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The nexus of nationalism and internationalism: the journey of a "diplomat" after the galleons

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After the galleons, Benito J. Legarda's masterpiece on socioeconomic transformation after the galleon trade, has enriched our knowledge of the semi-open colonial economy in the 19th-century Philippine Islands, which witnessed the rise of nationalism at the end of that century. In this paper, I shed new light on the nature of the Ilustrados' nationalism and their international activism by revisiting the life of the country's "first diplomat", Felipe Agoncillo, who battled in vain to achieve independence through a diplomatic channel. While class politics tends to be a focal point of the scholarly debate over the Ilustrados' nationalism, this paper highlights the international dimensions of their advocacy. Agoncillo's mission in the United States and Europe seems a reasonable option from our perspective, which has been shaped by the norm of modern diplomacy, but it was a risky adventure considering the overwhelming influence of imperialism. Why did Agoncillo conclude they had to send a mission? What kinds of negotiation strategies did they have? Combining Legarda's global insights on the Philippines' colonial economy with Agoncillo's ideational and actual travel, this paper reveals how Philippine nationalism and internationalism created a nexus whose legacy exists in current Philippine diplomacy, one of whose achievements was the award of the arbitration case over the South China Sea in 2016.

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1. Introduction

Benito J. Legarda's masterpiece on socioeconomic transformation after the galleon trade has enriched our knowledge of the Philippines' colonial economy, which witnessed the rise of Philippine nationalism at the end of the 19th century [Legarda 1999]. The enlightened ones (i.e., the Ilustrados) were the pioneers

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of Philippine nationalism but are often blamed for their "betrayal" in the midst of the Philippine Revolution (Agoncillo [1960]; Constantino and Constantino [1975]). More recently, scholars have revisited Legarda's insights for their studies on individuals' agency during the early globalization period (Anderson [2006]; Mojares [2006]; Hau [2017]; Thomas [2016]; Claudio [2019]). The interest of the earlier body of literature was in either a national or class collective identity, whereas later studies focused on individual agency. The later studies broadened the perspective beyond national boundaries by putting individual Ilustrados' thoughts in the contexts of anarchism, nation-building, cosmopolitanism, orientalism, or liberalism.

Following the development of the second group of studies, I shed new light on the nature of the Ilustrados' nationalism and their international activism by revisiting the life of the country's "first diplomat", Felipe Agoncillo, who battled in vain to achieve Philippine independence through a diplomatic channel [de Ocampo 1977]. Agoncillo's attempt shows the nationalist movement in the context of a type of internationalism in which nationalist activists (e.g., leading Italian nationalist, Giuseppe Mazzini) recognized the nationalism of other nations within the Habsburg Empire and fought together to defeat Habsburg imperialism (Mazower [2013]; Fujisawa [2011]). In the context of the Spanish Empire, the leading Ilustrado newspaper, *La Solidaridad* (1889–1895), had an international scope thanks to its correspondents in Havana, New York, and Saigon (Mojares [2006:456]; Claudio [2019:12]). Marcelo H. del Pilar and Jose Rizal, the leading figures in *La Solidaridad*, and several others organized the Propaganda Movement in Spain [Schumacher 1997]. While the propagandists appealed to the public by publishing strongly written arguments, Agoncillo negotiated directly with American government officials in Washington for recognition of Philippine independence. Agoncillo was a nationalist at the same time an internationalist in the sense that he believed in the meaning of negotiations among the nations.

Agoncillo's missions in the United States and Europe seem like reasonable options from the perspective shaped by the norms of modern diplomacy, but were risky ventures considering the overwhelming influence of imperialism and a possible military clash between the nascent Philippine Republic and the United States. This paper examines the reason for deciding to send a mission and the kinds of negotiation strategies they used.

Agoncillo first proposed sending a diplomatic mission in the midst of the Philippine Revolution (Agoncillo [1960]; Taylor [1971b:499-518]; Epistola [1996]; de Ocampo [1977]). Those who have promoted nationalist historiography take for granted that the revolutionaries understood diplomacy and modern statecraft and instead highlight tensions within the Hong Kong Junta and the internal struggle over the money the junta received from the Spanish authority.

In this paper, I am to reveal the nationalist movement's transformation during the second phase of the Philippine Revolution as well as the words and deeds of the revolutionaries who were on the frontline of the transformation. Due to United States (US) intervention, the Philippine Revolution suddenly became internationalized [Ueno 2015]. In the first phase of the revolution, the agendas were anti-colonialism, nationalism, and nation-building, whereas, in the second phase, they were broadened to cover state-building and diplomacy.

Cesar Majul wrote a masterpiece on the life and thoughts of Apolinario Mabini, known as the brain behind the revolution, which reveals the challenge encountered during the second phase [Majul 1996b]. In terms of state-building, Mabini strove to create revolutionary institutions that would support Philippine state-building efforts thereafter (Majul [1996a; 1996b]). For instance, Majul [1996b] highlights the government's role in Rizal's thoughts, which influenced Mabini's ideas. Both recognized the role of government in a society in which every person has a chance to be free [Majul 1996a:22-32]. In other words, Majul noticed that Rizal and Mabini had recognized not only liberation from colonial rule but also the Filipinos' liberty to govern their nation-state [Berlin 1969].

While Mabini attempted to give shape to a modern state in the nascent Philippine Republic, Agoncillo was in charge of the effort to achieve international recognition of the young republic. In addition, Agoncillo introduced Mabini to Emilio Aguinaldo, president of the Philippine Republic (Agoncillo [1960:223]; de Ocampo [1977:3]). Agoncillo served as the official representative to the United States, whereas Mabini served as the prime minister and foreign minister of the Philippine Republic, organized in Malolos. Mabini and Agoncillo strove for state-building in the country and recognition abroad for the nascent republic.

