

**Book Review: Jose, Ricardo Trota.**  
***Philippine Army, 1935-1942.* Ateneo de Manila**  
**University Press, 1998.**

**The Nucleus of the Modern Philippine Army**

**Kevin Philippe C. SANTOS**

Independent scholar

[kevinphilippecsantos@gmail.com](mailto:kevinphilippecsantos@gmail.com) | [kevincordova.2096@gmail.com](mailto:kevincordova.2096@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0005-3506-0876>

**ABSTRACT**

This book review aims to examine and analyze the work of Ricardo Trota Jose, *Philippine Army, 1935-1942*. A highly regarded Filipino military historian, Dr. Jose examines the history of the Philippine Army during the Commonwealth era, leading to the outbreak of the Second World War in the Pacific. His work on this topic is one of the first books of its kind, since unlike other historical works written by Filipino and American historians and scholars, the author focused primarily on the development and buildup of the Philippine Army from its inception in 1935 to the outbreak of the War. This nascent army, with the full backing of the Commonwealth government with the assistance and leadership of its commander, Field Marshal Douglas MacArthur, was meant to be the first line of defense by the time the Philippines gained its independence in 1945. Beyond the military organization and planning, Ricardo Jose also included the factors that affected the growth of the army, and he provided both praise and criticism, whether they were Filipino or American officials. From interservice rivalry among the ranks of the Philippine Army and Constabulary, the insufficient budget, and the mistrust between Filipino and American officials, Jose's work on the Philippine Army during the pre-World War II era, which utilized primary sources from both Filipino and American accounts cemented his reputation as the author of the first comprehensive study of the topic upon its publication.

**Keywords:** *USAFFE, Second World War, War Plan Orange, Philippine Army*

**Introduction**



As President Quezon was sworn to be the inaugural President of the Philippine Commonwealth in 1935, he faced numerous complex challenges as the country embarked on its road to independence, and one of which was creating a respectable

defense force to safeguard the country's territorial integrity. Although the United States government still maintained the responsibility for the security of the Philippines, Quezon knew that it would be a matter of time before the Filipinos would be the ones to shoulder the burden of defending their motherland.<sup>1</sup> In the 1930s, even though the Second World War had not yet begun, it was already becoming, in fact, a matter of growing concern, as the U.S. and other European colonial powers, such as the British and the French were anxious about the growing military threat posed by the Empire of Japan in their colonial holdings in the Asia-Pacific Region. Quezon immediately implemented the National Defense Act of 1935 as one of his important decisions as the President of the Commonwealth, and together with his newly appointed military adviser, General Douglas MacArthur, devised the necessary steps in forming and organizing a new Philippine Army.<sup>2</sup> However, creating a modern military was not as easy. Quezon's Commonwealth Government and MacArthur himself would find the difficulties of procuring resources and training recruits an enormous venture to undertake. However, their views would clash on how the new army would be organized and trained.

In his book, Dr. Ricardo Jose discussed and analyzed the history of the formation of the Philippine Army of the Commonwealth in its early years until its surrender, together with their American allies in Bataan and Corregidor in 1942. Using primary sources from American and Filipino sources in the form of wartime documents, newspapers, and letters, to name a few, the author vividly illustrates the politics, optimism, and challenges that Filipino and American officials faced before the outbreak of the Pacific War regarding the organization of the Philippine Military.

### About the Author and the Literature

The author, Ricardo Trota Jose, obtained his Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in History from the University of the Philippines, Diliman. In 1995, he attained his post-doctorate in History and Asian Studies from Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. Throughout his career, Dr. Jose has been

<sup>1</sup> Theodore Friend, *Between Two Empires: The Ordeal of the Philippines, 1929-1946*, First Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 160-165; Frank Hindman Golay, *Face of Empire: United States-Philippine Relations, 1898-1946*, 3rd ed. (University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Southeast Asian Studies., 2010). 350-355. As part of the Tydings-McDuffie Law, the United States under President Franklin Roosevelt granted the Philippines a ten-year limited self-government before gaining its full independence in 1945. In the meantime, all foreign affairs and security issues of the Philippines would remain in the hands of the U.S. Government.

