



Survival and Atrocity: Remembering the Japanese Occupation of the Province of Aklan, Philippines, 1942-45

FRANCES ANTHEA R. REDISON

ABSTRACT. This article documents the local narratives of the Japanese occupation of Aklan from 1942-1945 through the use of primary (oral history) and secondary (Historical Data Papers [HDP]) sources. In 1951, President Elpidio Quirino issued an executive order that directed the Division Superintendent of Schools to gather collected histories, which produced the HDP. The World War II section of the HDP focused on the activities of the guerrilla resistance movement in Panay and the war atrocities by the Japanese on the civilian population. Similarly, these anecdotes were mentioned in the oral histories of the people interviewed for this study. Moreover, the newer accounts depict more personal experiences such as daily activities, food security, religious beliefs, the inconvenience of moving, and the informants' family responsibilities. Given the proximity from the war of the data gathering for the production of the HDP, it is evident that there is a strong anti-Japanese representation in the materials. This research has found that oral history interviews and the HDP are important complementary sources in retelling the local stories of World War II in the province of Aklan.

KEYWORDS. Aklan · Japanese occupation · postwar · Historical Data Papers · oral history

INTRODUCTION

Although one of the most dramatic periods of Philippine history, the distant narrative of the Japanese occupation is starting to vanish from the memory of Filipinos. Despite not having the same level of attention in Philippine historiography given to the Philippine Revolution (Jose 2012, 185), the occupation years should still be recognized as one of the few collective memories that we have had as a nation. Since the start of the postwar period, commemorations of World War II have been celebrated annually all over the country. Still, our knowledge on the war focuses mostly on persons and events in Luzon. This limitation

leaves the accounts from non-Luzon provinces as mere mentions or absent in the national narrative. The lack of scholarly attention given to the stories of war from these localities create a disparity in historical writing as many of the communities look at their war experiences as less relevant and unimportant vis-à-vis the national politico-military chronicles.

The war brought traumatic experiences and important lessons, and documentation of these stories of survival, of daily life during a time of strife, are vital in our historical consciousness as a nation. One way to address this problem is to examine local histories and utilize multiple methods to make Philippine history writing more inclusive. The province of Aklan in the island of Panay has rich but untapped sources on the occupation years. The documentation on life during the war in Aklan has remained inadequate as collected stories lacked in-depth analysis or were treated as isolated experiences from other towns and provinces. This is evident in the number of undergraduate theses that focused on the war time years and books by war veterans that mentioned Aklan's experience in passing. Given this issue, this article aims to enrich the local narratives of the Japanese occupation of Aklan from 1942-45 through the use of primary (oral history) and secondary (Historical Data Papers [HDP]) sources. By reconstructing war narratives, this paper hopes to add more knowledge on and greater understanding of the community's war experience, including their strategies for providing for necessities and their perspective on war-time scarcity.

Following a discussion of this article's research questions, objects of study, and methodology is a section that provides a background on the war in Panay. From the data collected, the narratives of Aklan during the war are thematically divided into sections on daily life, evacuation, and atrocities. These sections highlight previously undocumented personal experiences of the war. The discussion focuses on the attitudes toward the Japanese based on the recollection of the respondents. By using oral history, this article acknowledges the subjectivity and selectivity of memories in the attempt to record the Japanese occupation years. Though the political and military aspects of the Japanese occupation was common in the sources, the oral history accounts provided insight into how the people survived and went about their everyday lives during the three years of war. After documenting the daily lives of the informants, their individual stories were weaved together to allow better insights in the collective experiences of the province. Their narratives complement secondary sources that also help give life to these narratives.

Existing literature suggests that accounts regarding the war follow a predominantly Manila-centric and politico-military perspective. Apilado (1999, 73) and Foronda (1991, 311), for instance, posit that there is a lack of understanding of the narratives of constituent towns and provinces. In order to understand the complexity of national history, Alfred McCoy and Ed de Jesus (1982, 3) urged scholars to move beyond the Manila-centric vision, and saw regional history as an analytical approach appropriate to an archipelagic nation like the Philippines. The war narratives of Aklan, for example, are often linked with its geographical setting, i.e., its swamps and thick mountains that became a refuge for the civilians, rice fields that sustained the food supply, several ports that served as landing sites, and rivers that became witnesses of executions. To reiterate, the history of the Japanese occupation of Aklan is understudied; my aim as an Akeanon is to contribute to the dearth of literature on the province's World War II history.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

As previously mentioned, this study utilized oral interviews conducted in Aklan between April 13, 2017 until March 22, 2018 and the Japanese occupation of the Philippines section of the Historical Data Papers, which are written accounts collected in the early 1950s. As a native Akeanon, the language spoken by the informants is accessible to me and I did not need the help of translators. During the research process, this positionality shaped my interactions and relationship with the informants. My aim for this article is to make room for narratives that have not been recorded before to be part of written history. The article intends to document how the informants from Aklan remembered their war experiences and compare the content of the HDP with the oral history sources.

Oral History

This study relies heavily on oral accounts in writing the history of the Japanese occupation. According to Ricardo Jose (2012), there is no central repository of war-related materials and many of the primary sources are either difficult to access or unavailable to researchers. Thus, literature on the war is based largely on memory (Jose 2012, 62). The Oral History Association defines oral history both as a field of study and a methodology that preserves and interprets the voices and

memories of people, communities, and participants in past events (Barber and Peniston-Bird 2009, 113). Social historians often use oral history with the aim of allowing the narratives of ordinary people to be part of written documents.

There are a number of studies that dwell on the collective experiences of the war, focusing mainly on those in Luzon. Sofia Logarta (1996) found that most of the women members of the underground resistance against the Japanese came from the peasantry. Based on her interviews, none of the women joined because of the influence of their husbands. In contrast, Vina Lanzona's *Amazons of the Huk Rebellion* (2009) uncovered the membership of women and described the importance of gender issues in the movement. Lanzona examined the political and personal factors behind women's membership in the anti-Japanese struggle and found that few women advanced to high positions, with the majority being relegated to traditional roles like housekeeping. Thelma Kintanar et al. (2006) deal with the situations and experiences of ordinary people as they lived from day to day. Their work was concerned with the social rather than the political aspects of the war. Using in-depth interviews and open-ended questionnaires, Kintanar et al. (2006) were able to analyze the collective experiences of people from different social backgrounds. Though the work claims to be comprehensive, the bulk of Kintanar et al.'s interviews and collected questionnaires were from Luzon; the study had no data from Western Visayas.