Revisiting Agoncillo's views—rather than those of Mabini, whose ideas distinguished scholars such as Majul [1996a; 1996b] have studied well—is important because Mabini did not necessarily share all of Agoncillo's views. Agoncillo and other revolutionaries in Hong Kong played a major role in the republic's foreign relations because Mabini was preoccupied with his job as prime minister and only had limited access to the external affairs of the Philippine Islands. The core question I address in this paper is how Agoncillo developed the idea of diplomacy at the birth of the first republic in Asia. Agoncillo was a lawyer, but not all lawyers were familiar with international law, let alone diplomacy. By looking at Agoncillo's actual words and deeds, I trace the origin of Philippine diplomacy at the end of the 19th-century. Combining Legarda's global insights on the Philippine colonial economy with Agoncillo's ideational and actual travel, this paper reveals the origin of the nexus of Philippine nationalism and internationalism, whose legacy can be found in modern Philippine diplomacy, with one of its achievements being the "victory" in the arbitration case over the South China Sea in 2016.

2. The Filipino diplomat in Hong Kong

Born in 1858, Agoncillo belonged to the generation of "national heroes" in Philippine history [de Ocampo 1977:35]. Among these revolutionary heroes were Marcelo H. del Pilar (born 1850), the founder of the Propaganda Movement in Spain; Jose Rizal (born 1861), the revolutionary nationalist writer executed by the Spanish authority; and Apolinario Mabini (born 1864), the brain of the revolution. They emerged during the socio-economic transformation in the late 19th century, which Legarda [1999] richly described.

The Philippine economy increasingly began to integrate into the early globalization during the 19th century. After the end of the galleon trade, the Spanish authority gradually opened various ports to other countries, which resulted in the "explosive" growth of export products [ibid.:334]. Resonating with the growing export economy, modern infrastructure projects emerged, one after another. For example, steam navigation arrived in 1848, a banking service by the Banco Español–Filipino (today's Bank of the Philippine Islands) began in 1851, and monthly mail delivery between Manila and Hong Kong started in 1854. Moreover, a regular, direct steamship from Manila to Spain via the Suez Canal was launched in 1873 and a cable service between Manila and Hong Kong began operations in 1880 [ibid.:337]. Manila was one of the most modern cities in Southeast Asia and was deeply connected with Hong Kong, an energetic colonial port city open to the world.

Almost all of the nationalist leaders enjoyed the best educational opportunities available in Southeast Asia [Legarda 1999:338]. Established in 1619, the University of Santo Tomas was reorganized in 1865 to accept native students to courses such as law and medicine. Thanks to commercial growth, the demand for office workers, including lawyers, increased. During the 1883–1884 school year, 232 law students enrolled, as compared to 68 students in theology and medicine [Furnival 1943:43]. J. S. Furnival, a British scholar–bureaucrat working for British Burma, concluded in his comparative study that Philippine education was "far ahead of any country in the Tropical Far East" in the 19th century [ibid.:44].

Legarda introduced a contemporary observation by a Filipino writer on the commercial port city of Taal (where Agoncillo was born) in Batangas Province that described the nouveau riche's "rococo splendor" thanks to the global coffee business [Legarda 1999:214]. Another record by a contemporary observer described the educational opportunities in Batangas: "Batangas during the time of Agoncillo was 'about the most intelligent and civilized area in the Philippines outside of Manila'" (Wenceslao R. Retana, as cited in de Ocampo [1977:44]). Legarda specifically mentioned the names of two Batangueños, Felipe Agoncillo and Sotero Laurel, as the representative beneficiaries of these educational opportunities, through which they found jobs in the colonial judiciary [Legarda 1999:338].

The Agoncillos were among the wealthiest families in Taal [de Ocampo 1977:37]. Felipe's parents and grandparents were *principalla*, and their house had a large library [ibid.]. The family sent Felipe to Ateneo Municipal de Manila and then to the Colegio de San Juan de Letran, where Felipe graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree. He then enrolled in the University of Santo Tomas and graduated with the title of Licentiate in Jurisprudence in 1880 [ibid.: 52].

After working as an assistant at the Godines law office in Manila, Agoncillo returned to Taal to practice law. After having served as auxiliary fiscal (or prosecutor) of Batangas seven times, he was elected advisor to the Administrative Council in Manila in 1894 [ibid.:56]. De Ocampo asserted that the colonial authority expected the council to manage the tensions between the civil governor and the judge of the court of the first instance in Batangas after the local government's executive and judicial powers were separated (de Ocampo [1977:57]; Abinales & Amoroso [2017:xxxiii]).

Although the secular authority embraced this talented lawyer in Taal, the religious order, as represented by Fr. Julian Diez, the parish priest of Taal, cast serious doubt upon Agoncillo's loyalty [de Ocampo 1977:59]. In 1895, Diez organized 12 witnesses to show Agoncillo's "anti-Catholic and anti-patriotic activities" [ibid.]. This was the era of the Propaganda Movement, spearheaded by Jose Rizal's *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, published in 1887 and 1891, respectively, as well as *La Solidaridad* from 1889. The friars were afraid of the movement spreading throughout the Philippine Islands and tried to suppress supporters or possible sympathizers, with or without evidence. Diez was very afraid of the subversive atmosphere in Taal (and Batangas in general), which he believed was "a great liability to our Mother Country" [ibid.:64]. According to Diez, none other than Felipe Agoncillo led "the 'subversive group' of Taal" [ibid.].

