

Exhibiting “Civilization”: The Hong Kong Junta and the Portraits of Filipino Bodies and Minds, 1898–1899

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Abstract

According to William Howard Taft, the first American civil governor of the Philippines, the US retained the islands in 1898 to prepare Filipinos for self-government. Rich historiography has analyzed how imperial representations of Filipinos, mostly portrayed as uncivilized, justified this “Benevolent Assimilation.” This study enhances that literature by examining how the Revolutionary Government of the Philippines—from January 1899 on, the First Philippine Republic—contested those depictions. Analyzing the Philippine Revolutionary Records, this chapter demonstrates that this government tried to reach US audiences with information emphasizing its leaders’ preparedness for ruling according to Western political modernity. They used portraits of their bodies and minds, making them appear as refined gentlemen.

Keywords: Philippine Revolution; First Philippine Republic; imperial representations; US imperialism; Philippine-American War; respectability

“This is a great day for the Philippines,” a Western journalist wrote early on 29 September 1898.² He was one of the “Britishers, Americans, and other foreigners” whom the leaders of the Filipino Revolutionary Government had invited to attend a “grand holiday at Malolos.” Almost a month and a half had passed since the Spanish-American-Cuban-Filipino War had ended.³ The United States and the Filipino Revolutionary forces had collaborated in fighting their common Spanish enemy since

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² “The Position at Manila...,” *Hong Kong Daily Press*, 7 October, 1898, p. 2.

³ As different authors have stated, the more common term Spanish-American War obscures the preceding struggles for independence that Cubans and Filipinos fought and the imperial interventions

April 1898, and, after its defeat in August, a tense interlude began. On the one hand, the US intentions towards the Philippines were unclear. On the other hand, the peace conference where Spain and the US were going to decide the future of the Filipino archipelago excluded the Filipinos. Therefore, the leaders of the newly erected Filipino Government—which became the Philippine Republic on January 1899—feared that the US would occupy the islands and ignore their political authority.

Consequently, the Filipino Government executed a resonant diplomatic and media campaign to encourage the international community, especially the US, to recognize its legitimacy as the representative of the sovereign Filipino nation and respect its demands for self-government. As historian Paul A. Kramer noted, that campaign for recognition was waged mainly “in the language of ‘civilization’.”⁴ In the face of racist Western prejudices about the alleged savagery of Asian populations, this campaign’s outcomes emphasized the efficacy of the government Filipino revolutionaries had erected, legal and historical arguments that legitimized its sovereignty, and the Filipino respect for the rules of civilized warfare. All this evidence aimed to prove that Filipinos both deserved and, due to their high evolutionary status, were prepared for self-government.⁵ Among this campaign’s displays of Filipino civilization was the festivity the journalist mentioned above attended, the ratification of the independence of the Philippines—which President Emilio Aguinaldo had proclaimed on 12 June 1898. This Western correspondent presented the event to the *Hong Kong Daily Press* as “the most ostentatious affair yet attempted by the insurgents.”⁶ The chronicle he wrote for this newspaper vividly illustrates the Filipino Government’s attempts to earn the sympathy of Western observers and, at the same time, these foreign observers’ actual opinions about the islanders.

The *Daily Press* article began by explaining that, given the uncertain future disposition of their islands, “the insurgents were strengthening their hand every day.” In case Spain tried to reimpose her rule, they had to be prepared to fight. If the United States were to hold the Philippines, “they would have already shown military activity and a successful provisional government because they will have made a showing of what they can do and proved that they do possess qualities of organization and administration.” Even so, the author expressed restlessness at the leader’s honest endeavors “to prove that as far as they themselves are concerned they are quite worthy of the control.” He hoped Aguinaldo would not be “guilty of such absolute folly” as resisting the American authority in the islands. In the

that came soon after. See Paterson, “United States Intervention in Cuba, 1898”. However, for the sake of brevity, the author uses the more common Spanish-American War in this text.

⁴ Kramer, *Blood of Government*, p. 100.

⁵ Kramer, pp. 97–102.

⁶ “The Position at Manila....” The following paragraphs also comment on this chronicle.

writer's opinion, this would lead to an absolute defeat and would be irrational, as "the US would do its best to treat the natives with all fairness and give them both protection and prosperity." Therefore, according to this journalist, Filipinos should gratefully welcome the American arrival to the archipelago.

In addition to these manifested reasons to support an American authority in the Philippines, the correspondent's depiction of the party, carefully planned to exhibit the aptitudes of the Filipino Government, evidenced that no propaganda could alter his racist perception of the islanders as a society unprepared for autonomy. Besides admitting that the food "was not that bad" and pointing out how all the foreigners received the kindest treatment, the writer denigrated every other aspect of the celebration condescendingly. According to him, "everything was done in the same tawdry, tinsel way that characterizes all Orientals, not even excepting the Japanese." In commenting on the Filipino leaders' appearance, he stated:

Perhaps the most amusing side of the festival to foreigners was the appearance of all ministers and members of congress in black evening dress and high black hats. It was almost grotesque to see these dark-skinned natives in the heat of mid-day marching through the streets and assembling in black evening dress, especially as not one suit in ten fitted the wearer, while the hats looked as if they had been collected from the four corners of the earth.

Despite this, he asked readers not to be too critical, as the Filipino leaders were "kindly-inclined, good people," did their best, and knew no better. He even recognized that they "made an impressive appearance." By playing their part to perfection, they gave "plain evidence that with proper coaching and education they can eventually assist in the government of the islands to a greater degree than was first deemed possible." Allegedly, the correspondent shared those scornful comments because he feared that "the natives" would also build a "shady, showy Government provided they are granted autonomy or independence," which was "the great central idea through everything said and omitted at Malolos."⁷ Therefore, all the Filipino exhibitions of strength and political capability were a cause of concern for this journalist: they manifested Filipino aspirations of autonomy that would become an obstacle to US tutelage.

The image of the Filipinos exhibiting themselves in Western gala attire and this writer's condescending comment on how the black evening dresses with high black hats "didn't suit the wearer[s]" are highly evocative. They articulate both actors' awareness of the significance of Filipinos' physical appearance and the ideas they could convey related to their political, social, and cultural preparedness for self-government according to Western political modernity. Such conception of

⁷ "The Position at Manila...."

