Part II

The Philippine Model

Send us your youths to study in some of our colleges. We will send you ours in return. China has sent many students to America, and these are coming back with better understanding of American institutions. The same thing should be done by us [China and the Philippines] in establishing our friendship.[1]

Wu Ting Fang (Wu Tingfang 伍廷芳), 1921

A great number of students moved with their colleges and universities westward, but there are also many others who have chosen to continue their education abroad . . . the Chinese student finds another host who is right at the next door – the Philippines.[2]

Edward C. Lim (Lin Caixi 林材熙), 1940

Introduction

In 1921, Wu Ting Fang (Wu Tingfang 伍廷芳), the acting president of the southern government in China, met with Teodoro R. Yangco and Conrado Benitez, two well-known Filipino educators and businesspeople. After they had come and gone, the famous diplomat and elder statesman from China took time out of his schedule to draft a friendly thank-you note, which publishers later printed in a Manila magazine. In addition to writing the line that appears at the start of this part, Wu penned, "My message is one of mutual friendship and understanding between the Chinese and Filipinos."[3]

This brief and seemingly mundane exchange hints at the hidden world of educational exchanges between China and the Philippines that fostered personal connections, cultural understanding, political partnerships, and

[1] Wu Ting Fang (Wu Tingfang 伍廷芳), "Wu Ting Fang Says Sun Yat Sen Is Backed Up by Progressive Chinese Educated in America," *Dongfang yuekan* 東方月刊 *[The Oriental Brothers]* 1, no. 1 (1921): 15.

[2] Edward C. Lim (Lin Caixi 林材熙), "The Adventures of Chinese Students in the Philippines," *Sino–Philippine Research Journal [Zhongfei yanjiu jikan* 中菲研究季刊*]* 1, no. 1 (1940): 29.

[3] Wu Ting Fang, "Wu Ting Fang," 15.

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general goodwill. The Chinese diplomat and the two Filipino educators recognized that education could be a powerful adhesive force that brought the people of the two polities closer together. However, to Wu Ting Fang's chagrin, designs do not always align with aspirations, as China failed to host many Filipino students during an era marked by internal tumult. The Philippines, however, attracted many Chinese students from the 1920s to the 1940s.

Chinese commentators and policymakers who traveled to the Philippines and praised, criticized, copied, and adapted innovations in education, law, public health, and governance accompanied these students. Chinese educators viewed the Philippine education system, with its emphasis on vocational training and critical inquiry, as an ideal model to import to China. At the same time, scientists and lawyers thought of the archipelago as an intellectual laboratory and incubator of ideas. Meanwhile, liberal activists saw the Philippines as a burgeoning and vibrant space of democratic experimentation and gender equality. And, while some Chinese people criticized legislative measures that limited the mobility and freedom of Chinese residents in the Philippines, many viewed the Philippines as a young and vibrant nation-state-in-waiting not just worthy but demanding of their attention.

For Chinese people who bemoaned unending conflict between militarists and rival governments and decried the rampant corruption and nepotism that discolored China, the Philippines appeared like a new canvas of possibility. The archipelago might not have been a city upon a hill, but at least it was a city above the floodplain. As historian Timothy Weston observes, "As China's domestic and diplomatic predicament worsened, intellectuals, conservative and progressive alike, instinctively turned to schools as a primary instrument of social and political revitalization."[4] The Philippines offered to Chinese observers and students something that Japan, the United States, England, and Germany could not: a non-militaristic, education-oriented path toward the elusive but cherished goal of "modernity."[5] And this proved highly appealing.

[4] Timothy B. Weston, *The Power of Position: Beijing University, Intellectuals, and Chinese Political Culture, 1898–1929* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 23.

[5] Although not listing the Philippines as a model, Republican-era historian Sophia H. Z. Chen (Chen Hengzhe 陳衡哲) captured this desire for a non-militaristic path to modernity in her book, Sophia H. Z. Chen (Chen Hengzhe 陳衡哲), *Xiyang shi* 西洋史 *[History of Western Countries]* (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan 上海:商務印書館, 1926), 313. See Fan Xin, *World History*, 50–52.