Through the oral history method, the studies above created a space for common folk, women, and marginalized groups who have been hidden from history to be represented. Moreover, the history of their lives can be written from their own perspective and in their own words. It serves as a democratic alternative to the dominant historical tradition and helps recover the voices of historically silent actors (Tosh 2010, 315–19; Gloria 2011, 28–29). This study is less concerned with the accuracy of the oral accounts, focusing instead on the way in which the informants recounted their personal experiences of the war. More importantly, it is necessary to retell the wartime experiences of survivors before the generation that experienced the war disappears (Constantino 1995, 1–2).

This study used in-depth exploratory and semi-structured interviews in Akeanon, the language spoken by the interviewees. I designed the interview to last from sixty to ninety minutes of conversation, employing participant observation and note-taking strategies. With the consent of

informants, interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. I met my informants through relatives and friends who facilitated our interviews. During the conduct of the research, the study documented the narratives of six Akeanon respondents (two males and four females): with three from Ibajay, and the other three from the towns of Malinao, Lezo, and Batan. The age of informants ranges from eighty-five to ninety-nine years old at the time they were interviewed.

Profiles of Interviewees

Lourdes Igoy-Inac was a high school student from Malinao when the war broke out. As a teenager, she remembered stories about her friends and classmates who perished during the 1943 Japanese punitive drive. After the war, she married a member of the Philippine Scouts who survived the Death March. I interviewed Lourdes on December 26, 2017 and March 20, 2018. In the town of Batan, I was cordially welcomed in the home of Maria Padios-Urquiola on December 29, 2017. She was attending the mass of the Immaculate Conception when the news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor reached them. Their family evacuated early 1942, transferring from one barrio to another. They survived the war through farming and raising livestock. Maria lost her brother, a prelate who served in the United States Army Forces in the Far East (USAFFE) but died of illness at Camp O'Donnell in Tarlac.

In Ibajay, I visited the house of Luz Elinon in Barangay Maloco on December 27, 2017 and March 22, 2018. Born and raised in Brgy. Unat, Luz was nine years old when the Japanese occupied Panay in 1942. As the eldest child, Luz had to take care of her younger siblings as they evacuated their home to escape the Japanese. A few blocks away from Luz was the house of ninety-three-year-old Castora Salido who shared her experiences with me on December 27, 2017. Castora, who was seventeen years old during the war farmed their fields with her family in Maloco. They evacuated not far from their home when the Japanese mopping-up operations in Ibajay became frequent. During the duration of the war, she mentioned that food was abundant, and hunger was not a problem for their family.

I rode a motorcycle and crossed the Ibajay river on a bamboo raft to talk to Cenon Placio during my visits on April 13 and December 27, 2017, and March 22, 2018. Unable to walk without holding two long canes, Cenon, at the age of ninety-seven, lived in the interior barrio of Naile, Ibajay where he once served as the barrio captain. During the

three occasions that he was visited, I needed to write down my questions on a piece of paper because he had a hearing problem but was still able to read. It was difficult to converse properly, however; when he read questions about his experiences about the war, he would recite the names of his commander and occasionally answer in straight English. Unlike others who were forced by the circumstances, Cenon was proud that he signed up to liberate the country from the Japanese. During the war, he was assigned as a messenger in Pandan, Antique not far from his hometown of Ibajay. The resistance movement actively recruited men in the province of Aklan. Cenon shared, "*Kung di ka man mageakot hay dudahan ka. Intra lang ron.*" (If you refused to join, they will be suspicious. It was better to join.)

In the town of Lezo, I met the ninety-nine-year-old Ramon Baldomero on December 26, 2017 while he was playing solitaire at the corner of a makeshift room inside his house. He could no longer hear properly, so whenever I asked a question, his daughter Remy relayed it to him loudly. He often retorted, "*Bungoe ako*" (I am deaf). My companions inside the room including his two grandchildren would burst into laughter as he would not answer the questions directly. Unintentionally, his responses to some questions became humorous especially when he shared stories about their experiences with the Japanese. My interview with him was one of the most memorable. When he joined the underground movement, he was around twenty-three years old. He was assigned in Cabatuan, Iloilo, "*Nag-abot ro Hapon riya sa Aklan . . . Nagbuhay sanda sa Kalibo. Nadestino man kami sa Malinao. Hay pagtakas nanda sa New Washington hay gin-ambusan namon. Sa ulihe hay nagpa-Iloilo sanda, idto man kami ag nagsukoe it inaway kanda.*" (When the Japanese arrived in Aklan, they stayed in Kalibo for a long time. We were assigned in Malinao. When they [Japanese] transferred to Iloilo, we followed to fight them there). The pressure to join the guerillas was possibly caused by the overwhelming presence of the anti-resistance movement in the province. Ibajay was the headquarters of the 2nd military district where Cenon is a resident while Ramon who hailed from Lezo is a neighboring town of Malinao which was the stronghold of the 1st Military District.

The study recognized the potential discomforts and risks on the interviewees brought by recalling their memories of the war as some of them had experienced loss of loved ones and may have undergone psychological distress. It was made sure that at least one family member was present during the interview.

Malinao and Ibajay served as the headquarters for the 1st and 2nd Military Districts of the Aklan sector. After the surrender of Brig. Gen. Christie, the guerrillas were first organized in the town of Malinao. Ibajay, which belonged to the 2nd Military District, became the stronghold Japanese garrison in Aklan in the latter part of 1943 with reported 150 Japanese soldiers in September 1944. Many of the informants' recollections referred to the presence of garrisons and the 1943 punitive attacks of the Batsu Group of the Japanese Military Administration (JMA). Based on Manikan's (1977) map on "Enemy Punitive Drives" (July-December 1943), the mopping-up operations were part of the third phase of the Japanese campaign, which happened from October 15 to December 31, 1943. The town of Batan recorded massacres during the October mopping-up operations while the town of Lezo was identified as a commercial center during the war, where merchants all over Panay island came to trade.

Given that the respondents were aged eighty-five to ninety-nine years old, they heavily relied on distant memories. As argued by Jose (2012, 62), because the oral histories were written so close to the war, many of the stories were of common knowledge and had insufficient primary sources to use. As discussed earlier, the paper does not scrutinize their narratives as factual vis-à-vis the "official" history of the war. Rather, among the aims of this study is to document war survivors' recollections of the war.

Historical Data Papers

In response to the need to supplement government records destroyed during the Japanese occupation, President Elpidio Quirino issued Executive Order (EO) 0486, entitled "Providing for the Collection and Compilation of Historical Data Regarding Barrios, Towns, Cities, and Provinces." The aim of the HDP was to regather the important documents on Philippine history and culture that were lost during the war. By compiling these materials again, it was hoped that the HDP would be "a source of inspirations and guidance for our future generations, as well as source materials for historians, investigators and researchers." The EO also encouraged all government agencies and private organizations who possess any pertinent historical data to join the national project. Quirino signed the document on December 7, 1951 and directed the Division Superintendent of Schools to put

together what has come to be known as the Historical Data Papers or Provincial Histories.¹

The Secretary of the Department of Education Cecilio Kapirig Putong thereafter issued General Memorandum No. 34, series of 1952 entrusting to all school officials and teachers the execution of the president's executive order (HDP Guide, Preface). The teachers were specifically entrusted to work on the data collection of HDP because there were public school teachers in every barrio. They were easily mobilized because they were from the communities and were directly accountable to their district supervisors.