<sup>2</sup> Celedonio A. Ancheta, ed., *Triumph In The Philippines, 1941-1946: The Saga Of Bataan And Corregidor*, Historic Documents of World War II in the Philippines (Navotas, Metro Manila: National Book Store, 1978), 4-5; Augusto V. De Viana, *The Philippines (A Story of a Nation)*, First (Rex Book Store Inc, 2012), 263-265.

regarded as one of the Philippines' foremost military historians, particularly focusing on the involvement of the Philippines during the Second World War, which includes the socio-cultural aspects of the Japanese Occupation of the country. In addition, he is also a well-known historian in the field of diplomatic history, whose expertise involves the history of the foreign relations of Japan and the Philippines and the foreign policies of the Philippine Republic during the Cold War.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout his career, Dr. Jose has been involved in numerous literary and scholarly projects, including solo works, co-authored books, and joint projects. Among these were *The Philippine Army, 1935-1942*, *The Japanese Occupation. Vol. 7, Kasaysayan: The Story of the Filipino People, World War II and the Japanese Occupation: Ang Ikalawang Digmaang Pandaigdig at Ang Pananakop Ng Mga Hapon*, and *Philippine External Relations: A Centennial Vista*.<sup>4</sup> Aside from being a successful author, Dr. Jose has received numerous invitations to participate in various seminars and lectures, and even to conduct interviews with prominent local and foreign media groups to discuss his views on various subjects involving his expertise in Philippine military history.

Dr. Jose's *The Philippine Army, 1935-1942*, is divided into 10 chapters, most of which are in the time frame of 1935-1942. The book can be categorized into major themes, including the primary military and constabulary units before and after the inauguration of the Philippine Commonwealth. Also, it includes other support personnel, not limited to frontline personnel, such as from the Philippine Army Air Corps, military and signal personnel, and a small contingent of naval personnel. The other major theme of the book that intertwined with the discussion of the organization of the Philippine Army's infantry divisions was the plans and strategies MacArthur and his staff proposed or adapted from the U.S. Military.

Another major theme was the difficulties and challenges that Also, it includes other support personnel, not limited to frontline personnel, such as from the Philippine Army Air Corps, military and signal personnel, and a

<sup>3</sup> "Ricardo T. Jose," accessed March 6, 2025, <https://spheres.dost.gov.ph/profiles/691-ricardo-t-jose>; "Jose, Ricardo T. | Department of History," accessed April 8, 2025, <https://history.upd.edu.ph/?faculty=jose>.

<sup>4</sup> Ricardo T. Jose, *The Japanese Occupation. Vol. 7, Kasaysayan: The Story of the Filipino People*, vol. Volume 7, Kasaysayan: The Story of the Filipino People (Metro Manila: Asia Publishing Company Limited, 1998); Ricardo Trota Jose, *Philippine Army, 1935-1942* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998); Julkipli M. Wadi et al., *Philippine External Relations: A Centennial Vista*, ed. Aileen San Pablo Baviera, and Lydia N. Yu-Jose (Pasay City: Foreign Service Institute, 1998).

small contingent of naval personnel. the Filipino and American authorities faced in implementing their military programs and strategies. It includes insufficient and outdated military equipment, a lack of competent and experienced officers, and internal political infighting between MacArthur, Filipino Commonwealth leaders, and American officials. Lastly, the book's last chapters centered on integrating the Philippine Army into the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) and its last-minute preparations before the outbreak of the Pacific War.

## **Main Arguments/Themes of the Book**

### **A. Status of the security forces in the Philippines before 1935**

After the end of the Philippine-American War, the U.S. Government oversaw the security of its newly conquered territory by relying not only on its army and navy, but also on establishing native Filipino units that would support them in securing the countryside against banditry and potential local rebellions. The two notable units formed during this period were the Philippine Constabulary, which acted as the primary mobile force to patrol the islands, and the Philippine Scouts, which were trained alongside American military lines and equipped with modern small arms. Despite being considered by the U.S. colonial authorities as reliable and loyal natives, Dr. Jose noted that these units were not given equal pay or promoted regularly compared to their American counterparts. As a result of these unequal treatments and other grievances, there were some instances in which several Filipinos who belonged to these units, notably from the Scouts, showed their resentment and dissatisfaction. Fortunately, for the colonial authorities, there were no open revolts or rebellions that were led by members of the Philippine Scouts or by the constabulary.<sup>5</sup>

In Chapter 1 of the book, Jose observed that despite the potential dangers of local rebellions and the threat of external threats such as from Japan, the United States Government never sought to increase its troop numbers in the Philippines, since the American garrison on the island. This is because he pointed out that the Philippine Department (the name of the U.S. Army garrison in the islands) managed to showcase itself as a deterrent in quashing

---

<sup>5</sup> One of those instances occurred in 1924 when a small group of Filipino Scouts at Fort McKinley conducted a 'silent mutiny' against their officers. It was labelled by the writer of this review as a 'silent mutiny' since the actions of that small group were mostly refusing to obey orders from their American officers when it came to drills and training.