After fighting this claim in vain, Agoncillo left the Philippine Islands for Hong Kong via Japan on April 28, 1896 [ibid.:68]. Hong Kong was "a heaven for Filipino deportees" who belonged to Filipino "subversive groups" after 1872 [ibid.:70] because it was the closest port city from Manila where entrepreneurial Filipinos could find business opportunities and had a cable and mail service with Manila, which allowed them to contact other cadres there. For instance, Jose Ma. Basa—who smuggled *Noli Me Tangere* to the Philippine Islands—lived in Hong Kong [ibid.].

When Emilio Aguinaldo occupied the commanding heights of the rebellion against Spain and formed a revolutionary government in Biak-na-Bato on November 1, 1897, Agoncillo became the most vocal voice for the independence movement among the Filipinos in Hong Kong. While Aguinaldo was in the negotiation process with the Spanish authority, Agoncillo contacted Rounseville Wildman, an American consul in Hong Kong, on November 3, 1897, to propose a military alliance against Spain (Kramer [2006:82]; de Ocampo [1977:72]). Agoncillo proposed that they form an alliance against Spain and requested a

shipment of arms and ammunition from the United States to the Philippine Islands, although Wildman declined his proposal (Agoncillo [1960:73-74]; Kramer [2006:82]).

Interestingly, Wildman recognized Agoncillo as a "diplomat" in an official report to the United States. In correspondence to the State Department dated November 3, Wildman reported, "Since my arrival in Hongkong [sic], I have been called upon by Mr. F. Agoncilla [sic], foreign agent and high commissioner, etc., of the new republic of the Philippines." Wildman continued, "Mr. Agoncilla [sic] holds a commission, signed by the president, members of the cabinet, and general in chief of the Republic of the Philippines, empowering him absolutely with power to conclude treaties with foreign governments" [Taylor 1971a:472]. Wildman left a positive impression of Agoncillo, writing that Agoncillo "was a very earnest and attentive diplomat", though he failed to spell Agoncillo's name properly [ibid.].

After Aguinaldo arrived in Hong Kong on December 29, the Hong Kong Junta supported by the Filipino Central Committee replaced the Revolutionary Committee organized by Agoncillo [de Ocampo 1977:73]. Aguinaldo and his fellow 26 revolutionaries established the junta using money they received from the Spanish colonial authority as a part of the Pact of Biak-na-Bato [Epistola 1996:3-6]. Tension seemed to exist between Aguinaldo and the old-timers in Hong Kong, who had already established their businesses there [Agoncillo 1960:140-141]. Basa and the Cortes family sought protection from the United States, while Aguinaldo and his followers were determined to pursue independence. Agoncillo worked in collaboration with Aguinaldo.

Aguinaldo and his followers continuously worked for Philippine independence during their stay in Hong Kong [Majul 1996:54-55]. Therefore, it is worth mentioning that Agoncillo recommended that Aguinaldo visit Mabini before the latter returned to the Islands (Agoncillo [1960:223]; de Ocampo [1977:3]). Agoncillo recognized Mabini's unique talent and played an important role in shaping the revolution's institutional dimension by introducing "the brains of the revolution" (i.e., Mabini), who bridged the revolutionary movement and modern state-building once he met Aguinaldo [Majul 1996].

3. The strategy for independence through diplomacy

3.1. The proposal for the diplomatic negotiations

Agoncillo proposed that Aguinaldo carry out diplomatic negotiations with the United States. He continued his role as an advisor to Aguinaldo after Aguinaldo returned to the Islands on May 19, 1898. For instance, Agoncillo recommended on May 28, 1898, that Aguinaldo change the form of the government to improve its international reputation. Agoncillo gently pointed out that the dictatorial form of the government Aguinaldo had established on May 24, 1898, did not "conform

to modern ideas of civilization" (Epistola [1996:50]; Taylor [1971c:240]). Instead, he suggested the creation of a provisionary government with the same functions as the current government.

In a letter dated May 27, 1898, he gave another substantial piece of advice to Aguinaldo in terms of American policy toward the Philippines and the necessary preparation by the Philippine side (Epistola [1996:50]; Taylor [1971c:238-241]). He informed Aguinaldo of the arrival of two American cruisers and 15,000 American soldiers, led by General Wesley Merritt, who would be the governor-general in the Philippines, and alerted Aguinaldo regarding American intentions. Moreover, he suggested that Aguinaldo not disclose his intention to seek independence from the beginning but rather maintain good relations with the Americans, to enable the revolutionaries to gain material support from them (Epistola [1996:50-51]; Taylor [1971c:238]). Agoncillo prescribed that Aguinaldo should avoid irritating the Americans until they attempted to enslave the Filipinos or sell the Philippine Islands [Taylor1971 c:239].

In the letter, Agoncillo proposed that Aguinaldo begin "diplomatic negotiations" with the Americans, although he did not elaborate upon the substance of the negotiations (Epistola [1996:51]; Taylor [1971c:238]). Instead of a detailed proposal for diplomatic negotiations, Agoncillo proposed a strategy of projecting their cause to the world. Agoncillo asserted that only after the Americans became hostile could the Filipinos claim "the right in the eyes of the world to fight against them for the welfare of our country" (Epistola [1996:51]; Taylor [1971c:239]). Tellingly, Agoncillo paid much attention to "the eyes of the world" or the moral high ground in the international community to obtain recognition of the Filipinos' legitimate claim for independence.