There was a total of 105 compiled volumes, covering practically all the provinces of the Philippines except for Negros Occidental, Ilocos Sur, Sorsogon, Isabela, Cotabato Lanao, and some chartered cities (Philippine Social Science Council 1993, 81-82). The seventeen towns of Aklan are included in the four volumes on the province of Capiz, which they were still part of at the time. Among the 200 submissions on barrios, 146 had documented war experiences; only fifty-four barrios had no accounts.

The HDP is primarily based on documentary sources and oral interviews. Originally, the intention was to document materials from each barrio following an outline that was divided into three parts. The first section, "History," includes the bulk of the gathered data that contains the town or the barrio's official/popular name, territorial jurisdiction, date of establishment, original families, list of *tenientes* from earliest date, historical sites, important facts, incidents or events that took place during the Spanish, American, Japanese occupation, and the postwar years (figure 2). The HDP highlights the destruction of lives, property, and institutions during wars, especially in 1896-1900 (the Philippine Revolution) and 1941-45. It also documented the efforts toward rehabilitation and reconstruction after World War II. The outline lays out the periodization used for each locality. The teachers arranged their data based on the prescribed outline intended for the readers' perusal. The second section, "Folkways," chronicles customs on birth, baptism, courtship, marriage, death, burial, beliefs and superstitions, local games, amusements, native songs, puzzles, riddles, and proverbs. The last part, often with the least amount of details, provides references, documents, and authors who were from the community. Since the attempt to gather data stretches to almost

1. Office of the Philippine President. *Executive Order 486*. 1951.

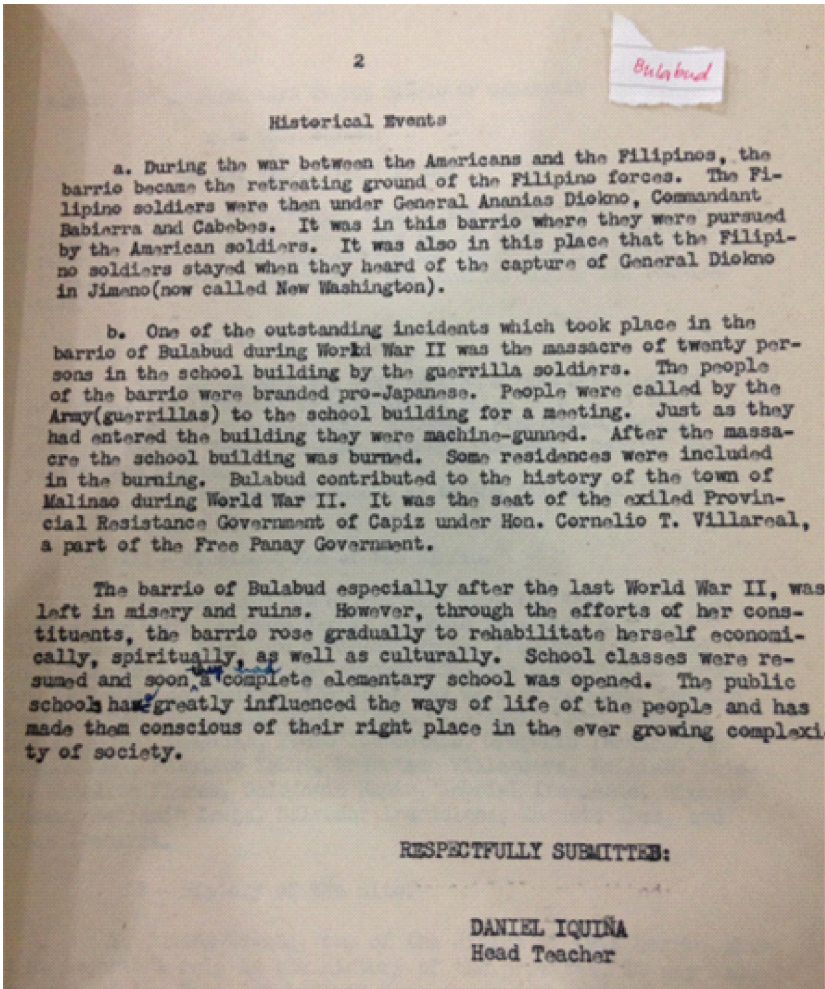


FIGURE 2. Photo of a sample account on the Japanese Occupation in barrio Bulabud, Malinao from the Historical Data Papers. Photo taken by author.

four centuries worth of history, the outline was not strictly followed. The teachers were also given a short span of time to collect data as they were required to submit their outputs before July 4, 1953, i.e., they had less than two years to complete their fieldwork.

According to R.B. Cruikshank (1973, 15-16), the main weaknesses of the HDP are the poor nature of the material and writing, and the inconsistency of the quality and quantity of the gathered materials. Based on the content of the HDP, most of the available information



FIGURE 3. Photo of the Historical Data Papers stored in the Restricted Section, seventh floor, National Library of the Philippines (NLP). Photo taken by Loradel Martinez of NLP.

used by the teachers were folk stories and legends and lacked reliable sources. This issue is understandable given the ambitiousness of HDP's goal of covering four hundred years of colonial history. The teachers who collected the data, he continued, did not have any background in historical methodology—they gathered the documents and conducted interviews only for the sake of compliance. Cruikshank's judgment is particularly right if one looks at the value of the HDP as documentation on general history, given the serious flaws therein regarding earlier historical periods, i.e., precolonial times, the era of Spanish colonization,

and the American occupation. On the other hand, as this paper argues, the data about the Japanese occupation should be given a different reading. The information collected during this period is reliable inasmuch as it reflects, for instance, the attitudes of the public toward the Japanese. Because data gathering was conducted within five years from when the war ended, the accounts in the HDP were able to capture the sentiments of the public at the time. Despite the limitations of the HDP, it is still useful for this specific study.

The HDP is stored both in original and digital formats at the National Library of the Philippines (NLP) (figure 3). There are a total of 126 hard-bound volumes from the then forty-nine provinces and their towns and barrios, arranged alphabetically. The documents were typewritten on legal size paper. The page numbers were either inconsistent or not indicated at all. From January to March 2017, I accessed the three volumes on the province of Capiz (figure 4). Though the volumes are available in digitized microfilm rolls, most of the copies are unreadable. Thus, the original documents were preferred. After visiting the NLP in September 2019, I found out that the original HDP can no longer be accessed and are now stored in the restricted and rare collections at the seventh floor of the building.