With the help of promises of reforms and consultations led by no other than General MacArthur, the mutineers returned to their regular duties, and a few ring leaders were given lengthy prison sentences. For further details of the 1924 mutiny, see Chapter 7 written by Richard Meixsel in Karl Hack and Tobias Rettig's *Colonial Armies in Southeast Asia*, 1st edition, Routledge Studies in the Modern History of Asia (London: Routledge, 2005).

any dissent and rebellions. These units include the Filipino Scouts and, alongside the Philippine Constabulary, fought and quelled any threats from the agrarian groups in the late 1920s and early 1930s and from Muslim Moro groups in Mindanao.<sup>6</sup>

### **B. The U.S. point of view in defending the Philippines**

Dr. Jose presented the narrative, which was accepted not only in the academic community but also among the policymakers in Washington D.C., before the outbreak of the Pacific War, that the United States was hesitant to deploy troops and military resources to the Philippines. The declassified diplomatic and military cables and books that were published by retired U.S. military officials who served in the Philippines during the war revealed that the U.S. Government was contemplating accepting the loss of the Philippines.<sup>7</sup> Instead, it would shift its defensive line along Alaska and Midway Island in the case of war against the Japanese.<sup>8</sup>

While not entirely critical of the pessimism of the American officials' view of the Philippines, the author tried to remain impartial as he explained the context of the U.S. position before the war. Dr. Jose wrote that the United States was unprepared for war during the 1930s, as its military suffered substantial budget cuts, and President Roosevelt and his administration focused more on domestic issues. Adding to the woes of the U.S. and Filipino forces in the Philippines, the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe and the eventual conquest of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy of most of Europe did not give the Roosevelt Administration a respite.<sup>9</sup> As historians such as Morton, Agoncillo, and Norman & Norman pointed out in their respective works despite the partial mobilization of the U.S. military, such as its navy, army air corps, and eventually the gradual mass production of war material in American factories, the U.S. Government faced a significant

---

<sup>6</sup> In Chapter 1 of the book, Jose discusses the history of the Filipino military units and paramilitary units that were serving under the U.S. flag before the inauguration of the Philippine Commonwealth.

<sup>7</sup> The author accessed various primary sources which include repositories, declassified diplomatic cables, and private and official correspondences among Filipino and American civil and military bureaucrats of that period. In the book, he acknowledged several of these such as the Philippine Army, Historical Division, National Library of the Philippines, U.S. National Archives, and diaries, letters, and reports, of General Eisenhower, High Commissioner Sayre, and the *Wainwright Papers*.

<sup>8</sup> Louis Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines*, World War 2 50th Anniversary Commemorative Edition (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 1993), [https://history.army.mil/html/books/005/5-2-1/CMH\\_Pub\\_5-2-1.pdf](https://history.army.mil/html/books/005/5-2-1/CMH_Pub_5-2-1.pdf); William H. Bartsch, *December 8, 1941: MacArthur's Pearl Harbor*, Reprint edition, Williams-Ford Texas A&M University Military History Series (Book 87) (Texas A&M University Press, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Jose, *Philippine Army*, 126–130.

dilemma regarding which on theatres and fronts should its army and navy should prioritize in the event of a two-front war in the Pacific and Europe.<sup>10</sup>

### C. MacArthur and the Organization of the Philippine Army

As the book slowly progressed toward its central theme, which is the establishment of the Philippine Army in 1935, Ricardo Jose narrated a brief yet staunch debate in the Philippine Congress on the purpose of having a national army. The discussion would also tackle the army's role in foreign and defense policy once the Philippine Commonwealth transitioned to become a fully pledged sovereign state. The author did not hesitate to point out the naivete and inexperience of several Filipino politicians and even lobby groups, such as those who formed semi-paramilitary groups and advocates of robust armed forces. These debates would cause further anxiety to future President Quezon, who had many domestic issues to deal with once the Commonwealth was formally inaugurated in 1935. However, at the same time, it could not avoid or abandon the issue concerning national defense because the country might get caught in the middle of a war between the United States and the Empire of Japan.

