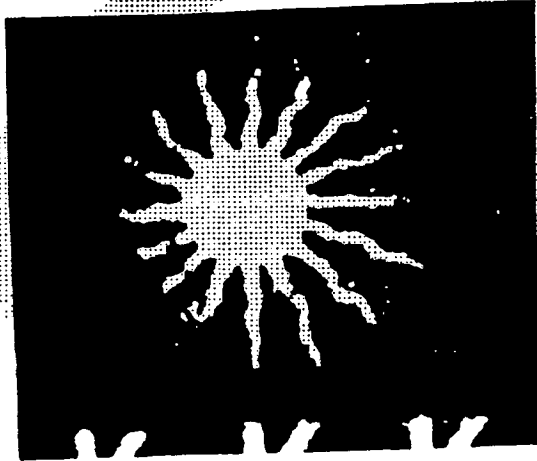
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# A PROUD RESISTANCE



It was in this context that the US invaded the Arkipelago. The new puti invaders were slick. They lulled our leadership with their promises of alliance, when their intention was subjugation under their brand of apartheid.

Spain "sold" our lands and people to the US, staged a mock battle in Manila Bay, and the US representatives kept feeding us lies to buy time for heavy reinforcements to arrive.

The stage had been set for the disintegration of Pilipino Rebolusyonarios' movement at the *Tejeros Coup* when assimilationist *Ilustrados* took control of the Katipunan's official leadership. After *Biak-na-Bato*, Aguinaldo demonstrated his priorities when he accepted a massive bribe from the Spaniards in exchange for being "exiled" to Hong Kong and telling the Rebolusyonaryos to cease the armed struggle. Most Katipuneros continued to fight without Aguinaldo- who returned only after Spain refused to pay him the other half of the bribe.

Even when the treachery of the "Americanos" became apparent, Aguinaldo hesitated to respond. If only our people had known that every major treaty they had made with indigenous nations had been violated by the US government. Within days of the first murder of Pilipino freedom fighters by US soldiers at San Juan bridge, literally thousands of dead and dying Pilipinos became undeniable testament to the effectiveness of the Americanos' rapid-fire weaponry and the reality of their intentions. As one Katipunero fell on the Manila frontline, another would often pick

up his or her gun, only to be hit by a Krag repeating rifle bullet or a hail of slugs from a Gatling. The US killed so many of us in the early battles that they even used Katipunero bodies for sandbags. There are picture postcards from that time which US servicemen sent home depicting themselves standing, smiling, on piles of our dead relatives.

At first, Euroamericans called the Pilipinos "niggers." But since part of the US army was black, they eventually found different derogatory names for us like "goo-goo" and "monkeys." Predictably, many US soldiers of Afrikan descent sympathized with Pilipinos. A few deserted and some joined the Pilipino Rebolusyonaryos. One Black soldier named Fagen even became a commander of a Katipunero unit and fought against the US army and Pilipino mercenaries for two years before he was captured and slayed by the US forces.

Opposition to the US invasion of the Philippines became a major issue in US politics, especially when depictions of atrocities slipped back to the US via sympathetic journalists. The Anti-imperialist League had at least one million supporters in the US, including a handful of congressmen, the famous and relatively conservative Booker T. Washington, and the well-known writer Mark Twain. Anti-imperialism was one of the central issues in the national elections of the time, but those opposing the invasion of the Philippines eventually lost to the commercial and militarist interests.

The Pilipino Rebolusyonaryos continued to fight even after Aguinaldo and his cabinet, with the notable exception of Apolinario Mabini, had become collaborators. After the US captured Aguinaldo, they got him to make an official public statement that the Katipunan was disbanded, and the war over. The US imperialists got great mileage out of this, quelling much dissent in the US and having the superficial moral convenience of branding Pilipino Rebolusyonaryos who continued to fight (beyond the official 1902 ending of the Philippine-American War) as bandits or outlaws.

Katipuneros, Pulahanes, Moros, and other Pilipinos actually resisted the US forces throughout the Arkipelago until 1912 and beyond.

But the price of resistance was high. Conservative estimates place the Pilipino death toll at around 200,000 people. When one considers factors like approximately 100,000 people killed on Samar alone, and that many more died as a result of concentration camps, the estimates of 500,000 or more Pilipinos killed by the US invaders bear more weight.

*Next issue: Resistance in the Southern Philippines and Neocolonial Pax Americana*

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7. Kayumanggi Kaloy, "Ang Bayan Ko: Heritage of a Proud Resistance," *Kaisahan*. Published by PACE: Pilipino American Collegiate Endeavor. SF State University, Spring Equinox, 1993. (For reprint permission, please call 415-338-1918). (H 12-13)