The barrios covered by HDP are based on the submission of the teachers. All the seventeen towns of Aklan have records. The quality and quantity of information per municipality are not uniform, with most of the accounts about World War II usually adding up to only a few sentences. The data from 152 barrios were organized according to what they revealed about the initial stages of the occupation, evacuation and atrocities, daily life, and attitudes toward the Japanese.

WORLD WAR II IN PANAY

Hours after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941, important bases were heavily bombed in Luzon and Mindanao. In a matter of days, the Japanese established air and naval supremacy. To save Manila from destruction, Gen. Douglas MacArthur, commander-in-chief of the USAFFE, declared Manila an “open city” but the Japanese refused to recognize this (Legarda 2007, 180). There was complete chaos as hundreds of people fled the city. Looting was rampant as there was no peace and order (Agoncillo 1965, 513). On April 16, 1942, the Japanese army led by Maj. Gen. Saburo Kawamura made a three-point landing in the island of Panay—in Oton (Iloilo), San Jose de Buenavista

(Antique), and Capiz (Capiz) (McCoy 1977, 270). With the Fall of Bataan on April 9, 1942, the Japanese continued their assault in the last pocket of resistance in Corregidor. The Japanese forced Gen. Jonathan M. Wainwright, who was in command of Corregidor and the Manila Bay harbor forts, to cause the defense forces in the Philippines to surrender. A few days after, the generals of Visayas and Mindanao laid down their arms (Kumai 2009, 28; Legarda 2003, 79-80).

After the surrender of Brig. Gen. Albert F. Christie, the division chief of staff of the 61st Division of the USAFFE in Panay, around 5,000 men of the 61st Division did not submit to the Japanese and later formed the underground movement in the island (Doromal 1952, 6-9). An estimated one thousand men from the Japanese forces were stationed in Iloilo and five hundred each in Capiz and Antique. With a small number of Japanese troops and with the guerillas controlling the island interiors, Japanese policy and impact was limited in Iloilo City and the milling district of Negros (McCoy 1977, 209; Doromal 1952, 19).

On June 1, 1942, Lt. Col. Macario Peralta Jr. issued his first general order assuming the command of all USAFFE forces in Panay. The 61st Division was divided into the three provincial commands of Capiz, Iloilo, and Antique. The Capiz Provincial Command was split into Ilayan and Aklan sectors. Under the Aklan sector were the 1st Military District in Malinao headed by Capt. Pedro Yatar, while the 2nd Military District stationed in Ibajay was under Capt. Jose Miraflores (Manikan 1977, 57, 89-90). About the same time in June 1942, Iloilo Governor Tomas Confesor organized the civil resistance government. By July 10, 1942, both Peralta and Confesor's representatives met in a conference and agreed that the former would handle the military aspect of the underground resistance while the latter will deal with the civil affairs (Agoncillo 1965, 682).

The guerillas preferred conducting intelligence work and maintained the secrecy of their large force in order not to encourage the Japanese to strengthen their forces (Manikan 1977, 89-90; 103). Since American dollars and Commonwealth pesos were banned, the underground civilian government headed by Governor Tomas Confesor authorized the issuance of emergency money to provide small change in Aklan. These emergency notes, however, were only useful outside the garrisoned poblacion of Kalibo as the Japanese imposed their military notes, which civilians later called "Mickey Mouse money" because it had no assigned value and was often considered worthless. Provincial folk also

called it “gurami,” which is a species of fish that was abundant during the war (Pick 1995, 829; Agoncillo 1965, 483).

After nearly a year of occupation, the JMA was still unsuccessful in forcing Peralta’s 61st Military Division to surrender. Moreover, the civilians were unconvinced of Japan’s colonial agenda, such that they continued to aid the underground resistance movement by providing food to the guerrillas and sharing intelligence information. Thus, as part of a large-scale effort to pacify Panay island by the last quarter of 1943, the Batsu Group under the command of Lt. Gen. Kawano Takeshi launched a penetration operation in Panay and Guimaras, which resulted in more than 10,000 civilian deaths (Doromal 1952, 93–95; Manikan 1977, 403–9; Nakano 1999, 55). The punitive drive lasted for five months. While there were no more than 1,000 to 2,000 Japanese Army soldiers in the island, the casualties were equivalent to almost one percent of Panay’s 1.3 million population (McCoy 1977, 331). From August to September 1943, the Japanese Army penetrated the island of Guimaras across the Iloilo Strait; made an amphibious landing in Sara, Iloilo by September; and conducted a large-scale massacre of civilians in Aklan and Capiz by October (McCoy 1980, 215). By the third week of October 1943, two Japanese forces came from Capiz and Pandan, Antique. They massacred hundreds of civilians, among whom were people who were beheaded and stabbed to death; burned public buildings; and occupied and garrisoned strategic towns of Aklan that had a strong guerrilla base. The goal of the scorched-earth policy was to deprive the population and the guerrillas of resources they can utilize to continue the resistance. Through demoralization brought by Japanese atrocities, the JMA hoped to force the surrender of guerrilla-controlled towns.

Upon establishing contact with Panay guerrillas, Gen. MacArthur directed Peralta in his order dated December 18, 1942 to postpone offensive guerrilla activity to avoid a major clash with the Japanese. The 61st Division in Panay then adopted a strict “lie-low” policy and focused on gathering enemy intelligence (Doromal 1952, 99). Although guerrilla and Japanese encounters were inevitable throughout the occupation, Peralta insisted that the guerrillas follow the policy to discourage the Japanese to increase their reinforcements. However, the 1943 Japanese punitive drive in Panay and Guimaras that killed thousands of civilians challenged this command policy. The butchery and devastation led to the frustration and low morale of the army who wanted to retaliate (McCoy 1977, 335).

Peralta insisted on continuing to abide by the lie-low policy and ordered civilians to show allegiance to the Japanese Army to avoid more brutalities (Kumai 2009, 67; McCoy 1977, 334). On December 20, 1943, Peralta sent messages to the 64th and 66th Infantry Regiments of the USAFFE, telling them “to lie low as much as possible,” further stating: “With the possible exception of HUBAG [Aklan] area, probably Japs are thru w/ serious mopping operations. Japs seems to have really a policy of using Filipinos (PC [Philippine Constabulary] & CDC [Civilian Defense Corps]) to maintain peace and order. Most of the puppets [local collaborators] are not worrying us. We have them under control” (Manikan 1977, 418). In January 1944, Peralta instructed Col. Leopoldo R. Relunia, Chief of Staff of the Division and Commander of the 63rd Infantry Regiment of Iloilo, via a letter to “LIE LOW, but if any Jap patrol commits atrocities, go after that patrol with a vengeance” (Manikan 1977, 450; Doromal 1952, 16). Notwithstanding the success of the Batsu Group in instilling fear in the civilian population, their actions made little impact on the guerrillas (Nakano 1999, 55). In effect, the guerrillas’ lie-low policy led to greater focus on espionage activities before the reoccupation of the Americans (Doromal 1952, 104-7).