Filipino bodies and minds as symbolic and discursive signifiers are the subject of abundant studies. On the one hand, rich historiography on US Imperialism in the Philippines has explored how, during and after the 1898 war, dominant representations in the US of the Philippines and Filipinos presented them, respectively, as an immature body politic and a childish and uncivilized population unprepared for self-government—as the chronicle above exemplifies. Those portraits helped justify the US policy that President William McKinley called a “Benevolent Assimilation”: allegedly, the US would raise the Filipinos from a state that was considered savage and barbaric and guard the Philippines against foreign interference until Filipinos could govern and defend themselves.⁸ On the other hand, thought-provoking works dealing with Filipino resistance to Spanish and US colonial ethnographies have also focused on the Filipino nationalists’ use of their bodies and minds as an instrument for political and social advancement.⁹

Building upon those bodies of literature, this research delves into, quoting Kramer again, the Filipino Government’s campaign for recognition based on the concept of “civilization” to explore how it used Filipino bodies and minds as political credentials between 1898 and the first months of 1899—when Filipino efforts to obtain the US’ recognition were most intense.¹⁰ To do so, it connects existing literature on the politicization of Filipino bodies—by Filipinos in other moments and by the US—with a review of the private correspondence of the Filipino leaders that managed the 1898–1899 media campaign and some of their media implants.¹¹ As a result, this chapter details how the Filipino Government’s campaign about “civilization” drew from an older tradition of Filipino political activism to systematically respond to the 1898 US accusations of Filipino savagery.¹² On the one hand,

⁸ The literature on the relation between US knowledge and rule of its empire is vast. For their focus on the “body politics” of the emerging American Empire, see Fitzpatrick, “Body Politic”; Balce, “The Filipina Breast”; Balce, *Body Parts of Empire*.

⁹ Among others (also referenced below), Reyes, *Love, Passion and Patriotism*; Hau, “Philippine Literary Nationalism”.

¹⁰ On the Filipino government’s media campaign and its managers, see Kramer, *Blood of Government*, pp. 97–102; Campomanes, “Figures of the Unassimilable,” pp. 76–123; Campomanes, “La Revolución Filipina”; de Viana, “Philippine Foreign Service”; Epistola, *Hong Kong Junta*; Agoncillo, *Malolos*, pp. 310–372.

¹¹ The chapter relies on the copy of the revolutionary papers available in Washington DC: “Philippine Insurgent Records, 1896–1901” series, part of the Records of the Adjutant General’s Office 1762–1984 (Record Group 94), at the National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC [henceforth, PIR]. I have also used John R. M. Taylor’s edited collection of a selection of these records: *Philippine Insurrection*.

¹² In their accounts of the development of Filipino nationalism in the last third of the nineteenth century, some authors have already presented a continuity in the Filipinos’ efforts to prove their “civilization” to overcome racial prejudice and consequent political marginalization between the

the Filipino Government adopted methods and ideas from the previous reformist Propaganda Movement, which had already defended Filipinos' high social evolutionary standing in front of Spanish audiences between 1872 and 1892. On the other hand, the Filipino Government adapted that strategy to dialogue with US public opinion, its 1898–1899 main target, to systematically contradict the specific arguments American media offered to prove Filipino uncivilization and dependency. Consequently, they constructed an image of civilized Filipino bodies and minds that mixed ideas already defended by the Propaganda Movement, such as the Filipino elites' Western education and social behavior, with new arguments that acquired relevance during the Revolution, such as the Filipino respect for the rules of civilized warfare. More broadly, by demonstrating how the representations of Filipinos were another battlefield of the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars—where previous generations of Filipino nationalists had already fought—this chapter aims to highlight how powerful discourses on colonized bodies could be.

It is important to note that, as Nicole CuUnjieng Aboitiz established, during the Spanish-American and Philippine-American Wars, the Filipino Government spoke to two different audiences. The first one was internal, Filipino and Asian, and Aguinaldo's Government highlighted the Asian roots of Filipino nationalists to encourage support from that region's societies, especially Japan. The second audience the Filipino Government tried to reach was the Western societies whose recognition they sought, which emphasized the humanitarian and internationalist dimensions of the Philippine Revolution.¹³ Given this chapter's interest in the Filipino campaign for recognition of Western powers, it is the messages they sent to these audiences and the strategies used to reach them that this text presents, which could be unrepresentative with the messages directed to internal and other Asian audiences.

Filipino Bodies and Minds and the Eyes of Empire

As Bonnie M. Miller cogently demonstrated, in the wake of the 1898 war, "cultural productions" offered a "compelling script for US intervention." Filipino revolutionaries were depicted as brave and heroic freedom fighters, worthy of trust in their shared fight with the US against the allegedly tyrannical and decaying Spanish Empire.¹⁴ Once the war finished, however, and Filipino aims for self-government clashed with the US

Spanish and the American colonial periods. See, for example, Kramer, *Blood of Government*, pp. 35–86, 87–158. This chapter, however, aims to expand this knowledge of the 1898–1899 media campaign by closely examining how the Filipino diplomats in charge of it instrumentalized the politics of the body.

¹³ CuUnjieng Aboitiz, *Asian Place, Filipino Nation*, pp. 87–88.

¹⁴ B. M. Miller, *From Liberation to Conquest*, p. 13.

interests in the Pacific, this portrayal radically changed. The US government and the supporters of its expansionist agenda argued that the population of the Philippines was a heterogeneous mix of uncivilized tribes. Therefore, their argument followed, abandoning the archipelago would leave the islands in internal anarchy and in danger of occupation by another European empire. Consequently, besides alleging strategic and economic benefits of controlling the Philippines, the expansionists defended that the US was responsible for protecting the archipelago from foreign invasion and teaching the islands' population the art of self-government until it was ready to stand for itself. President William McKinley called that policy a "Benevolent Assimilation" and guaranteed that most Filipinos would welcome it. He added that only a tiny fraction would oppose it: the followers of Emilio Aguinaldo, who had erected the Revolutionary Government. This minority, US authorities argued, aimed to retain all the power, establish a dictatorship, and tyrannize the rest of the islanders.¹⁵

The actual motives behind expansion were far more complex, as they included a wide range of political, economic, financial, social, and psychological pressures, both national and external.¹⁶ Despite the varying degrees of relevance that different researchers have attributed to these causes, all recognize that, in 1898, the rhetoric about Filipinos needing protection from foreign imperial powers and a responsible tutor that prepared them for self-government was widespread. The first expressions of those ideas established the basis of, using Thomas Richards' term, an "imperial archive," a vast system of knowledge about the US' imperial possessions and its inhabitants that extended far beyond 1898.¹⁷ Quoting Oscar V. Campomanes, "the New [US] Empire and its ideologues" created "a massive political and cultural archive which denationalized Filipinos and deemed them as racialized subjects unfit for self-determination, requiring systematic US tutelage."¹⁸ Abundant studies have looked at how such representations of Filipinos and the Philippines appeared in various US cultural media—such as journalism, photography, literature, cinema, and public exhibitions—and in the public discourses and archives of US political, administrative, military, and academic authorities.¹⁹ Overall, those depictions not

¹⁵ Reference explanations of the events after the Spanish-American War and the beginning of the Philippine-American War, including the arguments used, include Wolff, *Little Brown Brother*; S. C. Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*; Linn, *The Philippine War*.