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Cultural Internationalism, the Tributary System, and Laboratories

Before we apply gesso to the canvas of Sino–Philippine educational exchanges, we must first collect our methodological supplies in the historiography supply shop. Some shelves are rather sparse, though. Historians have consistently overlooked or downplayed how Chinese policymakers, educators, and students researched, toured, and copied the Philippines during the early twentieth century. In fact, an extensive search through recent articles or monographs dedicated to Chinese research on and modeling of the Philippines turns up little.[6]

What has caused this historiographical black hole? Though inadequate funding for Philippine-related research projects in general certainly factors in, I suspect that most of the neglect stems from an assumption that some historians might hold that Chinese people had little to learn from Filipinos. Historically, sinology, in both its Anglophone and Sinophone traditions, has been inward looking or focused on civilizational parallels. As for scholars who have reimagined China's relationship with the world more recently, their focus is usually on either Tang and Qing dynasty relations with Central Asia, or Chinese connections with the so-called West and Japan in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[7] These scholars tend, whether intentionally or not, to endow the "West" and Japan with a monopoly on science, technology, rationality, and modernity.

A quick perusal through research on American educational influence in Asia, and Asian borrowing and adaptation of American educational innovations, highlights this disparity. Scholars have written extensively about American universities in China,[8] Chinese students in the United

[6] For an exception regarding educational borrowing, see Khu, "José Tan Sunco." 1–17. For calls to pay closer attention to Chinese modeling of the Philippines and other areas of the Global South, see Aboitiz, *Asian Place: Filipino Nation*, 150–152; Fan, *World History and National Identity*, 17; and Karl, *Staging the World*, 3–4.

[7] Rebecca Karl calls this the "West–Japan/China dyad," while Shu-mei Shih calls it the "China–West binary of confrontation." See, Karl, *Staging the World*, 5. See also Lionel M. Jensen, "China and the Confluence of Cultures: Overcoming the East–West Mind-Set," in *Beating Devils and Burning Their Books: Views of China, Japan, and the West*, ed. Anthony E. Clark (Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 2010), 107–132; and Shu-mei Shih, *The Lure of the Modern: Writing Modernism in Semicolonial China, 1917–1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 4. There are notable exceptions, and they dot the footnotes of this book.

[8] See, for instance, Daniel H. Bays and Ellen Widmer, eds., *China's Christian Colleges: Cross-Cultural Connections, 1900–1950* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009); Mary Brown Bullock, *An American Transplant: The Rockefeller Foundation and Peking Union Medical College* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); and Hongshan Li, *U.S.–China Educational Exchange: State, Society and Intercultural Relations, 1905–1950* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2008).

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States,[9] and Chinese borrowing of American educational models.[10] Similarly, researchers have explored American influence on the Philippine education system[11] and, more recently, Philippine influence on the United States.[12] In other words, while the shelf on Chinese borrowing from and modeling of the Philippines might be empty, the rows on Chinese borrowing of "Western" and Japanese ideas are overstocked. What accounts for this imbalance, and what are some ways to adjust the inventory?

To better appreciate the magnitude and significance of Chinese borrowing from and modeling of the Philippines, it is critical to scrub off the biases that privileged research on East–West interactions in the first place. In research on the Philippines, the main blotches come from the American colonial occupation, which has consumed the research agendas and critical framings of nationalist and imperial scholars alike. Scholars of Chinese tributary relations and researchers of cultural internationalism, however, have created useful erasers that have accomplished a reset in different contexts, and this part borrows their metaphorical erasers to clear the page and resketch a history of inter-Asian interaction and interdependence. In so doing, this part challenges both the predominance of the East–West axis in research on global knowledge flows, as well as the

[9] Hsu, *The Good Immigrants*; Liel Leibovitz and Matthew Miller, eds., *Fortunate Sons: The 120 Chinese Boys Who Came to America, Went to School, and Revolutionized an Ancient Civilization* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2011); Edward J. M. Rhoads, *Stepping Forth into the World: The Chinese Educational Mission to the United States, 1872–81* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011); and Weili Ye, *Seeking Modernity in China's Name: Chinese Students in the United States, 1900–1927* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