By the end of October 1944, Lt. Col. Peralta ordered an island-wide offensive drive in Panay (Manikan 1977, 561-63). Following the successful landing of the US Forces in Leyte, the JMA forces in Panay Island weakened. In the morning of March 18, 1945, the US 40th Division commanded by Maj. Gen. Rapp Brush landed on Tigbauan, Iloilo. By September 1, 1945, the Japanese Army Headquarters surrendered to the US 160th Regiment at Maasin, Iloilo.

Evacuation and Atrocities

On December 8, 1941, people of the town of Batan were celebrating their town fiesta in honor of the Immaculate Conception. After attending mass, Maria recalled the moment when she heard from the only radio at the municipal building the news about the bombing of Pearl Harbor. The procession was cancelled, and people frantically ran home. The ninety-five-year-old recalled, “*Wa eon kami it kalibutan kun siin kami manago. May akon nga sister nga idto sa Iloilo gatuon. Nakoebaan baea kami kun ano matabo abi ano? Wa kami sa among painu-ino kun siin kami manago ag kun siin maadto. Ag ro among igmanghod nga wa iya hay nakoebaan baea. Kun siin imaw masaka . . .*” (We had no idea where to go and what to do, we were all scared of what might happen. We were

worried about the whereabouts of our siblings since they were away from home.)

On that same day, Lourdes, together with other fellow students from Malinao, were crossing the Aklan River because they had a class on Monday at Banga Rural High School. They met a man by the river who told them about the bombing. "*Gaalin pa mana kamo? Hambae it eaki ngato. Ginbombahan eon mana ro Pearl Harbor. Nagproceed kami sa among boarding house, ag ginhimos among things ag nag-uli eon kami.*" (He said, "What are you still doing? Do you not know that Pearl Harbor was bombed?" We immediately went to our boarding house to gather our belongings and hurriedly went home.) When Lourdes and her companions arrived in Malinao, the situation was still normal as people were still playing softball near the church. According to Lourdes, teenagers like her were not as fearful compared to the older folks who experienced the Philippine Revolution. At the time, they did not have any idea of what war could bring, "*Nagobra kami it air raid. Nagpakutkot it 2 x 3 meters, ag 1 meter deep. Haron do advise kato sa kada pamaeay agod kun may eroplano, may daeaganan. Hapa mana kamo idto. Matsa ignorante pat a ro mga tawo kato.*" (We were advised to build an air raid shelter so that if there is a plane flying, we can duck and cover. People seemed to be ignorant back then.)

When the Japanese landed in Aklan, they garrisoned the town center of Kalibo. They surrounded the town with barbed wires.² Although the Japanese were primarily stationed in Kalibo, they went out weekly to other neighboring towns to campaign and penetrate the different barrios.³ On August 28, 1942, Capt. Pedro Y. Yatar led the organized guerrillas of Aklan at Sitio Buntillao, San Roque, Malinao. By October, the Free Local Civil Government of Malinao was established under the Resistance Government of Capiz led by Governor Cornelio Villareal.⁴

There was no immediate evacuation in the earlier part of the war in Ibaday. Despite living in fear, the people continued with their day-to-day lives but remained alert.⁵ However, after learning that the Japanese were ruthless, many municipalities became deserted as people vacated their homes to seek refuge in the swamps, forests, and the

2. Kalibo 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

3. Libacao and Numancia 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

4. Malinao 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

5. Ibaday 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

mountains. People dug holes which served as underground bomb shelters.⁶ Luz was ten years old when her family left their home in barrio Unat, Ibajay to escape the Japanese. They moved to other far-flung barrios together with other members of the community; Luz said, “*Aga-aga pat a hay nagbakwit, December nagumpisa eon it bakwit . . . Indi ko matandaan basta December nagtakas ro Hapon sa Ibajay una sa Aslum, sa may banwa . . . Hay kundi ro taga banwa bakwit eagi. Kami ngato ay wa anay maghalin.*” (It was early morning of December when people from the lowland started to evacuate because the Japanese arrived in barrio Aslum, an area adjacent to the city center. But we did not evacuate right away [because we live near the hinterlands].) During the war, Castora, a resident of the interior barrio of Maloco, Ibajay, stayed in a forest not far away from home; “*Nagbakwit man ron. Una malang sa lapit sa nunok. Mabuhay a ron kami idto. Sobra a sang dag-on.*” (We also evacuated near the big tree in the forest. We remained there for more than a year.) From the town proper of Batan, Maria’s family transferred from one barrio to another in search of better living conditions, “*Halin kami sa Ambueong tapos nagpa-Angas mga sang dag-on man guro kami idto ag naghalin sa Napti. Kun malisod ro kahimtangan gahalin-halin man kami.*” (From Ambueong we transferred to Angas and stayed there for a year before we moved to Napti. We often moved to another place if the condition was difficult.)

Two of the informants had family members who endured the Death March—*Lourdes’* future husband and Maria’s elder brother. The two men survived the long march but became ill with malaria and dysentery. Unfortunately, Maria’s brother, who served as one of the military’s chaplains, did not survive. It was difficult for Maria’s family to bear the pain of losing their family’s sole breadwinner. During my interview with her, she was in tears while she remembered her brother: “*Wa abi imaw kauli. Nabalitaan eot a ku ulihe nga namatay imaw. Kada gabie pirme kami gapinamintana ag among ginadumdom nga si Manong nga mauli sa baeay. Gatinangis dayon kami karon. Kun gabie hay ginapinanamgo kami kana ag pukawon kami dayon ni Nanay.*” (He never came home after he left for the war. We just learned later that he died. Every night, we looked out our window hoping that Manong would come home, and we would start crying. Nanay would sometimes wake us up whenever we dreamt of Manong.)