¹⁶ For a historiographical review, see Woods, "The Burden of Empire."

¹⁷ Richards, *Imperial Archive*. Of course, the reference work regarding the imperial representations of colonized territories and their domination is still Said, *Orientalism* and also his *Culture and Imperialism*.

¹⁸ Campomanes, "Figures of the Unassimilable," p. 48. Also, Thompson, "Representation and Rule"; Thompson, *Imperial Archipelago*.

¹⁹ For some references on each media, see Brody, *Visualizing American Empire*; Deocampo, "Imperialist Fictions"; Wesling, *Empire's Proxy*. Among many other examples, on McKinley's public

only served the US to conceive its newly subject peoples but also established the basis to justify the American occupation of the Philippines and to design its rule.

In creating that imperial archive, the US echoed what other Western empires had done to rationalize imperial domination. Among its predecessors was the Spanish Empire in the Philippines. For centuries, the Spanish authorities restricted the involvement of the local population of the archipelago in metropolitan and colonial spheres of power, appealing to its alleged incapacity or unpreparedness for self-government. For example, according to an 1876 address to the Spanish Parliament by Manuel Azcárraga—an expert on the Philippines who had occupied various judicial and administrative positions in the archipelago—the five or six million natives on the islands were still incapable of exercising the political rights granted to Spanish citizens, and “they would neither need them nor understand them.”²⁰ Azcárraga represented a dominant conception in Spanish politics and public opinion.

These stereotypical images of Filipino bodies and minds, however, did not go unchallenged. Just as there was a continuity between the Spanish and US discourses on the supposed uncivilization of the inhabitants of the Philippines, Filipino reformists and revolutionaries at different stages of the nationalist struggle also worked to correct these imperial misconceptions. During the nineteenth century, the Philippines went through profound economic and social changes that led different sectors of the local population to demand an increase of their political rights within the Spanish Empire. To do so, various members of those sectors with political aspirations tried to prove those images of Filipino savagery wrong. The Propaganda Movement was the most influential advocate in Spain for a new relationship between the islands and the metropolis. Active between 1872 and 1892, it was formed by a “native” and mestizo-educated elite called the *ilustrados* (in English, enlightened). Based in Barcelona and later in Madrid, they demanded the extension of Spanish metropolitan law and rights to the archipelago and the application of reforms that alleviated the increasing discontent. To advance their cause, *propagandistas* denounced that metropolitans had scarce knowledge about the Philippines and its inhabitants. They directly confronted the racist and condescending stereotypes that justified low “native” participation in the archipelago administration: they argued that Filipinos were not children in need of a tutor and

relations efforts to sell the annexation, see Hildebrand, *Power and the People*, pp. 30–51. On debates in Congress about annexing the Philippines based on massive production of information on them, see Barreto Velázquez, *La amenaza colonial*. On academic discourses about the savagery of the Filipinos caused by the Spanish tutelage, see Cano, “Deliberate Distortion.”

²⁰ Quoted in Elizalde, “Filipinas, fin de siglo,” p. 309 (footnote 5). On Spanish nineteenth-century ethnographic representations of Filipinos, see also, among others, Muñoz Vidal, “Filipinas en la ilustración gráfica”; Sánchez Gómez, *Un imperio en la vitrina*; Lasco, “De Estatura Regular.”

that their level of enlightenment made them worthy of greater participation in their islands' government.²¹

When the '90s arrived, in the face of continuing intransigence by Spain, several *ilustrados* gave up on their demands for reforms. In the case of the Propaganda Movement, this metropolitan inflexibility compounded with a lack of economic support, internal divisions, and personal disagreements and resulted in the slimming and final dissolution of the collective. Some of its members, however, brought their experience to the 1896 Revolution, and two of them became prominent managers of its media campaign. The first one was Mariano Ponce. Ponce was writer and manager of *La Solidaridad*, the standard media of Filipino reformers in Spain. Also, he was secretary of the Asociación Hispano-Filipina in Madrid, and a noted member of Filipino masonic lodges in Spain.²² The second one was Dr. Galicano Apacible—a physician who, during his studies in Spain, had joined the reformists and, in 1897, had almost been arrested by the Spanish authorities.²³ As Resil Mojares established for Ponce's case, and that could be extended to Apacible, this *propagandista* applied well-known methods to new goals: instead of campaigning for reforms, they wanted independence.²⁴

These ex-propagandistas joined a Filipino exiled community based in Hong Kong that had grown during the last third of the nineteenth century escaping the Spanish repression and had benefited from the liberal climate of the British port. Just like Ponce and Apacible, during the 1896 Revolution, this community—whose members had previously supported the Propaganda Movement in Spain—received many other exiles that escaped Spain's repression. This was the case of Felipe Agoncillo, a lawyer that arrived in December 1896 escaping from deportation, who led the organization among that exiled community of the Philippine Revolutionary Committee. It aimed to collect support from foreign nations to provide Filipino combatants in the archipelago with arms and other necessary supplies and propagate the nature and goals of the Filipino national struggle through diplomacy and the press.²⁵

After the pause of the rebellion in December 1897, in April of 1898, Filipino revolutionaries restarted hostilities against Spain next to the US Army. During this

²¹ The reference history of the Propaganda Movement is still Schumacher's *Propaganda Movement*. For a complete and exhaustive synthesis of the works of the Propaganda in Spain and the ideas they tried to convey, see Kramer, *Blood of Government*, 52–66.

²² Mojares, "Los itinerarios de Mariano Ponce"; CuUnjieng Aboitiz, *Asian Place, Filipino Nation*, pp. 112–147.

²³ Alzona, *Galicano Apacible*, pp. 17–35.

²⁴ Mojares, "Los itinerarios de Mariano Ponce," p. 91.