Accepting the limitations of his abilities and the unpreparedness of his government officials to understand how to protect the country's sovereignty from a potential invasion from a foreign power, Quezon decided that he needed to find someone in the United States to oversee the defense preparation of the Philippines, in one of his final independence missions before the inauguration of the Philippine Commonwealth Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, General Douglas MacArthur. He offered MacArthur the position of head of a military mission to advise the Philippine Commonwealth regarding military matters and to head the buildup of the Philippine army, since the general would officially retire from service in 1937. Quezon accepted MacArthur's extravagant demands in exchange for his service, including the rank of Field Marshal in the Philippine Army. This enormous

---

<sup>10</sup> Teodoro A. Agoncillo, *The Fateful Years: Japan's Adventure in the Philippines, 1941-45 (Volume 1)*, Second Edition, 1st vols. (Quezon City, 2010, see pages 20-23 of Chapter I, 14-16 of Chapter I & 41-42, 62-63 of Chapter II.); Louis Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines, World War 2 50th Anniversary Commemorative Edition* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1993), [https://history.army.mil/html/books/005/5-2-1/CMH\\_Pub\\_5-2-1.pdf](https://history.army.mil/html/books/005/5-2-1/CMH_Pub_5-2-1.pdf), see pages 12-13 of Chapter I, 14-16 of Chapter I & 34-37 of Chapter III. Michael Norman and Elizabeth M. Norman, *Tears in the Darkness: The Story of the Bataan Death March and Its Aftermath* (Farrar Straus Giroux, 2009), see pages 35-38 & 55-59 of Chapter II;

During the Second World War, the most significant air component of the U.S. military was the U.S. Army Air Corps, which was initially under the U.S. Army structure. However, as the war progressed, it would slowly become a semi-independent branch of its armed forces. Only in 1947 did President Truman approve the formation of the U.S. Air Force as the primary and most significant air force component of the U.S. Military.

salary is extravagant for a military adviser, even with his stature and luxurious accommodations in the Manila Hotel.<sup>11</sup>

Already possessed with some background knowledge of the geography of the Philippines through his military service in the Philippines in the early decades of the 1900s, MacArthur garnered much political credibility through his familiarity with local politicians such as from Quezon, Osmena, and other notable members of the President's political party, the *Nacionalista* Party. Like other Filipino and American historians and scholars, Jose accepted that MacArthur's popular war hero status among the American public and its military was not only a significant coup for the Philippine Commonwealth. However, he noted that it was a political victory that strengthened Quezon's credibility for his post-independence plans for the Philippines.<sup>12</sup>

As the first military camps were planned out and the first trainees were being formed, some sectors of Filipino society, notably the business community and the media, were encouraged to promote the development of the army. While some historians, notably the American ones, understandably wrote in their respective books and journals that the first units of the Philippine Army in 1936 (even those formed by 1941) were poorly trained and equipped, Jose argued that this should not come as a surprise.<sup>13</sup>

He stated that countries like the Philippines, whose budget was not that large and at the time was still under American direct supervision, could not have rapidly built a strong army. Furthermore, the author blamed

<sup>11</sup> Jose, *Philippine Army, 1935-1942*, 37-40. These terms were documented in the RG 1 section of the MacArthur Memorial which is titled 'Memorandum of the Terms of Agreement between the President of the Philippine Commonwealth and General MacArthur'.

At that time these were just mere allegations but years after the war, newly released documents showed that MacArthur did demand and agreed to these salaries, allowances, and other privileges that he deemed fit for a field marshal. Jose was not the first historian to publish this since he cited scholars and documents that confirmed these allegations which includes Richard Connaughton's, *MacArthur and Defeat in the Philippines*, 44-45. Frank Hindman Golay's, *Face of Empire: United States-Philippine Relations, 1898—1946*, 352-354; Stanley Karnow's, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines*, 463-466;

MacArthur was lambasted in the press even before the outbreak of the war when his salaries and allowances totaled ₱66,000 a year, and his excessive demands began to surface in both Filipino and American news media. Some World War 2 American commanders like Dwight Eisenhower, who served as an aide to the Field Marshal in the Philippines, criticized MacArthur for acting beyond the norms of a standard American general.

<sup>12</sup> Jose, *Philippine Army, 1935-1942*, 37-45. The author remarked that the reasons for appointing MacArthur to head the military mission to organization the Philippine Army could net positive consequences since he was still part of the U.S. Army until his retirement in 1937 which he could have used his position to lobby for additional equipment for the Filipinos which the Roosevelt Administration was hesitant to approve.