6. Numancia 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

The Japanese's scorched-earth policy was executed in Aklan, leaving a trail of burned-down towns. In October 1943, the Japanese commenced the third phase of their ruthless attacks in the province. These massacres were known to the public as *juez de cuchillo* (justice by the knife) because the Japanese slaughtered their victims using their blades. Coming from Pandan, Antique, the Japanese ransacked the town of Ibajay and beheaded twenty-eight Ibayjanons.⁷ Luz recounted this event and revealed that there was a sole survivor. When the Japanese reached the neighboring town of Tangalan, they killed fifty residents. The church of Tangalan was spared from burning because of the intervention of the parish priest. Later, the church became the barracks of the Japanese.⁸ Lourdes recalled that the Japanese were patrolling around the nipa hut where she and her companions were hiding. Fearing for her life, she rolled her body inside a mat. She considers herself lucky that the Japanese did not stay long and left. While gathering her thoughts, she remembered a classmate who was one of the victims of the massacre in the town of Banga: "*Iba ko nga classmates nga nagkaeamatay. Tanda mo tag ginmasaccre sa Banga, may akong classmate idto. Masubo man kami.*" (We were sad that some of my classmates were victims in the Banga massacre.)

Upon the order from higher command, many of the towns' public buildings were burned to prevent them from being used by the Japanese.⁹ The guerrillas also destroyed many of the bridges to delay the Japanese from making rapid advances and burned houses so they could not loot from the towns.¹⁰ As a form of retaliation, the Japanese also burned deserted communities.¹¹ They dismantled the school buildings' iron gates in Numancia, Lezo, Buruanga, and Altavas and used the wood floors as fuel. Although reportedly no persons were killed in Lezo, the Japanese took domesticated animals such as carabaos, cows, pigs, chickens, and ducks. Around 135 perished in Altavas and seventy civilians including two priests and two teachers were massacred in Batan.¹² Maria's first encounter with the Japanese was when they were forced to gather in the church of Batan. They were told that if they did

7. Ibajay 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

8. Tangalan 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

9. Lezo, Malinao, and Nabas 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

10. Buruanga and Makato 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

11. Altavas, Kalibo, Madalag, and Makato 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

12. Altavas and Bataan 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

not leave the mountains, they would be severely punished. She shared a story of people who were imprisoned for days and later were burned alive. She remembered a man named Dikoy who was one of the two people who had managed to escape by slowly crawling away from where they were held.

Ramon narrated about folks being shot by the Japanese. His daughter even recalled that their mother was struck by a bayonet in the head. He mentioned comrades who were severely punished by the Japanese: “*Andang gindakop ag ginpatikang sa baga. Hapon ro nag-dap-on, si Into ag nalipat ako sa sambilog.*” (My comrades were caught and forced to walk on fire. [He recalled that the Japanese stabbed someone he knew.]) He continued, “*Ro andang pagwarang riya sa aton hay nagturaw sanda sa bukid, andang ginbuno si Rosing sa dughan. Eaom nanda hay patay eot ah hay wa gahueag. Nabuhi mat a imaw.*” (When they were patrolling, they went to the mountains, and they stabbed Rosing. They thought she was dead because she was not moving. She managed to survive.)

The Japanese also conscripted men for forced labor. In Tangalan, the Japanese drafted men from barrios of Afga and Dumatad who were forced to carry palay from their barrio to Sitio Boboc-on¹³ and Pandan, Antique.¹⁴ They tortured those who they suspected to have guerrilla connections and extracted information from them.¹⁵ For their amusement, the Japanese soldiers ordered civilians to run after chickens and pigs. Some were told to run with hands tied and were shot.¹⁶ A man who was caught dismantling his house was beaten, tied to a cart loaded with wood, then hanged upside down until he died.¹⁷ Women also fell victims to the cruelties of the Japanese, as evidenced by rape cases that were recorded in Libacao and Malinao.¹⁸

Daily Life: Food Security, Religiosity, and Entertainment

As people left their houses, their day-to-day survival was their major concern. Many families clustered and aided each other. Since Lourdes’ family had land in Cabayugan, Malinao, they resided in their aunt’s

13. This is a sitio in Ibajay, which is approximately 20 km from Tangalan.

14. This is around 10 km away from Ibajay. Tangalan 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

15. Madalag 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

16. Malay 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

17. Banga 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

18. Malinao 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

house in that place. During the war, the family survived through farming. “*Sa ubos hay may rice field. Ga-uma ron, may anwang kami, may ga-arado, not so much kami nga kaagi it hunger unlike sa iba nga owa it bugas.*” (We had a rice field and carabaos thus we continued to farm. We did not experience hunger compared to others.) Even during periods of military incursions, the town of Lezo became an alternate trading hub in Aklan. As a result of the war, traders from different towns and other provinces like Iloilo and Antique sold their goods near Tayhawan Creek. The Japanese did not destroy the town because it served as an evacuation area for local civilians. However, the Japanese were unaware that the town served as the food storage warehouse of the guerrillas.¹⁹ Lourdes recalled that her mother weaved sinamay while her elder brother sold cigarettes: “*Hay ro akon nga dictionary hay white ash, maw ta ro ana nga nagamit, ro tabako hay ginasi-ad it manipis ag ginapack ag ginabaligya nana sa tindahan kato hay Tayhawan, Lezo. Ro among mga suea hay idto gahalin. Idto gapanindahan, mga ibis ngaron.*” (My brother would cut the tobacco into small pieces and use my dictionary to make cigarettes. He sold them in Tayhawan, Lezo where we also buy our food like dried fish.)

In the town of Banga, records show that there was a shortage of salt used to preserve food. The Banganons saved themselves from impending hunger through farming and tilling their lands.²⁰ Rice was abundant in Habana, Buruanga and people also planted bananas, root crops, and vegetables for sustenance.²¹ Many of the fisherfolks in New Washington continued to go fishing and earned for their families. Some Japanese soldiers unknowingly bought fish alongside guerrillas.²²

Maria’s family got through by producing coconut oil, cultivating rice, and raising farm animals. Whenever they heard news of Japanese intrusion, her mother butchered and cooked their chickens and ducks to prevent the Japanese from stealing them, thus saving their poultry for the family’s consumption. They also pounded and sold rice: “*Gatipid kami sa pagkaon, two meals a day. Wa eot a it pamahaw, makaon ka it alas diyas, ag umihapon ka it alas cinco. Pag-alas cuatro ron hay napukaw eon kami nanay ag makuskos it niyog.*” (We only ate twice a day, first at ten in the morning then five in the afternoon. By four in the morning, mother would wake us up to scrape coconut meat.) According to

19. Lezo 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

20. Banga 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

21. Buruanga 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

22. New Washington 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

Ramon, bananas became a staple food for the guerrillas because Japanese surveillance limited their movement to obtain a variety of food: “*Mga saging, di man makauli sa baeay, hay andang ginalibod ro mga kabaeayan gabi-gabie. Anay kaulihe nagtinir sanda sa Kalibo hay gin-ambusan sanda sa karsada.*” (We ate bananas, because the Japanese keep on tailing the houses every night that people could not go back to their houses. In the later part, they stayed in Kalibo where the guerrillas ambushed them.)