[10] Liping Bu, *Making the World Like Us: Education, Cultural Expansion, and the American Century* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003); Yung-Chen Chiang, *Social Engineering and the Social Sciences in China, 1919–1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001; and Huajun Zhang and Jim Garrison, eds. *John Dewey and Chinese Education: A Centennial Reflection* (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

[11] A. J. Angulo, *Empire and Education: A History of Greed and Goodwill from the War of 1898 to the War on Terror* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Alexander A. Calata, "The Role of Education in Americanizing Filipinos," in *Mixed Blessing: The Impact of the American Colonial Experience on Politics and Society in the Philippines*, ed. Hazel M. McFerson (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 89–97; Paul Kramer, "Bernath Lecture: Is the World Our Campus? International Students and U.S. Global Power in the Long Twentieth Century," *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 5 (2009): 775–806; and Noel V. Teodoro, "*Pensionados* and Workers: The Filipinos in the United States, 1903–1956," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 8, nos. 1–2 (1999): 157–178.

[12] Greg Bankoff, "Breaking New Ground? Gifford Pinchot and the Birth of 'Empire Forestry' in the Philippines, 1900–1905," *Environment and History* 15, no. 3 (2009): 369–393; Alfred W. McCoy and Francisco A. Scarano, eds., *Colonial Crucible: Empire in the Making of the Modern American State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009); and Lisandro E. Claudio, "Beyond Colonial Miseducation: Internationalism and Deweyan Pedagogy in the American-era Philippines," *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints* 63, no. 2 (2015): 193–220.

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so-called laboratory of modernity trope, to which we will return in a moment. In other words, it centers Asia in Asian history.

Some people in the past, just like some people today, held a romantic view of a denationalized, interdependent, and harmonious world.[13] They challenged national and other artificial boundaries with their itineraries and their organizations, inspiring historians – myself included – to sketch their transnational portraits.[14] However, many of these cultural internationalists, who fostered "international cooperation through cultural activities across national boundaries," just like the scholars who research them today, came from a place of privilege, which brought with it a certain set of blinders.[15] To put it another way, cultural internationalists and the scholars who study them, even in their global travels, sometimes inadvertently became anchored "in the metropolis," reaffirming "metropolitan authority in its own terms," as Mary Louise Pratt observes.[16] So, to build on this innovative transnational research but not fall into the metropolitan trap, the chapters in this part leave the metropole behind.

Scholars of the tributary "system" have pioneered an Asian-centered research model that helps accomplish such a feat.[17] The tributary "system" was an amorphous and overlapping set of interactions in Asia defined by a mutable hierarchy with China ostensibly at the center, a ritualistic exchange of tribute or gifts, and substantial if not always well-documented private trade.[18] In other words, it was a "system" of inter-"national" relations sans the Westphalian nation-state. Scholars debate

[13] For an example of this semi-celebratory approach to globalization and denationalization in the early post-Cold War era, see Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*.

[14] For more on cultural internationalism, see Akira Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism and World Order* (Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997); Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment: Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Fiona Paisley, *Glamour in the Pacific: Cultural Internationalism and Race Politics in the Women's Pan-Pacific* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009).

[15] Iriye, *Cultural Internationalism*, 3.

[16] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 5. For a similar sentiment, see Ghosh, "AHR Forum," 782.

[17] The "system" itself was never called a "system" historically, hence the use of quotes. I will drop the quotes for the remainder of this chapter for simplicity, however. For an instructive conversation on this topic, see Peter C. Perdue, "The Tenacious Tributary System," *Journal of Contemporary China* 24, no. 96 (2015): 1002–1014.

[18] For more on the tributary system, see John Fairbank, ed., *The Chinese World Order: Traditional China's Foreign Relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968); Takeshi Hamashita, "The Tribute Trade System and Modern Asia," in *China, East Asia and the Global Economy: Regional and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Linda Grove and Mark Seldon (London: Routledge, 2008), 12–26; Morris Rossabi, ed., *China among Equals: The Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th–14th Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983); and Yuanchong Wang, *Remaking the Chinese Empire: Manchu–Korean Relations, 1616–1911* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2018).