His skepticism of the American consul in Hong Kong might have prompted Agoncillo to propose a diplomatic mission in the United States. After Aguinaldo's departure, the remaining members of the Hong Kong Junta accelerated their efforts to procure weapons (Ueno [2015:266-293]; Taylor [1971b:492]). Because the British government maintained a neutral position in the Spanish–American War, the British authority in Hong Kong did not allow the Filipinos to buy and sell weapons in public. Therefore, the revolutionaries in Hong Kong had to work secretly and involved themselves in various troubles in their secret deals with arms traders. Agoncillo had already lost his confidence in Consul Wildman, who may have been playing "a double game with our money here" to profit personally through weapons-procurement deals [Taylor 1971c:239]. Suspecting Wildman's insincerity, Agoncillo wrote in his letter to Aguinaldo dated May 27, 1898, "I will go to the United States for diplomatic negotiations" [ibid.]. He asked Aguinaldo and other leaders to give him "full power to negotiate in the name of our country" [ibid.].

In the Philippines, Aguinaldo was busy remobilizing the revolutionary forces against Spain but still recognized the significance of international recognition. At first, to encourage the revolutionaries, Aguinaldo prepared a declaration

of independence on June 12 and subsequently organized the revolutionary government by replacing it with a dictatorial government through a June 23 decree [Agoncillo 1960:222-223]. In a message written by Mabini, Aguinaldo claimed the people of the Philippine Islands were deprived of their rights at the Cortes, or the Spanish Parliament, established through the Cadiz Constitution of 1812, and that the Spanish authority suppressed the Filipinos when they had sought reform. Finally, Aguinaldo stated the Philippine Islands sought "a definite separation" from Spain and that his government constituted "a Revolutionary Government" [ibid.:233-234]. Aguinaldo further explained that the revolutionary government was provisionary and that it should be reorganized after the recognition of its independence by all nations, including Spain. Aguinaldo claimed that the Philippines had "resources and energy sufficient to … claim a modest, though worthy, place in the concert of free nations" [ibid.:235].

The decree had an "additional clause" in which Aguinaldo designed the revolutionary committee outside of the Philippine Islands to pursue the recognition of the belligerency and independence through diplomacy [Epistola 1996:47]. Aguinaldo also expected the committee to inform the Philippine government of "grave matters occurring abroad" and to recommend necessary reforms "to raise the political and civil institutions of the Philippines to the level of modern progress" (Epistola [1996:48]; Taylor [1971c:198]).

Through Aguinaldo's message, Mabini sought information and insights from abroad to modernize Philippine institutional arrangements, aside from the committee's diplomatic works, partly because Manila had lost contact with the outside world when Commodore Dewey cut the marine cable during his squadron's May 1 attack on Manila. He restored it only on August 20, 1898 [Agoncillo 1960:211, 214].

When it lost the direct link abroad for almost four months, the revolutionary government depended on the committee in Hong Kong for communication abroad [Ueno 2015:36]. Suffering from an irresponsible consul in Hong Kong (i.e., Wildman), the visible buildup of American military forces on the islands, and the Manila revolutionary government's limited understanding of public opinion outside of the islands, Agoncillo proposed a diplomatic mission to the United States.

3.2 The proposal for the diplomatic mission

Agoncillo accelerated his efforts to convince the government to send an official mission to the United States amid disturbing events developing around his government's plea for independence. The Spanish government sought peace with the United States on July 22 and received a message from the US government with several conditions for terminating the hostilities, without communicating with Aguinaldo's government [Epistola 1996:53-54]. However, facing this alarming turn of events, Filipinos abroad failed to consolidate their positions [Agoncillo 1960:115]. Afraid of possible abandonment by the United States, some even

suggested that the government surrender to the Americans and allow the United States to annex the Philippine Islands. For instance, Basa and others attempted to send a letter to President McKinley asking the United States to annex the Philippine Islands, whereas Agoncillo and others strongly opposed their move. Agoncillo wrote to Aguinaldo to explain the situation in Hong Kong and sought the latter's instructions on the means to achieve interdependence [Taylor 1971c:259-260].

Before the guidance concerning the United States, Agoncillo received a letter explaining the situation regarding the declaration of independence. This is because, in the postscript of the letter dated August 2, Agoncillo asked Mabini if the Aguinaldo government had sent "a diplomatic note" to "the foreign consuls informing them of said proclamation [of independence]", as well as their replies to the note, and asked him if he had "a copy of said note" [ibid.:264].

The revolutionaries in the Islands seem to have failed to send such a note to the consuls in Manila and the committee in Hong Kong, although Aguinaldo wrote a letter to Dewey on July 15 asking him to forward Aguinaldo's decrees of June 18 and 23 to the United States and his friendly message to the American nation [Agoncillo 1960:239]. In response to Agoncillo's request, Aguinaldo wrote him a letter and attached the Act of Proclamation of Independence and "a manifesto to the foreign governments" [Taylor 1971c:189]. Aguinaldo instructed Agoncillo to publish the documents in the Hong Kong newspapers and bring the originals to the United States [ibid.]. In the manifesto, Aguinaldo asserted the following:

> The undersigned, availing himself of the powers vested in him as [the] President of the revolutionary Government of the Philippines, in the name and on behalf of the Philippine nation implores the aid of all the powers of the civilized world begging them fervently to formally recognize the belligerency of the revolution and the independence of the Philippines. [ibid.:188].