<sup>13</sup> These include the sources that were part of this review notably Chapter 11 pages 350-354 of Golay's, *Face of Empire*; Chapter 10 - *MacArthur's Mandate* in Karnow's, *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines*, 463-466; Chapter 1 pages 8-13 of Morton's *The Fall of the Philippines*,

MacArthur for boasting to Quezon during their meetings in 1934 that the future Philippine Army could be established and trained with an annual budget of ₱16 million. Contributing to this optimism was the belief held by MacArthur that the U.S. Government would provide sufficient military instructors drawn from the Philippine Division and supply equipment to the nascent Filipino Army—if not free of charge, then at least a considerable discount to align with the budget allocated by Quezon's Government.<sup>14</sup>

Dr. Jose's arguments were not only supported by historians and scholars of the post-war period, but they were widely discussed, criticized, and reported by newspaper publications in Manila, such as the *Manila Bulletin*, *The Tribune*, and the *Philippine Free Press*, Filipino civil and military officials such as General Alfredo Lim, and even by members of the American military mission in the Philippines particularly General Eisenhower. These primary sources, combined with careful examination and analysis, illustrate how the author was keen on providing substantial and credible pieces of evidence on how he wrote the narrative of his arguments and his justifications behind them.

#### **D. Problems and Weaknesses of the Philippine Army**

As the book progressed towards 1941, Jose discussed the various issues that plagued the formation of the Philippine Army. Other historians like Teodoro A. Agoncillo, Louis Morton, Richard Connaughton, Michael, and Elizabeth Norman pointed out that the Philippine Army, though large on paper, was ill-prepared to fight the Japanese, not only because they were equipped with outdated weaponry and had virtually no combat experience, unlike their Japanese opponents.<sup>15</sup> While their arguments were accurate, Jose offered another way of examining the army's shortcomings, which he alluded to the mistrust and political disagreements among Filipino and American officials. Jose heavily analyzed and discussed the latter two factors. Using his expertise in military history, he was able to identify the politics behind the internal conflict among senior military and political officials of both countries.

The book discussed the foremost problem: the insufficient budget allocated by the Commonwealth Government to the Philippine Army. President Quezon was aware that the islands' security was a concern since his government was still relying on the United States to provide external

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 6 and 7 of Jose's book which he utilized various primary sources involving in this topic.

<sup>15</sup> Agoncillo, *The Fateful Years*, 60-62; Connaughton, *MacArthur and Defeat in the Philippines*, 63-65 & 72-75; Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines*, 9-12 & 25-28; Norman and Norman, *Tears in the Darkness*, 53-61 & 73-75;

security in the event of a foreign invasion. Nonetheless, the ₱16 million annual budget was not enough from the start of the training programs and weapons acquisition that MacArthur and his staff planned.<sup>16</sup>

Dr. Jose did not spare any criticism of the field marshal for his grandiose designs on how he envisioned the Philippine Army would be. First, it was pointed out that MacArthur's vision of having a large reserve force of 200,000 soldiers was too large for the given budget.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the author brought up the mistrust and hesitations of the U.S. Government to assist the Philippine Army, since they thought that if the Commonwealth had a large trained army, Quezon would utilize it as his private army to suppress or intimidate domestic opposition.<sup>18</sup> Also worth mentioning is the perception of the American authorities that if the Filipinos were given proper military training and were equipped with modern weapons, it might threaten U.S. interests in the Philippines, including their military bases, as part of the Tydings-McDuffie Law.<sup>19</sup>

In the last chapters of the book, in July 1941, President Roosevelt approved the integration of the Philippine Army into the U.S. Military under the newly formed command, the USAFFE, with MacArthur being recalled from retirement to lead the formation. Jose observed and examined the increase of American reinforcements in the form of troops and supplies to the Philippines, which delighted Quezon, who was finally relieved that the security of the Philippines was being taken seriously by the Americans. While the significant increase in American military presence in the Philippines boosted the country's defenses, the author did not mince his words that it was too little and too late for it to affect the development of the Philippine Army.<sup>20</sup> This is because, by the end of 1941, the Japanese launched their invasion of the islands. Despite the frantic preparation and last-minute training by Filipino soldiers, it would not be enough, as they would eventually be driven back to the Bataan Peninsula. Jose did not solely blame the lack of experience and training of the Filipinos for being outclassed by

<sup>16</sup> Agoncillo, *The Fateful Years*, 85-87, 121-122, 126-128, and 146-150.

<sup>17</sup> These problems and challenges in the built up of the Philippine Army can be primarily read from Chapters 5-7 of Dr. Jose's book.