²⁵ de Viana, "Philippine Foreign Service," pp. 22–24; Laura Díaz-Esteve and Albert García-Balaña, "Civilized Violence. Appealing to the Laws of War during the 1896–1897 Philippine Revolution" (article currently under peer review process).

new phase of the Revolution, the Filipino revolutionary leaders formalized the Hong Kong committee as a vital department of the Filipino state that would fill the void of government left after the expulsion of Spain. On 23 June, 1898, Emilio Aguinaldo decreed the constitution of a committee abroad, based, again, in Hong Kong, that included a diplomacy delegation. Although some of its members would change throughout the conflict due to internal divisions and disagreements on the final goal of the Revolution, the committee—better known as the Hong Kong Junta—was composed of a central managing board and correspondents in capital cities of Europe and America. It aimed, according to Aguinaldo's orders, "to work for the recognition of the belligerency and independence of the Philippines."²⁶ To achieve those goals, it had "to engage in propaganda work in foreign countries, enter into diplomatic negotiations with foreign governments as authorized and instructed, and procure whatever was required for waging the Revolution."²⁷

Echoing the Propaganda Movement's pivotal goal of demonstrating Filipino civility, during the Spanish-American War, the Hong Kong Junta tried to prove that US authorities and audiences—and, more broadly, Western powers—did not grasp the nature of the inhabitants of the Philippines and the realities in the islands. That lack of knowledge, their argument followed, inevitably altered the US' vision of which policy it should apply to the Philippines after Spain left the archipelago. As the intentions of the US to forcefully remain in the Philippines became clear towards the end of 1898 and during the Philippine-American War, the Junta would argue that US politicians and media misrepresented Filipinos as savages on purpose to push the "Benevolent Assimilation" agenda. As a result, to correct those politically harmful impressions, the Junta executed an ambitious communication campaign directed to a global audience—but with a specific focus on the US—to spread, using Mary Louis Pratt's term, "autoethnographic expressions." Pratt noted, "if ethnographic texts are a means by which Europeans [in this case, Americans] represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, autoethnographic texts are texts the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations."²⁸ In this case, the Filipino Government spread representations of the young Filipino nation and its leaders constructed in response to or in dialogue with US metropolitan representations of their soon-to-be subjugated others. The Junta tried to contradict the misrepresentations Western media offered of Filipinos as savages unprepared for political modernity. It tried to place the young Filipino nation on a high level of evolutionary standing in the contemporary social Darwinist hierarchies that the US used to justify the alleged Filipino dependency.

²⁶ Epistola, *Hong Kong Junta*, p. 145.

²⁷ Epistola, p. 144.

²⁸ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 9.

The Junta first closely monitored international public opinion on the Filipino people and their struggle. Then, with that information, they defined the best strategy to, quoting Galicano Apacible, “rectify the inexactitudes foreign newspapers published,” knowing that “public opinion influenced notably the decisions of foreign cabinets.”²⁹ They assessed the messages the Filipino government should emit to earn the sympathy of international observers and tried to draw these foreigners’ attention to them. Having presented the Filipino corps in charge of the Filipino Government’s campaign to demonstrate Filipinos’ civility, the next section argues the Junta adapted methods and arguments already employed during the Propaganda Movement and used new strategies to specifically respond to the discourses on alleged Filipino inferiority that many Western media spread. Both in US imperial ethnographies and in Filipino ethnographic self-representations, Filipino bodies and minds appeared as crucial signifiers of their political capabilities.

Exhibiting Civilization in the Contact Zone and through Photography

In the Hong Kong Junta campaign for recognition, the Filipino Revolutionary Government leaders’ appearances were the most immediate display of the Filipino enlightenment. Personal sacrifice and self-discipline played a crucial role in Filipino nationalism. As Caroline Hau explained, during the last third of the nineteenth century, Filipino nationalism intimately linked the destiny of the collective Filipino struggle for liberation to the “bodily dispositions and actions of its individual members.” Secularizing inherited colonial and “Christian” doctrines of self-abnegation and suffering, Filipino nationalism demanded that its members engaged in disciplined efforts of self-improvement so they were prepared for “executing the intentions of conscientiously patriotic selves in order to strive for the welfare of ‘the people’ and toward the realization of the new imagined, national community.” That involved, on the one hand, “intellectual and spiritual reorientation”, that is, cultivating their minds and spirits.³⁰ Along this line, it is essential to highlight how *ilustrados* engaged in different scholarly subjects, like ethnography, folklore, and history, which—as abundant literature has expounded—provided the intellectual grounding of the Filipino nation.³¹ On the other hand, Filipino nation-

²⁹ Galicano Apacible to Apolinario Mabini, 18 September, 1898, PIR, Folder 396, document 1. Original: “rectificar las inexactitudes que publican los periódicos extranjeros. No se le ocultará a V. que la opinión p[ú]blica influye mucho en las decisiones de los gabinetes extranjeros.” [All translations are by the author]

³⁰ Hau, “Philippine Literary Nationalism,” p. 40.

³¹ Mojares, *Brains of the Nation*; Thomas, *Orientalists, Propagandists, and Ilustrados*.

alism "required as well a corresponding corporeal or bodily readjustment to meet the demands" of history.³² That translated into building their physical bodies and adopting a social behavior that linked them to modernity.³³ Therefore, as Hau put it, the insurgent body was "at once the trope and the proper instrument of national liberation and radical social change."³⁴ Those efforts at self-improvement were key to the Propaganda Movement while campaigning for Filipinos' higher political rights within the Spanish Empire. During the 1880s, *propagandistas*—with their knowledge, manners and looks—presented themselves in the European cities they inhabited as living proofs of Filipino enlightenment. In this way, they evidenced that the Spanish conception of a backward Philippine society, unprepared to assume certain political rights, was wrong.³⁵

During the 1898 campaign for recognition, Filipino individuals' cultivated bodies and minds, with the accompanying moral and intellectual capacities, were also crucial signifiers of the entire nation's preparedness for independence. A first example of such embodied displays of Filipino civility was the Malolos government's opening ceremony mentioned in the introduction. According to the Western reporter who exhaustively described it for the *Hong Kong Daily Press*, every aspect of the festivity—including the Filipino leaders' appearances, the food, and the decoration—had been staged, at least in part, to convince foreign observers like him of the Filipino preparedness for autonomy. Another display of Filipino civility was a concert held at the Ateneo Rizal in Cavite on 23 July 1898, just weeks before the end of the Spanish-American War, when tensions between the Filipino and US political elites over the disposition of the islands after Spain's defeat were already mounting. According to a chronicle of the event published in Hong Kong's the *China Mail*, the revolutionary leaders had staged the event to honor the leaders of the US Navy and Army forces sent to the Philippines to support the Filipino fight for freedom and to cement a lasting friendship between the two countries. As well as summarizing the good wishes of cordiality expressed, the chronicle also noted that the Ateneo was "fairly decorated and illuminated" and that the "congregation of youth and beauty of the insurgent families of standing was surprising to those who had not already partaken Filipino hospitality." This, and other references such as the Filipinos' "catholic cordiality" in receiving the foreign guests, again illustrate the importance attached to demonstrating the Filipinos' adoption of Western sociability and gentlemanly behavior.³⁶ In a similar vein of breaking down Western

³² Hau, "Philippine Literary Nationalism," 40.