In his letter dated August 7, Aguinaldo told Agoncillo to go to the United States "as soon as possible" but also instructed Agoncillo not to "establish himself as an ambassador until the indicated arrangement is carried out" [ibid.:189].

Instead of appointing Agoncillo as ambassador to the United States, Aguinaldo set up the Revolutionary Committee in Hong Kong and appointed Agoncillo to the position of "correspondent" to the United States on August 10, 1898, together with other correspondents in Paris, London, and Australia (Epistola [1996:47]; Taylor [1971c:197]). On the same day, Aguinaldo instructed Theodorico Sandico, a member of the Hong Kong committee's managing board, to find a way for Filipinos in Hong Kong to "act in unity" and stated that the revolutionary government's policy was the struggle for independence, not protection or annexation [Taylor 1971c:196].

Instead of leaving Hong Kong soon after receiving Aguinaldo's letter, Agoncillo stayed in Hong Kong and wrote a telegram to President McKinley via Consul Wildman as well as two letters to Aguinaldo and Mabini. In his August 15 telegram to President McKinley as "High Commissioner and Ambassador Extraordinary representing the Provisional Government Philippine Islands [sic]", Agoncillo wrote, "I assure the United States of the allegiance and unquestioning support of our people, and petition that we are granted one or more [Filipino] representatives on the commission that is to decide the future of our islands" [ibid.:669-670]. By "the commission", Agoncillo meant the commission to be held in Paris to discuss the peace treaty ending the Spanish–American War. At the time of the commission's organization, the US and Spanish governments excluded representatives from the Philippines, although the Americans did not yet have a fixed policy toward the Philippine Islands.

Agoncillo explained the situation and his observations on it in a separate letter dated on the same day but addressed it to Aguinaldo. In this letter, Agoncillo stated, "Our country is at present in a lamentable condition" because Spain and the United States had agreed the Spanish–American commission should decide the future of the Philippine Islands without including representatives from the Philippines [ibid.:670].

Interestingly, Agoncillo also explained his action by saying, "I am confident that you will approve my action. I wish you could immediately send me my appointment in accordance with the above-mentioned telegram and let me know the date of the establishment of our provisional government" [ibid.:672]. He also confessed, "I have not received a letter from you for a long time, and I am in complete ignorance about events there and about all of you" [ibid.:670]. Based on what he wrote in this letter, Agoncillo had proclaimed himself ambassador without official appointment from President Aguinaldo when he wrote a telegram to President McKinley on August 15.

As if reflecting his anxiety about his action, Agoncillo also wrote to Mabini to ask for approval of his action to send a telegram to McKinley through Consul Wildman and asked about the revolutionary government's preparations for the peace talks between the two countries. Agoncillo again expressed his disappointment but proposed that the revolutionary government send a mission to Paris to represent the Philippine government at the commission to discuss the peace treaty (Epistola [1996:55-57]; Taylor [1971c:668]).

Agoncillo received a reply from Aguinaldo directing the former to go to the United States. Before carrying out the mission to the United States, Agoncillo reiterated his request for his appointment as an ambassador (as he had described himself in his previous telegram to President McKinley) in his letter of August 26 [Taylor 1971d:2]. In his biography of Galicano Apacible, who succeeded Agoncillo when the latter left for Washington, DC, Alzona [1971:65] wrote that Apacible returned from the Philippines and brought the news of Agoncillo's appointment as "Minister Plenipotentiary to the Paris Peace Conference", though he did not provide the source of this description.

Agoncillo seemed to have gone to the United States as an "official representative" of the Philippine government, instead of as ambassador [Taylor 1971d:25]. The documents Taylor edited do not contain the document confirming Agoncillo's appointment. That the letter Agoncillo addressed to President McKinley dated October 3 does not include a title before his name is also important. This was not the case in the cablegram from Hong Kong dated August 15. In the letter he filed to the Paris Commission, he introduced himself as having "the post of Official Representative to the very Honorable President and Government of the United States of America" [ibid.:11, 25]. Agoncillo went to the United States with an appointment as a correspondent, as the August 10 decree prescribed. In the letter dated August 30, Aguinaldo instructed Agoncillo to suggest the name of someone who might act as their representative at the conference in Paris and told Agoncillo that he would send the credentials to that person [Agoncillo 1960:316].

Interestingly, Aguinaldo suggested that Agoncillo ask the Americans for their help in the same way that the Americans received French government support during their battle for independence from the British [ibid.]. Agoncillo thereafter used the example of American independence when he argued his case for Philippine independence.

4. Claim for independence in Washington, DC, and Paris

Agoncillo left Hong Kong with Salvador Lopez as his aide on September 2 and arrived in Washington, DC, on September 27. They met President McKinley on October 1, though not as representatives of the Philippine government but as private citizens (Agoncillo [1960:316-323]; Taylor [1971b:500]). Agoncillo reported that they "were well received" but were told they should talk with the commissioners in Paris. However, in the same report, Agoncillo revealed his pessimistic view of the situation by writing, "I think they will not grant us independence.… Prepare all that is necessary" [Taylor 1971d:14]. Agoncillo must have been disappointed that he could not see President McKinley as an official representative, which might have contributed to his pessimism about the Philippine independence, though he did not explain what he encountered in detail.