Luz fondly reminisced: “*Abong humay ag suea, pirme gapatay it anwang o baka hay pirme gabuoe si Tata, ag paeay baea ing bayad. Ro iba karon hay gina-asinan ni Tata ag puston it eukab ngaron indi maalin ron. Kun mayad mat a du tiempo, may galibot mat a nga isda.*” (Rice and food was abundant. Some people butchered their cattle and my father bartered meat in exchange for rice. He used to cover the meat with salt and conceal it with palm leaves in order to preserve it. When the weather was fine, fish was sold.) Castora added, “*Owa a kami gingutom, abo ta kami nga paeay.*” (We didn’t starve. We had plenty of rice.) Since some barrios were far from the fishing villages, Cenon caught freshwater fish from the river, at the risk of being spotted by the Japanese, “*Gapangisda man kami sa suba, hay kun una ro Hapon, manago ka ron.*” (We fished in the river. If you spot the Japanese, you have to hide.)

People tended to continue to practice their religion in many parts of the province. The accounts in Balete recorded that Seventh-day Adventists and Jehovah’s Witnesses were still able to attend church services.²³ On the other hand, the people in Malinao had to celebrate masses in temporary chapels and in the forests. In the ten-month stay of the parish priest, Fr. Anacleto Selorio in the town, he celebrated masses every day in the forest of Cuyapnit. He also officiated weddings and baptisms in private houses that served as temporary chapels.²⁴ Lourdes shared that her cousin’s wedding was almost cancelled because some Japanese tried to cross Malinao through Aklan River: “*Hay tag gabie pa eang hay may tinug-on sa kueon ag om ga suea ngato hay gindaea ro humay sa Manhanip ag idto kami mag-ihapon. Memorable ta ay Nang Terry [Pering] nga kasae ron hay mayad eang wa sanda magtabok.*” (Nang Terry’s [Pering] wedding was memorable. We already prepared the food the night before the wedding day and brought it to Manhanip where we

23. Balete 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

24. Malinao 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

had dinner. It was fortunate that upon the arrival of Japanese, they did not cross the river going to Malinao.)

Lourdes even emphasized what she believed to be the intervention of their patron saint: flooding the Aklan River, disallowing the Japanese to encroach Malinao and saving the town from destruction. She said, "*Gusto kunta nanda magtabok sa Malinao halin sa Banga galing baha ro Aklan River. Gin-abangan ta it among patron, Sr. San Jose, haron du belief it mga tawo, wa ta iya katabok ro Hapon. Matya gratitude ron ay.*" (The Japanese from Banga wanted to cross the river but it was flooded. It is the people's belief that St. Joseph protected the people of Malinao. We are very grateful.) Ramon recited his nightly prayers: "*Gapangadi mat a ako. Gapangamuyo mat ang sa Diyos nga mageawig ro ang kabuhi. Kabay pa gid nga mabuhi ako.*" (I always pray to God for a longer life. I hope I live longer.) His daughter Remy relayed how her father always prays the rosary every evening while listening to the radio. For Maria, the war taught her to have faith in God. She commended her mother for being religious. Two of her brothers became priests and one sister became a nun. Overall, what was evident in the six interviews was that they believed that their strong faith protected them from brutalities and the misfortunes of war.

Although the people were in constant fear of the Japanese, it did not stop them from having a sense of normalcy during the war. The children, though scared of the war, continued playing games. Luz warmly described how they would go to the river when it was peaceful to *eaya* (a fishing method). They played *taksi*, a game of coins, as well as hide and seek within the evacuation areas when there was no news of Japanese operations. Maria and her sisters spent their free time taking lice off their hair while they sang Christmas songs. Lourdes accepted suitors who serenaded her at night: "*Ga-age sixteen eon abi kato hay madya blooming eot a, may gaadto eot a sa amon hay may gaharana eot a.*" (I was already blooming at the age of sixteen so there were men who serenaded me.)

Dances were also common in many localities. For instance, dances were regularly held on the bridge at the poblacion of Makato. People lit burnt copra at the corner of the streets and on cement pathways. At one instance, the people hired two bands for a nighttime affair at a high cost; the men and women danced from 8 p.m. to 6 a.m.²⁵ Women were

25. Makato 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

also active in holding benefit dances held in guerilla camps or guerilla-controlled areas in order to raise money and funds to buy food and clothing for the resistance movement.²⁶ Cenon recalled, “*May mga binayle man ro army, ag may mga daeaga.*” (There were dances to which the guerillas invited young maidens.) Other combatants visited their girlfriends in between encounters even if they had to cross enemy lines.

DISCUSSION

I asked my informants about their thoughts on their war experiences more than seven decades after the war. Ramon, with a smile on his face, told a story about an instance when his comrade almost tricked him into eating a Japanese person. Since food was scarce in Cabatuan, Iloilo, his friend offered to look for food and cook. “*Naga-usoy sanda it pagkaon hay andang hakita ro patay sa daean hay ginhilab ra anang nga pa-a, anang panuok ag daehon. Gin-eaha nanda ag ginpakaon kamon. Hay kasayod kami nga Hapon gali, hay owa gid magkaon. Idto sa Tiring, Cabatuan. Owa mat akon magkaon. Wa man sanda nagkaon. Wa man nagkaon ro nag-eaha. Sadyaan gid mat ah ro pageaha.*” (They were looking for food when they found a dead body on the road. This was in Tiring, Cabatuan. They took the leg part and cooked it for us. We knew it was a Japanese, so we did not eat it. My friends and the one who cooked the meal also did not eat, but the cooking seems good.) This story was brought up when Ramon was asked about his feelings toward the Japanese. The war made a visceral impact on him as he survived a gunshot which left him with a head injury: “*Inigo ako it bala sa ueo . . . mga katapusan tong inaway, cuarenta y cinco natapos ro gyaera, cuarenta y cuatro ako gin-igo it bala.*” (I was shot in the head in 1944, towards the end of the war in 1945.) As much as he wanted to remain vindictive, Ramon said he cannot do anything about what had already happened and what matters now is that he is alive: “*Naakig kunta ron hay alinon ay di ako makahueag. Wa mat akon naakig makaron ay buhi mat ang. Mayad mat akon.*” (I want to be angry, but I could no longer move. I am not angry anymore for I am alive and well.)