³³ Reyes, *Love, Passion and Patriotism*; Pérez, "Play and Propaganda."

³⁴ Hau, "Philippine Literary Nationalism," 40.

³⁵ Shumacher, *Propaganda Movement*; Reyes, *Love, Passion and Patriotism*.

³⁶ "The War," *The China Mail*, 2 August, 1898, p. 3.

prejudices about supposed Filipino savagery through direct interactions, the Filipino Government also invited foreign citizens—such as journalists—to travel through the territory under Filipino control during the war to study its reality.³⁷

The private correspondence of Filipino leaders demonstrates their awareness of how compelling first-hand impressions like these were to convey the idea of civilization to foreign observers. The following letter by Mariano Ponce exemplifies that concern while expressing how useful photography could be for them to spread those images beyond the contact zones between Filipinos and foreigners:

...it produces a better effect to view a photograph than any information spread in newspapers. When they see how the houses are, groups of well-dressed students, trained troops, military men and courageous generals, beauties, conversationalist black eyes, an impressive Parliament whose representatives, instead of wearing loincloths and feathers in their heads, wear tailcoats and white ties with elegance; all of this at a simple glance persuades more than a speech.³⁸

In mentioning Filipino parliamentarians that wore “loincloths and feathers in their heads,” Ponce was referencing the specific racialized, gendered, and sexualized visual grammar that was already widespread in the US to convey ideas of Filipino savagery.³⁹ On the one hand, Filipino individuals were represented in those terms, and, as Miller cogently demonstrated, the abundant visual caricatures of Emilio Aguinaldo are the most evident example. While during the Spanish-American War craze, the media had portrayed him as “young, handsome, brave as a lion, patriotic and self-sacrificing,” visual constructions of Aguinaldo underwent a radical transformation as the clash of interest between them and the US came to the fore.⁴⁰ The media turned to portray him, most often, in an “Africanized” way. According to Miller, Aguinaldo’s most typical racialized expression was to appear with “black

³⁷ S. C. Miller, *Benevolent Assimilation*, pp. 93–95.

³⁸ Letter from Mariano Ponce to F. Lichauco, Yokohama, 5 April, 1899. Letter 157 in Mariano Ponce, *Cartas sobre la revolución, 1897–1900* (Manila: Biblioteca Nacional de Filipinas, 1932), pp. 319–320. Original: “Veo que aquí, con la afición al arte fotográfico de esta gente, produce mejor efecto la vista de una fotografía que cualquiera afirmación que se haga en los periódicos. Cuando ven que hay casas de tal estilo, grupos de colegiales bien trajeados, tropas formadas, tipos marciales y bizarros de generales, bellezas, ojos negros parlanchines, un parlamento imponente cuyos representantes en vez de ir con taparrabos y con plumas en la cabeza, visten frac y corbata blanca con elegancia, todo esto a simple vista convence mejor que un discurso.”

³⁹ On photographic and other visual representations of Filipinos in the US, see, among others: Vergara, *Displaying Filipinos*; Halili Jr., *Iconography of the New Empire*; Ignacio et al., *The Forbidden Book*.

⁴⁰ B. M. Miller, *From Liberation to Conquest*, p. 197.

skin, large lips, hoop earrings, and kinked hair.”⁴¹ On other caricatures, the Filipino leader presented stereotypical Asian features, resonating with “rampant cultural prejudice against Chinese and Japanese immigrants.”⁴² Besides these racialized traits that connected US audiences’ conceptions of Filipinos to the stereotyped ideas they had in relation to American minorities, they also presented Aguinaldo and other Filipinos as vulnerable and unlearned kids. Additionally, as Nerissa Balce pointed out, the Philippines were metonymically represented through the bodies of the Filipinas, whose breasts represented the colony’s resources and whose nakedness signified the savagery of the populations to which they belonged.⁴³ For pro-imperialists, those representations of Filipinos as unruly savages, uneducated children, and objectified women confirmed “the moral, political, and economic necessity of US dominion over the islands.”⁴⁴

To contradict those visual images, not only did the Filipino Government try to exhibit its inhabitant’s civility through their direct encounter with foreign observers present in the Philippines, but it also tried to impress that idea in the US public sphere. Just as the *propagandistas* had exhibited Filipino civilization in Europe, so did Filipino diplomats abroad, most importantly, Felipe Agoncillo, the representative of the Filipino Government in the US during the fall of 1898, when the Peace Treaty was being negotiated. Several authors have demonstrated that while in the US, Agoncillo appeared as an embodiment of Filipino civility that corrected the preconceptions of the islanders as “uncivilized savages.”⁴⁵

More broadly, to spread that impression to a much wider audience, the Junta also resorted, when possible, to photography. As Vicente Rafael proved, during the Propaganda Movement, Filipino nationalist imagery had already constituted “an attempt at self-fashioning.”⁴⁶ Some of the portraits of the members of the First Philippine Republic could also be interpreted that way. The most eloquent example is a report published in the Parisian *Le Monde Illustré* in April 1899, two months after the outbreak of the Philippine-American War. Three expressive photographs accompanied the text: a portrait of Agoncillo, another of the members of the Junta (Fig. 12.1) and a third one depicting one troop of the Filipino Republic’s army

⁴¹ B. M. Miller, pp. 200–201.

⁴² B. M. Miller, p. 200.

⁴³ Balce, “The Filipina Breast.”

⁴⁴ B. M. Miller, *From Liberation to Conquest*, p. 202.

⁴⁵ On the US media coverage of Agoncillo’s visit, see Hoyt, “Agoncillo’s Mission to America;” Campomanes, “Figures of the Unassimilable,” pp. 76–126. For a fascinating analysis of how Filipinos in metropolitan spaces acted as embodiments of Filipino enlightenment during the American colonial period, see Prieto, “Delicate Subject;” Ventura, “‘I Am Already Annexed’.”

⁴⁶ Rafael, “Nationalism, Imagery,” p. 605.

(Fig. 12.2). All of them visually challenged the stereotypes of Filipino savagery and childishness spread by US outlets eager to misrepresent Filipinos.