Despite his pessimistic evaluation of the progress of US recognition of Philippine independence, Agoncillo submitted a memorandum addressing President McKinley through the State Department, in which he explained the Philippine government's position. In the ten-paragraph memorandum, Agoncillo explained the Philippine-US relations (paras. 1 to 3), the Philippines' situation in the peace talks between Spain and the United States (paras. 4 and 5), and the Philippine claims that the Philippine government should participate in the peace talks (para. 6). In the latter part of the memorandum, he asserted that the Filipino people hoped the United States would recognize the Philippines' independence and belligerent rights against Spain (paras. 7 to 10) [ibid.:12-13].

Notably, Agoncillo explained that the Filipinos assisted the American forces against Spain "*as allies*, with the conviction that their personality would be recognized as well as their political, autonomous, and sovereign rights". To support his argument, he had used the argument in his previous communication with American officials in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Manila [ibid.:12].

In the memorandum, Agoncillo highlighted how the Filipinos had organized a legitimate government independent of Spain and the United States. He further asserted that the Philippine government had already been formed with de facto American recognition in the Philippines, although he could not provide substantial documents supporting his assertion of American recognition [ibid.]. Without further opportunities to negotiate with American government officials, he left Washington, DC, for Paris and continued his efforts in the city where the peace treaty was under discussion.

On October 22, Agoncillo reported from Paris to Hong Kong, informing the committee that the American commissioners in Paris "are aware of our aspiration" and that "Europe and America recognize now our civilization" [ibid.:15]. He sounded positive but also revealed the limits of what he could achieve in Paris by not mentioning an agreement but only awareness. Instead of recognizing the Philippines' right to belligerency and independence, they only recognized its civilization. In a separate letter that arrived in Hong Kong on November 19, Agoncillo claimed, "If our country should be retained by (the) Americans, I think independence will not be granted [to] us. Their ambition is great…. They have sent many soldiers to our country. Necessary for you to arrange immediately an expedition of arms" [ibid.:24].

After the commission finalized the peace treaty stating the transfer of the Philippine Islands from Spain to the United States, Agoncillo filed the Official Protests against the Paris Treaty [ibid.:25]. In the protest, Agoncillo claimed the Philippine government could not accept the treaty because it was never heard by the commission, which was an "unquestionable right" of the Philippine government [ibid.].

Agoncillo argued that the Spanish commissioners had no capacity to transfer their right to the Americans because "the Spanish Government has ceased to hold any dominion by deed and by right" after the proclamation of sovereignty on August 1, 1898, and the organization of the Philippine government, with its established effective control of the Islands [ibid.:27].[1] To support his assertion, aside from his claim regarding effective control of the Islands, he argued, "the Union of Spain and the Philippines was founded solely on two historical facts, in which the exclusive rights of the Filipinos to decide their own destiny was implicitly recognized" [ibid.:26].

[1] August 1 was the promulgation date of the Act of Independence after Aguinaldo's dictatorial government organized the towns [Agoncillo 1960:227].

First, he highlighted the Blood Treaty between Sikatuna and Miguel Lopez de Legazpi signed on March 12, 1565, as the initial document that bound Spain and the Philippines. In his study on Mabini, Majul introduced the Filipino revolutionaries' attempts to frame the revolution in legal discussions by highlighting the Blood Treaty, although Majul pointed out the problem of a lack of historical evidence backing the revolutionaries' contention [Majul 1996a:84-85]. The revolutionaries, including Agoncillo, claimed the treaty between the Philippines and Spain regulated their relations and that the revolutionaries took arms because the latter broke the treaty.

Second, Agoncillo focused on the Cadiz Constitution of Spain in 1812. Agoncillo claimed the Spanish authority had carried out "the violent deprivation of their [Filipino] rights" at the Cortes when the Spaniards drafted the Constitution of 1837. Legarda introduced the view of Spanish scholar–politician Franco Pi Y Margall, also a friend of Jose Rizal, to describe the Constitution of 1837 as retrogression of the Philippines from overseas territory to a colony [Legarda 2011:5]. Agoncillo asserted that the "Peninsular Public Powers (or the Spanish authority) attempted to impose their absolute sovereignty on the islands, the Filipinos protested energetically by force of arms, and from the first attempt in 1814, the struggle in defense of their political personality was implanted" [Taylor 1971d:26].

He asserted that the Filipino struggle for "political personality" had "lasted almost a hundred years" [ibid.]. Although Agoncillo did not elaborate on the struggle in his protest against the peace treaty, he must have meant the bloody uprising in Ilocos against the abolition of the Cadiz Constitution [Mojares 2006:412]. He might have been referring to the mutiny led by Mexican Captain Andres Novales, who claimed he was emperor of the Philippines, although it was suppressed within one day (Legarda [2011:4]; Claudio [2019:6]). By claiming a 100-year struggle, Agoncillo traced the origin of the struggle for Philippine independence to one of the earliest advocacies for native rights by the Filipino Spaniards, or the Spaniards born in the Philippine Islands in the early 19th century and the creoles moving from Mexico to the Philippine Islands [Mojares 2006:409-417].

After combing the history of the revolts against the Spanish authority in the early 19th century along with the independence movements from Spain in the late 19th century, which finally achieved effective control of the islands through the Philippine government, Agoncillo concluded that Spain had no authority to surrender or transfer rights over the islands, based on "the principles of the law of nations" [Taylor 1971d:27]. This notion of the principles of the law of nations shows Agoncillo's recognition of international law.