For Lourdes, it is a situation that war survivors had to accept. However, one cannot deny that if the Japanese did not occupy the country, the lives of the people would not be difficult. According to Lourdes, “*Ga-obey malang it orders sanda galing hay alinon wa man sanda*

26. Ibajay 1953, National Library of the Philippines.

kungta naila karon pero kun may pamilya ka nga namatay syempre gadumot kat imo ron." (The Japanese were just obeying orders. Given the chance, they would not want to do the acts they had committed. But if you have family members who were killed, definitely you will be vengeful against them.) Maria was thankful that her brother, who died of dysentery in a concentration camp, did not experience torture. She no longer felt animosity against the Japanese: "*Ga-amat amat man ngani it dua man. Ag ro Hapon madya nag-ayad ayad man sa Philippines no?* They learned to love our country. They have contributed something to the Filipino people. *Maayad-ayad ro Hapon, mahugod.*" (The animosity is disappearing. The Japanese are hardworking. They have contributed to the Filipinos and they have learned to love our country.)

The recent oral accounts still reveal Japanese atrocities in the memories of the survivors nearly seventy-five years after the war. Since they were given the opportunity to talk about their experiences, the respondents tended to remember their daily experiences such as having to move to safer places, their strong faith, games and activities, food security, and their responsibilities in the family. As Jose (2012, 186) suggests, "war memories are determined more by one's present perceptions of the war, rather than delving into past facts." This observation is especially true for war survivors who were interviewed with a relative distance from the event. Although the people continue to regard the war as a tragic memory, because of the distance of the event, they were able to look at the experience from different perspectives. When asked about their attitudes toward the Japanese, they had a way of contextualizing their experience as a result of the wartime conditions that they had no control of. Their perceptions of Japan differed today because of its economic ties with the Philippine government, which they find indispensable to our country. Nevertheless, this attitude does not mean that they have absolved the Japanese of their atrocities. They look back at those experiences that shaped who they are today and are grateful to have survived a perilous time in history.

Although the respondents recalled their more personal experiences, the common experience of violence brought by the war still lingered in their memories. Consistent in the two sets of historical sources are the guerrilla operations and Japanese atrocities. The respondents have identified the brutalities of the punitive drive of October 1943 as a prevailing narrative but there was confusion on the exact year of the incursions. Counterchecking with published accounts, Aklan was relatively free from Japanese control except for the occupation of

Kalibo between April–May 1942, as the Japanese left for Capiz by August. The absence of Japanese forces during the early period of the occupation was one of the reasons why Aklan experienced a relatively peaceful situation. The Japanese reoccupied Aklan during the last quarter of 1943 during their planned punitive drive. Following the October 1943 *juez de cuchillo*, they garrisoned the towns of Kalibo, Ibayay, New Washington, Altavas, Balete, and Batan while the remaining towns were relatively free of Japanese forces. The study shows that the terrors of the war still resonate in their individual and collective reckonings and the distance of time enabled them to reflect on these experiences and the learnings embodied in their lives. They narrated how their religious beliefs played a significant role in their day-to-day lives as the respondents linked their survival and long life with their strong faith. Informants also associated their war memories with other people's ordeals by way of citing several anecdotes contributing to the collective memory of the war in Aklan.

After the Second World War, Japan became one of the world's largest economies and had utilized its official development aid to exercise its influence over Southeast Asian countries which received the largest share from the 1970s to 1990s. The Philippines is among the top three recipients (Rivera 2003, 509–11; Villacorta 2003, 593). For the respondents, the former colonizer is now seen as an important economic power that is aiding the Philippines. The interviews revealed how they negotiated their attitudes toward Japan with the contemporary times by contextualizing their past experiences as a consequence of history. With the distance of the war and the changing attitudes toward Japan, it is even more important to gather these stories from the survivors whose memories are starting to wither.

CONCLUSION

The immediate postwar years concentrated on getting reparations from Japan, achieving justice at the war crime trials, and acquiring war damage claims from the United States. During the 1960s, the Philippine government began to be more open to Japan because of its growing economic importance to the Southeast Asian region. As we look back to this part of our past, what have we learned from the wartime years? For this study's respondents, they believe that war should never happen again because everyone suffers. However, if it is inevitable, every Filipino should always fight for their sovereignty until the very end. The story of the lives of ordinary folks in this study gave us insights on how

Filipinos survived an extraordinary period in history. Both historical accounts suggest the pain and horror that the people of Aklan experienced during the occupation. There might be some changes in their attitudes because they were eager to get a sense of closure and may have been influenced by the Philippine-Japan relations. Still the atrocities will never be justified and should always be remembered by the younger generations. As the great political and military narratives continue to dominate the history of the Japanese occupation, there is a need for more studies that focus on the accounts of the ordinary people.

This paper shows how both the HDP and oral history accounts have significant potential in revealing the nuances of local narratives, yet have serious methodological limitations given the weaknesses of each source. With the limited time of data collection, the teachers who did not have training in historical research in the 1950s were forced to produce the HDP. However, the Japanese occupation section of the HDP discloses relevant information about local communities and how they responded to the challenges of the war collectively. Although Japanese atrocities were commonly documented in HDP, it also recorded the state of food security, identified evacuation areas where families lived together and aided one another, and how religion played an important part in the sense of normalcy of the civilians. The data from the HDP still resonated with the oral history sources collected more than seven decades from respondents with fading memories and selective remembering. Yet, when used as complementary sources, the two historical accounts provide a more informed and multifaceted analysis of survival in a time of great adversity, scarcity, and atrocity. In this study, I also attempted to map out barrios who have records about the war based on the HDP to provide a visual representation of the data using GIS. Perhaps, a project such as this can be of interest to researchers given that the HDP is digitally available. Also, the Central Philippine University (CPU) in Jaro, Iloilo digitized their guerrilla papers as part of the Roderick Hall Collection of the Filipinas Heritage Library, Makati, Metro Manila. Although not utilized in this study, these guerrilla papers are important primary sources for the World War II history of Panay. The collection included personal letters and correspondence with the guerrillas and can provide more insights about the civilian population.

Panay Island was the home of one of the most successful anti-Japanese guerrilla resistance movements that is well documented. But

many of the stories of the ordinary folks in Panay during the war who remained nameless and faceless in history are merely part of footnotes and brief mentions. Studies about ordinary life is the gap in our literature about the war. The study shows that the two sources present the history of Filipino resilience and solidarity. By giving war survivors a space for their lives to be recorded, we are democratizing the production of knowledge from the communities. We allow these actors to retell their stories from their perspectives and use their own words to converse with the people they belong to and represent. Many of the local stories similar to what this study had recorded were lost or became unknown to many because very few histories are written about the ordinary folks. As of this writing, I already lost two of my informants; Castora and Cenon both died in 2021. I hope to honor their stories of survival and heroism through this study. The generation of war survivors will soon be gone, and if their narratives are not documented, we will be detached from our collective history that shaped us as a people. ❀

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FRANCES ANTHEA R. REDISON is assistant professor, Division of Social Sciences, University of the Philippines Visayas, Miagao, Iloilo. Send correspondence to the author at fredison@up.edu.ph. This article was first published online on March 12, 2024.