To begin with, in these pictures, Filipinos showed their political credentials through their dress. During the nineteenth century, there were many particularities in Filipino clothing.⁴⁷ However, in many of the images spread in their campaign, instead of dressing in traditional Filipino clothes, like the Barong Tagalog, they wore Western attire. Referring to the period of American occupation right after the war, Mina Roces argued that “Filipino male politicians disassociated themselves from the colonized claiming to be among the powerful” by wearing the *Americana*, the Western suit associated with the “English-speaking, university educated, professional political.”⁴⁸ In that way, as Roces stated, “in vestimentary code, men were identified as heirs of the colonizing powers—the future wielders of power in the emerging nation.”⁴⁹ Along similar lines, in these *Le Monde Illustré* images from 1899, the leaders of the First Philippine Republic also used their dressing to equate themselves with the leaders of, using their terms, “civilized nations.”

Such interpretation is also consistent with Christopher Bayly’s depiction of a trend towards the uniformation of clothing during the turn of the century. As this historian noted, elite men in colonial societies across the world adopted sober and formal European wear to express trustworthiness, responsibility, self-discipline, and respectability.⁵⁰ The power of such symbolism finds further support in the fact that Westerners “lampooned ‘natives’ who mimicked them,” aware that the colonized were doing so to blur Western imperial hierarchies.⁵¹ An evident example of this dynamic is the *Hong Kong Daily Press*’ chronicle mentioned in the introduction, especially the journalist’s mockery of the Filipinos as “dark-skinned natives in the heat of mid-day [...] assembling in black evening dress” that did not suit them.

Secondly, the postures of the Junta’s members and that of the troop try to convey relevant ideas of the campaign of civilization. According to Rafael, during the Propaganda Movement, images of the *ilustrados* showed them exhibiting gentlemanly postures and serious expressions, which made “one think of collected interiors in command of their exterior representations, of rational minds holding together bodies in studied repose.”⁵² Similarly, Filipinos in these two photographs also exhibit a gentlemanly, dignified posture. In the first case, the clean and elegant office, full of books and newspapers, relates the leaders of the Filipino Republic,

⁴⁷ Roces, “Dress, Status, and Identity.”

⁴⁸ Roces, “Gender, Nation and the Politics of Dress,” p. 25.

⁴⁹ Roces, “Women, Citizenship and the Politics of Dress,” p. 13.

⁵⁰ Bayly, *Birth of the Modern World*, pp. 12–17.

⁵¹ Bayly, p. 17.

⁵² Rafael, “Nationalism, Imagery,” p. 605.



Figures 12.1–2. “Le Comité Philippin de Hong-Kong” and “Officiers et soldats de l’armée tagale aux Philippines” in “M. Agoncillo et la Cause Philippine,” *Le Monde Illustré*, 8 April, 1899, 272–273. Retrieved from Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département Philosophie, histoire, sciences de l’homme, FOL-LC2-2943, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/>.

whose impressive flag hangs on the wall, to erudition and cultivation. By doing so, they distanced themselves from the portraits that showed the Filipinos as “coming out of the woods,” as Galicano Apacible described one particular US cartoon they saw, which is representative of many others.⁵³ Far from being a primitive society, with that image, the Junta tried to demonstrate they possessed intellectual and social capacities and knowledge to rule a country according to political modernity.

In the case of Figure 12.2, the position of the troop suggests organization and discipline, challenging widespread US depictions of the Filipino combatants as unruly and violent savages. At the same time, the troop’s attitude, with all men staring directly at the camera, conveys an idea of defiance and bravery, demonstrating that they were manly enough to defend the Republic, undermining common depictions of Filipinos as childish. Finally, the presence of an actual child in the first row, to the viewer’s right, expresses a sentiment of camaraderie and the idea that the whole nation is ready to fight for its freedom. Overall, the images in *Le Monde Illustré* visually evidenced what Agoncillo, interviewed in the accompanying article, tried to explain through words: that the Filipinos not only deserved the recognition of their independence but, just as important, that “they are able to govern themselves.”⁵⁴

In sum, the leaders of the Philippine Revolution consciously attempted to convey the idea that they were civilized and, therefore, prepared for autonomy, by exhibiting their cultivated bodies and minds through direct interactions with foreign observers and through photography. Still, as the next section explains, despite Ponce’s conviction that photographs like the analyzed ones, “at a simple glance persuade[s] more than a speech,” most archival evidence of the ethnographic self-representations Filipinos spread during the 1898 and 1899 campaign for recognition is textual.⁵⁵

Not Just “Dark Skinned Natives in Black Evening Dress”

During the 1880s, beyond presenting themselves as embodiments of civilization, *ilustrados* in Spain had tried to advance their cause, first and foremost, through political lobbying—creating fruitful relationships with Spanish liberal and republican politicians—and a journalistic campaign in newspapers in the peninsula—most notably, *La Solidaridad* (1889–1895) and other Spanish media. Similarly, between

⁵³ Isidoro de los Santos to Apolinario Mabini, 14 September, 1898, PIR 406.2. Original: “Bray me dijo a m[i] de otra caricatura en la que sale nuestro presidente silbando ante los Americanos como llamando a bandadas de negritos saliendo de los bosques.”

⁵⁴ “M. Agoncillo et la Cause Philippine,” *Le Monde Illustré*, 8 April, 1899, p. 272.

⁵⁵ Ponce to Lichauco, Yokohama, 5 April, 1899 in *Cartas sobre la Revolución*.

1898 and 1899, the Filipino Government also made a considerable effort to share their narratives of the Revolution in their diplomatic exchanges and the media. To reach global Western audiences, the Junta constantly worked to get their texts printed in the nearby press of Hong Kong—which could be telegraphed to Europe and America—or tried to send them directly to European and American media outlets such as the Associated Press.⁵⁶ In this regard, their Records also demonstrate that Filipinos built a network of influential media allies, such as Ferdinand Blumentritt, the famous Austrian ethnographer who had already collaborated with the Propaganda Movement, and William G. St. Clair, editor of the *Singapore Free Press & Mercantile Advertiser*.⁵⁷ Additionally, the government also hired at least two British press representatives who made critical efforts to bring its message to Western audiences: Howard W. Bray and Chesney Duncan.⁵⁸ As a result, some Filipino texts were published in the US and a much larger amount appeared in the Hong Kong Anglophone media and the *Singapore Free Press & Mercantile Advertiser*.