<sup>18</sup> Jose, *Philippine Army, 1935-1942*, 64-65, 96-97 & 104-105; Golay, *Face of Empire*, 351-352.

<sup>19</sup> Connaughton, *MacArthur and Defeat in the Philippines*, 75-78; De Viana, *The Philippines*, 263-265; Golay, *Face of Empire*, 388-389 & 402-403. Part of the conditions of the law is even if the Philippines gained its independence at the end of the 10 year transition period, the United States will be granted several areas in the islands that will be used as naval and fueling stations or outposts in the future.

<sup>20</sup> Supporting Jose's analysis were declassified documents taken from the U.S. National Archives were the following "Memorandum for the President" (National Archives and Records Administration, February 11, 1941), <https://s3.amazonaws.com/NARAprodstorage/opastorage/live/24/6187/16618724/content/arcmedia/presidential-libraries/roosevelt/psf/psfa0444.pdf>.

the Japanese, since the former fought the invaders to a standstill in several areas in the first weeks of the Luzon campaign. Rather, it was the indecisiveness of MacArthur in the early hours of the war to formulate a response that, in the end, would force him to adopt War Plan Orange, which he had previously discarded for being a defeatist strategy.<sup>21</sup>

## Analysis and Examination

### a.) Methodology and Data Gathering of the Research

The author utilized primary sources from autobiographies of prominent American and Filipino civil and military officials of that time. Adding to the credibility and historical accuracy of his work was the ability of author to visit several libraries and archival repositories both in the Philippines and in the United States. He included sources from the Japanese point of view, which he cross-referenced and analyzed to ensure that their perspectives aligned with the theme of the book. In his data collection for the literature of his book, Dr. Jose utilized diverse primary sources. He included newspaper and periodical journals that were printed in the 1930s and 1940s, which include *Philippine Free Press*, *Philippine Magazine*, *The Philippines Herald*, and *The Tribune*, to name a few.

Aside from these print news media sources, the author was fortunate to access declassified World War Two documents from the U.S. Military, State Department, U.S. Congressional Records, and correspondences from the White House. Furthermore, the author was visited and interviewed surviving Filipino and American veterans from the war and visit battlefields and military camps where the Filipino and American personnel operated before the outbreak of the Second World War.

The book *The Philippine Army, 1935-1942*, was researched and written as the author presents all the arguments and viewpoints that are backed by the primary sources and other data that are available to the author. Ricardo Jose did not spare any criticisms for both Filipino and American officials alike, while at the same time praising the personalities that he mentioned in the book. In addition, while today's historians and scholars can now view the decisions and events during the Second World War through hindsight, the way the author discusses his analysis in the book does not foreshadow or skip the events not part of the given year. Instead, he narrates his explanation chronologically, allowing his readers to understand the context of the events without delving into future events that are not yet in the timeframe of a specific chapter in the book.

---

<sup>21</sup> Jose, *Philippine Army, 1935-1942*, 210-221.

### **b.) Differentiating From Other Similar Works**

Dr. Ricardo Jose's work has a few noticeable similarities and differences in how it was written and analyzed from other books that focused on the theme and narrative of the Japanese Invasion of the Philippines in 1941-1942.

Filipino military historians, such as Carlos Quirino, *Filipinos at War*, and Uldarico S. Baclagon, *Military History of the Philippines*, wrote comprehensive chapters about the Filipino-American and Japanese military campaigns conducted during the Philippine Campaign of 1941-1942. Unfortunately, both historians briefly discussed the status of the Philippine Army, such as MacArthur's appointment and the army's deficiencies, before largely focusing on the USAFFE's formation and its buildup before Pearl Harbor.<sup>22</sup> Louis Morton's *The Fall of the Philippines* discusses a lengthy chapter on the status of the Philippines and its defenses before the outbreak of the war. Among those are the state of the Philippine Army before its integration into USAFFE. Relying more on U.S. military documents that were partially released at the time of the publication of his book (1952), Morton wrote that the army led by MacArthur was still in its inception as the preparations for the defense of the Philippines were still being planned which includes the air force and a fleet of mobile torpedo boats.<sup>23</sup> In addition, the author mentioned that MacArthur was optimistic about the capabilities of the Philippine Army in the event of war, even though most of the personnel and officers of the army had no training in military science and were ill-equipped. Ricardo Jose provided further elaboration in his book, since he had the benefit of accessing both Filipino and American primary sources released mainly to the public by the 1990s.