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when and if the system came to an end and the extent to which the Philippines or other Southeast Asian polities belonged to such an order, but the focus of the idea itself can help us realign our approach to Asia.[19] Famous scholar of the tributary system Takeshi Hamashita writes, "Asian history may be broadly understood as the history of a unified system characterized by region-wide tribute trade relations, with China at the center."[20]

This part, therefore, proposes a "cultural tributarism" approach to Asian history that combines the attention to cultural institutions and exchanges one encounters in research on cultural internationalism with the focus on inter-Asian interaction one sees in research on the tributary system. Combined, these lenses allow us to detach ourselves from European, Japanese, and American imperial power and better view and appreciate the history of Chinese borrowing from the Philippines in the early twentieth century. "Cultural tributarism" decenters the nation and the "West," foreshortening Chinese and Filipino peoples in the landscape of history.

Chapter 3 and 4 examine how the Philippines became a model of modernity, where liberal-minded Filipino reformers, who had captured the hearts of many Asian romantics with the establishment of the First Philippine Republic in 1898, worked with American progressives to craft what they envisioned as a modern society. It shows how Filipino agents along with American colonials funneled money toward education, forestry, infrastructure, public health, and other elements of a "modern" state. These multilayered investments made the Philippines into much more than a "laboratory of modernity" – or a passive colonial space on which colonial officials applied experimental policies.[21] Filipinos played a critical role in transforming the archipelago, and many Chinese

[19] For critical Southeast Asian perspectives on the tributary system, see Anthony Reid and Zheng Yangwen, eds., *Negotiating Asymmetry: China's Place in Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009); Geoff Wade and James K. Chin, eds., *China and Southeast Asia: Historical Interactions* (London: Routledge, 2019); and Brantly Womack, *China among Unequals: Asymmetric Foreign Relations in Asia* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2010). For Chinese borrowing from Southeast Asian polities during the height of the tributary system, see John Guy, "Pan-Asian Buddhism and the Bodhisattva Cult in Champa," in *The Cham of Vietnam: History, Society and Art*, ed. Tran Ky Phuong and Bruce Lockhart (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2011), 300–322; and Charles Wheeler, "Buddhism in the Re-Ordering of an Early Modern World: Chinese Missions to Cochinchina in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of Global History* 2, no. 3 (2007): 303–324.

[20] Hamashita, "The Tribute Trade System and Modern Asia," 12.

[21] For the "laboratories of modernity" approach, see McCoy and Scarano, *Colonial Crucible*; Paul Rabinow, "Governing Morocco: Modernity and Difference," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 13, no 1 (1989): 32–46; and Gwendolyn Wright, *Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). As

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observers accepted the Philippines as a unique and inspirational form when molding their own such model.[22]

However, it is important for us to recognize that, for most of the early twentieth century, the Philippines was an occupied country. Arguing for Filipino agency in an asymmetric imperial relationship sometimes necessitates downplaying the reach, and therefore the negative consequences of, American colonial rule, and this can be irresponsible in many contexts. But, as Anne Stoler and Frederick Cooper note, "colonial regimes were neither monolithic nor omnipotent," and it can be an act of decolonization to highlight agency under occupation.[23] The chapters that follow cautiously attempt to make such an intervention by weaving in ideas pioneered by scholars of inter-Asian interactions in the Ming and Qing and by scholars of culture and imperialism.

Pacific history scholars have pointed out, scholars still grapple with the perception of Pacific Islands as laboratories for study. See, for instance, Terence Wesley-Smith, "Rethinking Pacific Island Studies," *Pacific Studies* 18, no. 2 (1995): 121–124. For a critique of the "efficient scientific management" aspect of the "laboratories of modernity" approach, see Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 57–58.

[22] David Bell, in his research on the French Revolution, describes how "dynamic laboratories" of change influenced global events; see David Bell, "Words from David Bell," *Journal of Global History* 13 (2018): 17.

[23] Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, "Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda," in *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 6. For similar interventions, see Richard Phillips, *Sex, Politics and Empire: A Postcolonial Geography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 138–141; and Ann Laura Stoler, *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 146–147.

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