Believing the Filipinos to be the main actors in the struggle against Spain, Agoncillo gave the Americans not the role of their Spanish counterparts but merely that of arbitrators between the two nations of the Filipinos and Spaniards. Furthermore, Agoncillo claimed that the United States could not play the role

of "arbitrators as to the future of the Philippines" because it was once an ally in Spain's attack on the Philippines [ibid.]. He pointed out that the American troops in the Philippines recognized the Philippine flag and did not oppose "the formal proclamation of the Philippine nation" [ibid.:28]. He accused the Americans of questioning Philippine independence only "*after the danger*" had passed and pointed out that Admiral Dewey of the United States did not possess "disembarking forces" and depended on Aguinaldo's forces to prepare for disembarking by General Thomas Anderson's forces (italics in original in Taylor [ibid.:28-29]). Agoncillo also reminded the parties that the Americans did not oppose the Filipinos' proclamation of independence [ibid.:28].

His historical claims might not have been completely accurate, but this point was not debated at the time because the McKinley administration did not address Agoncillo's claims directly but rather simply neglected them. Avoiding diplomatic negotiations, McKinley instead relied on his Christian views and geopolitical calculations when he declared the benevolent assimilation on December 21, 1898 [Anastacio 2016:17]. Studying the legal design of the American colonial rule in the Philippine Islands, Anastacio [ibid.] argued it was a "benevolent imperialism" in which American colonial rulers organized a sovereign but not popular colonial state in the Philippines over the coming decades.

5. The American Revolution as a precedent of the Philippine Revolution

Agoncillo never gave up the fight, and he returned to the United States on December 25, or a few days after McKinley's declaration of benevolent assimilation, to prevent the US Senate from ratifying the treaty. He thereafter developed his argument mainly by using the case of the American War of Independence in the 18th century. In Washington, DC, Agoncillo, and Lopez sent six letters of request for an appointment with the Office of the Secretary of State but were ignored [de Ocampo 1977:87-118].

In a memorandum addressed to the secretary of state, Agoncillo briefly explained the situation in the Philippines and reiterated his position on Philippine independence. In the memorandum dated January 5, 1899, Agoncillo wrote, "the Philippine Republic was promulgated on June 18, 1898.… Its existence was formally announced to foreign powers on August 1, 1898." He explained that the Philippine Republic had established "a detailed system of government" over the entire archipelago except for Manila and Cavite, which American forces had occupied. Based on the government's organization and the effective control of the entire islands, he asserted that the Philippine Republic "should be welcomed to the family of the independent nation" [Taylor 1971d:33].

Faced with a series of rejections by the Department of State, Agoncillo wrote a long memorandum to the secretary of state, in which he maximized his knowledge of the law and described the history of the American War of Independence as an important precedent for the Philippine Revolution [de Ocampo 1977:118-121].

At first, he reiterated his argument of the 100-year struggle against Spanish rule, accusing Spain of depriving the Philippines of the right to self-government promised by the Blood Treaty of 1565 and the Cadiz Constitution of 1812.

Following this assertion, Agoncillo emphasized the relationship between the Philippine Revolution and the American Revolution. He argued that the Filipino revolutionaries were inspired by "the Declaration of Independence of the American people" and pointed out that the Philippine government had declared independence and organized a government controlling over almost the entire islands, whereas the Americans had declared independence while the British still occupied major ports [ibid.:118-119].

Agoncillo contended that the American occupation of Manila should not be the source of the American right over the territory because Manila's residents did not express their consent to be governed by the Americans. Rather, he argued, the government should derive its power "from the consent of the governed", according to the American precedents [Congress of the United States 1899:1321-1322]. He also cited the claim of former US Secretary of State Lewis Cass, who said that the capital city's occupation was not an issue as long as the United States could continuously occupy the majority of the country, although it may not sound so convincing to use the American annexation of New Mexico as an example for the cause of Philippine independence [ibid.:1322]. Agoncillo tried his best to remind the secretary of state about his predecessors' claim.

Agoncillo cited the words of several former U.S. secretaries of state to convince the current secretary to recognize Philippine independence (Congress of the United States [1899]; de Ocampo [1977:119-120]). He cited the words of Secretaries Edward Livingston of the Andrew Jackson administration and James Buchanan of the James K. Polk administration and reminded the current secretary that the United States has "always recognized de facto governments" [Congress of the United States 1899].

Aside from the American Revolution, Agoncillo used academic works on international law to support his contention. In terms of the definition of a "nation", Agoncillo referred to the books written by Robert Phillimore and James Kent and claimed that the Filipino nation met their definition; that is, a nation "is a people permanently occupying the definite territory, having a common government peculiar to themselves for the administration of justice and the preservation of internal order, and capable of maintaining relations with all other governments" [ibid.:1321-1322]. Based on this, Agoncillo claimed, "the Philippine Republic has been entitled to recognition as a separate national entity" since June 1898, when Aguinaldo declared independence and organized the revolutionary government.

Despite the neglect by the Department of State, Agoncillo tirelessly worked for his cause and became a lobbyist in Congress [Epistola 1996:44]. In his memorial to the Senate dated January 30, 1899, Agoncillo reiterated his contention that the Philippine government was entitled to national recognition after its establishment

of the government, considering "the rule of international law" (de Ocampo [1977:121-125]; Agoncillo [1960:363]). In the memorial, he explained the situation in the Philippine Islands. First, he argued, "the Philippine nation had achieved its independence free from any danger of losing it at the hands of the Spaniards, prior to the signing of the protocol" between the United States and Spain [Agoncillo 1960:364]. He reiterated his contention in his Official Protest against the Paris Treaty, in which he claimed that Spain had no power to transfer rights over the Philippine Islands because it had lost control over the islands before the protocol was ratified and the United States did not show any intention of gaining control over the islands.