Similar to Morton's book, in Celedonio A. Ancheta's *Triumph In The Philippines, 1941-1946: The Saga Of Bataan And Corregidor*, the author dedicated two chapters of the book to narrating the background of the Philippines before the war. The forces were available then to defend the islands against external threats. While the pre-war army of the Philippine Commonwealth is not as comprehensively discussed, Ancheta wrote a chapter about the Japanese military strategy in the event of war with the Americans. It includes how they would attack the American defenses in the Philippines while at the same time relying on Japanese spies and other 'fifth

---

<sup>22</sup> Carlos Quirino, *Filipinos at War* (Manila: Vera-Reyes, 1981); Uldarico S. Baclagon, *Military History of the Philippines* (Manila: Saint Mary's Publishing, 1975). See Chapters VII to X of Baclagon's book.

<sup>23</sup> Morton, *The Fall of the Philippines*, 1-13.

column' elements among the Filipino society to carry out sabotage and espionage in the event of war.<sup>24</sup>

One of the popular pieces of literature on the history of the Second World War in the Philippines was Teodoro Agoncillo's *The Fateful Years: Japan's Adventure in the Philippines, 1941-45*.<sup>25</sup> The book briefly discussed the preparations of the Philippine Commonwealth in building up its army before the inauguration of the USAFFE, which includes the status of the Philippine Army before 1941 and what policies Quezon and MacArthur sought to integrate various civil agencies into the development of the army. This includes the establishment of the Civilian Emergency Agency (CEA), which was included in Jose's book as the Philippine Commonwealth wanted the civilian population to be informed and prepared in the event of an invasion. Agoncillo also included, unlike other authors that were mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the disagreements between Filipino and American officials on numerous issues, from inadequate budget, outdated weaponry, and even the issue of supreme authority over the Philippine Army.

From the books that were mentioned, it is clear that Dr. Jose's work on the topic of the Philippine Army during the Commonwealth years before the war was more comprehensively written compared to others. What can be observed from those works of literature is that they only dedicated a few dozen pages and one or two chapters to the army before its integration into the USAFFE and the outbreak of conflict on December 8, 1941.

### c.) Strengths and Weaknesses of the Book

As was mentioned in the earlier subsection, the sources of the book that Jose gathered were credible and reliable, notably the primary sources that were previously declassified by the U.S. government or have not yet been published like in the case of autobiographies of those personalities that were not considered as notable military and civilian officials of the era. Instead, Dr. Jose includes the perspectives of lower-ranking military personnel and other ordinary Filipino civilians who were either involved or witnessed the topic by relying on comments made through newspaper and periodical articles.

The work of the author in researching the pre-war Commonwealth Army's narrative history can rarely be compared to other historical literature of its kind, especially when it was first released in 1998. Undoubtedly, many historians and scholars have written various books and other research about

<sup>24</sup> Celedonio A. Ancheta, ed., *Triumph In The Philippines, 1941-1946: The Saga Of Bataan And Corregidor*, Historic Documents of World War II in the Philippines (Navotas, Metro Manila: National Book Store, 1978), 1-14.

<sup>25</sup> Agoncillo, *The Fateful Years*, 41-65.

the Philippine Campaign of 1941-1942. However, it must be pointed out that most of these, if not all, discussed briefly the buildup of the Philippine Army. Hence, any mention of the topic was overshadowed by the establishment of the USAFFE and last-minute preparations before the outbreak of war.

One of the few weaknesses the reviewer observed was the lack of a Japanese perspective on the buildup of the Philippine Army from 1935 to the eve of the Pacific War. Even though after the Second World War, the U.S. military authorities in Japan gained access to and confiscated the documents and repositories of the Japanese government, the author seemed to face a considerable language barrier. This is because some of the views of the Japanese government are not limited to its official documents and military plans; they also include newspaper and periodical articles that were printed during the given timeframe of the book.

## Conclusion

From December 1941 to its eventual surrender in June 1942, the Philippine Army fought alongside their American counterparts as best as they could. The mostly ill-trained and ill-equipped Filipinos tried to supplement their deficiencies with bravery and determination to hold out against much more well-experienced and well-supplied Japanese forces. Despite all of the possible alternatives and hindsight that current historians and scholars may argue, Dr. Ricardo Jose wrote in his book that the Philippine Army could have fought more effectively if it had been trained and appropriately equipped. Nevertheless, the author methodologically explained that despite their best intentions, the blame falls on the shoulders of the Filipino Commonwealth officials, led by Quezon and his American advisers, led by MacArthur. He argued that if these civil and military officials were more realistic in their goals of organizing the army and its strategy to defend the Philippines, then it would decrease the mistrust and rivalries between Filipino and American officials alike.