A close analysis of these texts shows that in all its media implants, the Junta directly dialogued and responded to US reports on the conflict. While most of the US media explained the causes of the conflict and reported on each episode of the war in a way that emphasized the alleged ferocity of the Filipinos, the Filipino reports responded by trying to prove the opposite: Filipino readiness for self-government. That is, they sought to offer a narrative of the Filipino revolutionary movement that supported the ideas of cultivation, discipline and strength embodied in the images analyzed earlier. As Kramer noted, their campaign was based on three main arguments: the efficacy of the state created by the Filipino revolutionaries, legal and historical arguments that legitimized its sovereignty, and the Filipino adherence to civilized warfare.

To begin with, as several analysts of the US media reaction to the 1898 and Philippine-American Wars have demonstrated, the expansionist elites and the press did not contextualize the fight for freedom that Filipinos had already waged against the Spanish Empire and the antecedents of that struggle.⁵⁹ The press did not accurately portray the complexity of the Filipino revolutionary movement and its aspirations. Moreover, no matter how skillfully Aguinaldo made a case for

⁵⁶ For examples of their mentions to the Hong Kong and foreign press, see the various documents on PIR 493.

⁵⁷ Sichrovsky, *Ferdinand Blumentritt*. The author of this text has analyzed William St. Clair's cooperation with the Filipino propaganda campaign in a forthcoming article to be published in *Diplomatic History* and entitled "The *Singapore Free Press* and the War of 1898 in the Philippines".

⁵⁸ On Howard W. Bray, see Díaz-Esteve, "The *Singapore Free Press*...". On Chesney Duncan's appointment as press advisor, see Epistola, *Hong Kong Junta*, 156.

⁵⁹ See, among others, B. M. Miller, *From Liberation to Conquest*; Vaughan, "The 'Discovery' of the Philippines"; Welch Jr., "The 'Philippine Insurrection'"; Welch Jr., *Response to Imperialism*.

Philippine independence, the “Filipinos’ aspirations,” as Christopher A. Vaughan observes, “were irrelevant to US editors.”⁶⁰ Instead, the Hong Kong Junta framed the 1898 war into a larger Filipino struggle for reforms in the archipelago. They narrated how, after centuries of education, Filipinos were enlightened, brave, and honorable enough to stand up for their liberty and improve their people’s well-being. After decades of peacefully demanding reforms to the island’s administration within the Spanish Empire, a revolution against tyranny had started in 1896, before any US intervention. Once the 1898 war had begun, they argued that far from being mere puppets supporting the US war effort, the Filipino-American collaboration had been planned as a cooperation between two equal nations. Still, the Junta argued that the Filipino forces had managed to expel the Spanish troops from most of the archipelago without the help of the US—which was waiting for reinforcements for most of the war. As a result, they protested that Filipinos had hardly earned their autonomy.

Among the many texts that exemplify this discourse is American journalist A.H. Myers’ extensive report entitled “America’s Transgressions in the Philippines”, published in *The Singapore Free Press*. A private letter to Emilio Aguinaldo identified it as a “well-written manifesto” that was worth spreading, as it explained point-by-point the Filipino narrative of the war.⁶¹ After attacking the US media for misrepresenting the situation in the Philippines and the Filipinos, Myers defended the revolutionary leaders’ position in different polemic situations that the Americans had exploited to attack the legitimacy of Aguinaldo’s government. For example, Myers explained the pact between Admiral George Dewey and Emilio Aguinaldo that established the terms of collaboration between their armies at the beginning of the 1898 war. Such an episode became much discussed in the US press, because the US government argued that they had not made any promises of Independence to the Filipino revolutionaries in exchange for their help. By contrast, Myers explained that Admiral Dewey had guaranteed the following: “if the Filipinos co-operated with the Americans, the result could only be one and that was Independence, for which they had been fighting for years.” After that, this journalist analyzed through abundant evidence how those collaborations had developed, highlighting the fundamental role the Filipino troops—and not the Americans—had played in expelling Spain from the archipelago.⁶²

The second key argument of the Junta campaign was exhibiting, in Kramer’s words, the results of the Filipino Government’s “competitive state-building” efforts.⁶³

⁶⁰ Vaughan, “The ‘Discovery’ of the Philippines,” p. 306.

⁶¹ Isidoro de los Santos to Emilio Aguinaldo. Hong Kong, 18 March, 1899, PIR 479.6.

⁶² A.H. Myers, “America’s Transgressions in the Philippines,” *The Singapore Free Press & Mercantile Advertiser*, 24 March, 1899, p. 3.

⁶³ Kramer, *Blood of Government*, p. 98.

In most of their media implants, the Junta defended that Filipino leaders had established a competitive state that followed the rules of enlightened government, that had widespread support, and that was able to maintain peace in the areas under its control. Quoting a letter by Isidoro de los Santos—one of the members of the Junta based in Singapore—they tried to “refute and destroy the malicious lies that the European and American press[,] inspired by ignorant or by enemy brains, were constantly publishing that the revolutionaries were a crowd of ferocious ambitious [people] captained by an animal chief with no less thirst for glory.”⁶⁴ Such concern derived from the awareness of US accounts that attacked the leadership of the Philippine Revolution, accusing its members of being egoistic rebels who aimed to establish a dictatorship among masses of a semi-barbarian population.

An eloquent example of the Filipino efforts to respond to those ridiculing images of the Filipino leaders is the above-mentioned letter by de los Santos, written on 14 September, 1898. He warned about one of the numerous “base of rumors” against Aguinaldo: a proclamation “regarding the badges for the dignitaries of the Revolutionary Government[,] with a golden or silver chain according to their ranks, and the chain and whistle for the President [Aguinaldo].” Indeed, as several historians have observed, the proclamation became a rich source of mockery regarding the leader’s alleged ambition and arrogance. For example, de los Santos warned that the *New York World* had printed “America like a great old man sitting and[,] at his feet open[,] the carton puppet of a general with a chain, and from the chain the whistle, and a hat with a sign that said ‘Aguinaldo’.”⁶⁵ As a response to this attack, they managed to publish in *The Singapore Free Press* a lengthy editorial that tried to justify the use of those badges, comparing them to the dressing codes of other “civilized” countries and concluding that Aguinaldo “merely took over existing Spanish regulations and adopted the official insignia in everyday use, but varying these in such a way as to mark the supersession of Spanish authority by Filipino authority, while at the same time continuing administrative authority, under the new regime, with the least possible indications of a break in its scope or character.” “The case being so,” the text followed, “the epithets ‘childish’ and ‘puerile’ so glibly,

⁶⁴ Isidoro de los Santos to Apolinario Mabini, 14 September, 1898, PIR 406.2. Original: “...en sentido de refutar y destruir los terribles infundios de la Prensa Europea y Americana sugeridas por cerebros ignorantes quizás o enemigos publicando a mandoble que los revolucionarios eran una bandada de feroces ambiciosos capitaneados por nuestro jefe animal con no menos aspiraciones de grandeza.”