Second, he supported his contention by referring to "several notable and exact American precedents" [ibid.:366]. He pointed out the precedent of the American Revolution, in which America warred with Great Britain and Spain joined the American side but occupied a certain British territory and demanded rights over it. On the Spanish claim, Agoncillo reminded his readers that Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Pinckney had argued, "It is contrary to the law of the nations for one nation engaged in a common cause with another to despoil its associate" [ibid.:367-368]. Agoncillo used the examples of the tripartite relationship among the United States, Great Britain, and Spain in the American Revolutionary War to explain the tripartite relationship among the Philippines, Spain, and the United States, and he claimed that the Philippines should retain the territory occupied by the United States during the Philippine Revolution.

Ignored by Congress, which ratified the treaty on February 6, 1899, Agoncillo and Lopez left Washington for Paris and continued their advocacy there, as well as in Washington and Hong Kong, until the last moment, when the Hong Kong Junta was dissolved and Agoncillo returned to the Philippine Islands in 1905.

6. Natural law or positive law

Why did Agoncillo become the first "diplomat" of the Philippines, instead of other intellectuals? Agoncillo was determined to seek independence, whereas some Filipinos in Hong Kong attempted to achieve protection from or annexation by the United States. Aguinaldo and Mabini understandably thought that Agoncillo was the most trustworthy representative to the United States.

One of the remaining questions was the missing appointment of Agoncillo as ambassador to the United States. Those who were familiar with the internal power struggle within the revolutionary government may speculate that Aguinaldo felt insecure about Agoncillo becoming too famous outside of the country. Instead of personal feelings, however, we may consider Mabini's and Agoncillo's different strategies for seeking independence. Majul noticed that Mabini had disagreed with Agoncillo when the latter argued that the Philippine government had established its sovereignty because Spain did not comply with the Blood Treaty [Majul 1996a:85-86]. Mabini argued that the Philippine Revolution was an expression

of natural law, following the examples of the American and French Revolutions [Majul 1996a]. In other words, Mabini developed his argument based on natural law and might have underestimated the mission's format, whereas Agoncillo attempted to build his position upon positive law and sought official recognition for his mission.

Agoncillo was familiar with the evolving international order, partly because he was in Hong Kong, unlike the leading figures in the Propaganda Movement in Spain or the revolutionaries in the Philippines. Hong Kong was a British colony, where various international agents from numerous countries and colonies lived and worked for commercial or diplomatic purposes. For instance, before Agoncillo arrived in Hong Kong, Jose Rizal had spent time with the exiles and also communicated with the British about his idea of creating a colony for British refugees in North Borneo [Claudio 2019:17]. Indeed, Agoncillo approached the American consul and left an impression, which prompted the consul to introduce Agoncillo as a "diplomat" in his official cable to the State Department. This intriguing cable sent from Hong Kong was the only official American document to record Agoncillo's name as a diplomat in the voluminous records edited by Taylor [1971a; 1971b; 1971c; 1971d].

Agoncillo tirelessly wrote formal letters to government officials, while the propagandists engaged public opinion through newspapers. Although Agoncillo failed in submitting a letter of credentials in the United States, he prepared a formal protest against the Paris Peace Treaty. He also submitted documents explaining the cause of Philippine independence, addressing the U.S. president, secretary of state, and Congress. In these documents, he strove to base his argument on his legal knowledge, as well as history, especially the American Revolution. Although his documents may not necessarily be accurate by today's academic standards and were not supported by written documents to prove his points, they clearly showed his efforts to support the Philippine Revolution using the framework of positive law. His efforts and the complete neglect by the McKinley administration ironically revealed the nature of the Filipino struggle against the Americans to be as a struggle between nationalists in a colony seeking legitimacy in the international community and imperialists in an independent state imposing their will with physical force.

Interestingly, Agoncillo used the American Revolution as the precedent to support his argument for the Philippine Revolution in these documents. His contemporaries in the Philippine Revolution recognized that history was an important subject for nation-building. For instance, Jose Rizal studied the pre-colonial Philippines and published Antonio Morga's historical study on the Philippine Islands, whereas Felipe Calderon—the principal author of the constitution of the Philippine Republic—organized an association of historians under American colonial rule [Mojares 2006:453, 475-477]. Historical knowledge provides substantial components of Agoncillo's diplomatic plea in his writing. In

this way, Agoncillo maximized his knowledge of history and law in his diplomatic mission, whereas his counterparts avoided negotiation and chose the imperialist path to suppress the Filipino people.

7. Conclusion

Sensing possible double-talk by the American consul, Agoncillo realized that the Philippine Republic should send a mission to the United States to break the deadlock that the revolutionaries faced in the Philippine Islands. He repeatedly asked the revolutionary government to appoint him as ambassador to project himself as a formal envoy because he believed that the appointment would empower him in Washington, DC, and Paris. Despite not receiving the appointment, he penned impressive protest letters, memoranda, and memorials addressed to the American authorities. He contextualized the Philippine Revolution in not only Philippine history but also American history, especially employing the American Revolution to convince the Americans to recognize Philippine independence. In Agoncillo's mission, we can find the nexus of nationalism and internationalism which would be the basis of diplomacy of modern states.

Legarda's study vividly reveals a contrasting view of the booming colonial economy and declining Spanish authority in the Philippine Islands. Somewhat similarly, Agoncillo's endeavors have shown the contrasting positions of colonial nationalists seeking independence via diplomatic means and imperialists in an independent state depending on crude physical force. Agoncillo's quixotic adventure failed in front of the imperialists but left a legacy of Philippine foreign policy for the independent Philippine Republic.

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