Fifty-three years after the end of the war, to the year that Dr. Jose's book was published, he proved that despite a plethora of books relating to the Philippine Campaign of 1941-1942 that were written, other topics have not yet been thoroughly researched in regards to the topic. His work about the history of the organization of the Philippine Army from its beginnings in 1935 to 1942 was a significant addition to the rich collection of scholarly works and books that focus on the theme of the Second World War in the Philippines. This book does not solely revolve around the military aspect of the army, such as its weapons, strategies, and organizations. However, it examines how political decisions, economic needs, and international

diplomacy are crucial when it comes to enhancing professionalism and recognizing the needs of the Philippine Military.

To conclude the review, the goal of writing this book was not an ideological or politically motivated one. But Ricardo Jose wanted his readers, particularly those who are involved in the study and affairs of foreign policy and national defense that when it comes to preparing the Philippines for an eventual conflict against an external threat, there are many aspects, even the non-military ones, are need to be factored in. After all, if there are important lessons that are required to be learned from the book, it is that patriotism, nationalism, and optimism that the United States would defend the Philippines in the event of war will not be sufficient to protect the country and its people from sheer scale destruction and malevolent actions of modern war. ★

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agoncillo, Teodoro A. *The Fateful Years: Japan's Adventure in the Philippines, 1941-45 (Volume 1)*. Second Edition. 1st vols. Quezon City, 2010.
- Ancheta, Celedonio A., ed. *Triumph In The Philippines, 1941-1946: The Saga Of Bataan And Corregidor*. Historic Documents of World War II in the Philippines. Navotas, Metro Manila: National Book Store, 1978.
- Baclagon, Uldarico S. *Military History of the Philippines*. Manila: Saint Mary's Publishing, 1975.
- Bartsch, William H. *December 8, 1941: MacArthur's Pearl Harbor*. Reprint edition. Williams-Ford Texas A&M University Military History Series (Book 87). Texas A&M University Press, 2012.
- Connaughton, Richard. *MacArthur and Defeat in the Philippines*. 1st edition. Harry N. Abrams, 2001.
- "Cultural Policy during the Japanese Occupation | Dr. Ricardo T. Jose - UPOU Networks," January 3, 2018.  
<https://networks.upou.edu.ph/10329/cultural-policy-during-the-japanese-occupation-dr-ricardo-t-jose/>.
- De Viana, Augusto V. *The Philippines (A Story of a Nation)*. First. Rex Book Store Inc., 2012.
- Friend, Theodore. *Between Two Empires: The Ordeal of the Philippines, 1929-1946*. First Edition. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965.
- Golay, Frank Hindman. *Face of Empire: United States-Philippine Relations, 1898—1946*. 3rd ed. University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 2010.

- Hack, Karl, and Tobias Rettig. *Colonial Armies in Southeast Asia*. 1st edition. Routledge Studies in the Modern History of Asia. London: Routledge, 2005.
- "Jose, Ricardo T. | Department of History." Accessed April 8, 2025. <https://history.upd.edu.ph/?faculty=jose>.
- Jose, Ricardo Trota. *Philippine Army, 1935-1942*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1998.
- Karnow, Stanley. *In Our Image: America's Empire in the Philippines*. Reissue edition. United States of America: Ballantine Books, 1990.
- "Memorandum for the President." National Archives and Records Administration, February 11, 1941. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/NARAprdstorage/opastorage/live/24/6187/16618724/content/arcmedia/presidential-libraries/roosevelt/psf/psfa0444.pdf>.
- Morton, Louis. *The Fall of the Philippines*. World War 2 50th Anniversary Commemorative Edition. Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1993. [https://history.army.mil/html/books/005/5-2-1/CMH\\_Pub\\_5-2-1.pdf](https://history.army.mil/html/books/005/5-2-1/CMH_Pub_5-2-1.pdf).
- Norman, Michael, and Elizabeth M. Norman. *Tears in the Darkness: The Story of the Bataan Death March and Its Aftermath*. Farrar Straus Giroux, 2009.
- Quirino, Carlos. *Filipinos at War*. Manila: Vera-Reyes, 1981.
- "Ricardo T. Jose." Accessed March 6, 2025. <https://spheres.dost.gov.ph/profiles/691-ricardo-t-jose>.