⁶⁵ de los Santos to Mabini, 14 September, 1898, PIR 406.2. Original: “Otra base de los infundios en contra de nuestro Presidente en la actualidad es la proclamación [...] de las insignias de las dignidades del Gobierno Revolucionario con aquello del collar de oro y plata según el mando[,] lo mismo que la cadena y el silbato para el Presidente. [...] El *New York World* ha gravado a la Am[é]rica como un gran viejo sentado y en sus pies abiertos un muñeco como general de cart[ón] con una cadena, y de la cadena el silbato y el sombrero con letrero diciendo [“]Aguinaldo.”

in ignorance of facts, applied to Aguinaldo's proclamation *re* official badges, will come back on those who made use of them with boomerang-like effect."⁶⁶

Finally, the last key argument of that media campaign was the Filipino respect for the rules of civilized warfare. Throughout the Spanish-American War and interwar period, the Filipino Government constantly spread the message that the Filipino Army had paid the utmost attention to treating prisoners correctly and behaving according to international humanitarian law. Again, one of the multiple examples is Myers' chronicle. Myers argued that "Aguinaldo raised an Army, and promised Admiral Dewey that the warfare should be conducted upon the recognized methods of modern warfare: that there should be no cruelty, murder, nor pillage." Furthermore, he followed: "Notwithstanding reports that may have been cabled and written to the US to the contrary, the Filipinos have openly challenged anyone to prove one single instance where this promise has been violated."⁶⁷

Along a similar line, the Junta insisted on the fact that the Filipinos had tried as much as they could to avoid hostilities, that they had pursued the recognition of the Republic through all the diplomatic means possible, and that, contrary to the accusations of the US authorities, American troops had started the Philippine-US War. Indeed, the US political and military elites insisted throughout the conflict that Filipino troops, after having pestered the disciplined and patient US Eighth Army Corps for months, had finally attacked them on 4 February, 1899. This allegedly demonstrated the unruly and traitorous character of the Filipinos, who were ungrateful to their one-time allies without whom, according to US narratives, they would still be under Spanish tyranny. Aware of the significance of the event, just a few days after the battle, Apacible explained to Aguinaldo: "When we received news of the outbreak of the hostilities, I telegraphed immediately to all of our representatives to protest, as well as to the Associated Press and to other newspapers."⁶⁸

One of the results of that effort was an account in the *Hong Kong Daily Press* published on 15 February 1899, entitled "Filipino Account of the Hostilities at Manila" and signed by Kaibigan Nañg Bayan, "Friend of the Country." The text was a lengthy contradiction of the narrative the *Manila Times*—but more broadly, the hegemonic US public opinion—offered at the start of the clash in Santa Mesa, and with it, of the character and legitimacy attributed to the Filipino Republic. The article argued that the *Manila Times* and the American military authorities were making the most of the US audiences' ignorance of the Philippines and its people and their control of the outgoing information to deceive Americans about

⁶⁶ "About a couple....," editorial, *The Singapore Free Press & Mercantile Advertiser*, 15 September, 1898, p. 2.

⁶⁷ A.H. Myers, "America's transgressions in the Philippines."

⁶⁸ Galicano Apacible to Emilio Aguinaldo, Hong Kong, February 20, 1899, PIR 493-13.

the reality of the conflict and its main characters. While offering their narrative of the clash through many pieces of evidence and details, the author of the text blamed the US troops and authorities for the sins their media attributed to the Filipinos. First, the author tried to demonstrate that the US had planned the clash to encourage its senators to ratify the Paris Peace Treaty in the upcoming vote on 6 February. Among the arguments it offered to demonstrate Filipino innocence, the author pointed out the inconsistencies in the US account of the alleged Filipino attack by explaining the positions of the different forces in the area and exposing what would have been a logical military strategy. Also, defending the indisputable authority of Gen. Aguinaldo and the discipline of his troops, the author denied that Aguinaldo's unruly subordinates had instigated a Filipino attack, as the US suggested. Instead, it argued that Filipinos had been surprised by an American attack after believing the US promises not to cause any problems. This way, they demonstrated US trickery, attributing to the Americans the traitorous character that the US press often attributed to the Filipinos. Finally, the text defended the efficiency of the Filipino army in the battle. It declared that the most significant death toll had occurred among the civilian population, mostly defenseless women and children killed by the American forces. The text denounced this as a "monstrous outrage on civilization." The argument that the Americans, not the Filipinos, were conducting warfare without respect for international regulations became another essential trope of the Junta discourse.⁶⁹

In summary, the Hong Kong Junta worked hard to promote a narrative of the Philippine Revolution that, by detailing the motivations and behavior of Filipinos at every stage of their struggle, proved the legitimacy and strength of their movement and their readiness for self-government, as also demonstrated by their direct contact with foreigners or through photography.

Conclusion

Throughout the Spanish-American war and the first year of the Philippine-American War, the Hong Kong Junta tried to spread autoethnographic representations which stressed the civilization of the Filipino leaders and, more broadly, of the nation they represented. To do it, its members drew on methods and ideas from the earlier Propaganda Movement but also responded to contemporary Western misrepresentations of the islands. As demonstrated, after openly denouncing the distortion of the nature of Filipinos and their Revolution in Western public opinion, they demonstrated

⁶⁹ Kaibigan Nañg Bayan [translated as "Friend of the Country"], "Filipino Account of the Hostilities at Manila," *The Hong Kong Daily Press*, 15 February, 1899, p. 2.

that Filipinos had the necessary level of enlightenment for independence, as shown by their struggle against the Spanish tyranny, their erection of a functional government after its defeat, and their conduct of the war, following the rules of civilized warfare. They tried to impress those general ideas in images such as in the examined report of *Le Monde Illustré* and also through their narratives of particular controversies that many US authorities and media exploited to allege Filipino “unpreparedness,” such as Emilio Aguinaldo’s proclamation on the use of badges for the revolutionary leaders and the outbreak of the Philippine-American War.

All in all, those efforts showed the intense battle the Junta fought to construct an image of Filipino bodies and minds that placed them high on the scales of enlightenment that Euro-American powers constructed to justify their rule over peoples they considered in an inferior stage of development. Representations of Filipino bodies and minds became evidence of their political credentials. This constituted another battlefield for the Revolution, demonstrating how powerful the socio-cultural signification of bodies was in the politics of imperial recognition.

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