

Propaganda or not? An Analysis of Tony Velasquez's "The Kalibapi Family," 1943-1944

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Abstract

At the height of Japan's occupation of the Philippines, among the major priorities of the Japanese government was to bring back a sense of normalcy, to pull the Filipinos into their fold, and to support their war causes. This was done through various means, such as wartime propaganda through the control and censorship of Philippine media. The *Tribune* was one news publication that fell under Japanese control, and its contents, including its comic strips, were heavily censored during the war. This study analyzes the historical and artistic contents of the comic strip "The Kalibapi Family." Penned by Antonio "Tony" Velasquez, the strip was published by the *Tribune* from 1943 to 1944. This study seeks to answer the following questions: How did Tony Velasquez illustrate the conditions and different aspects of life under the Japanese Occupation through "The Kalibapi Family" comic strips? Did Velázquez try to satirize the Japanese? Did he put some elements of resistance in the comic strips? Data for the study were gathered through the online archives of the Filipinas Heritage Library and the National Library of Australia. After a process of purposive sampling, 30 strips were selected and explored through content and discourse analysis. The study found that although "The Kalibapi Family" was initially dismissed as propaganda, the comic was generally more pro-Philippine Republic. Velasquez presented a nuanced perspective where he showed how a Filipino artist could portray the real situation at that time in a more comical manner that the general public can understand.

Key Words: Japanese Occupation, Kalibapi Family, Propaganda, Tony Velasquez, SDG 4: Quality Education, SDG 16: Peace Justice and Strong Institutions

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Introduction

During the height of Japan's expansionist drives, which eventually led to the capitulation of the American-controlled Philippines, the Japanese government made efforts to bring the Filipinos into their fold through various means, with wartime propaganda as one of the most notable mechanisms. One important tool to achieve this purpose was through the mainstream newspapers at that time, chief among which was *the Tribune*. This newspaper had considerable clout and was well-known for its credibility and impartiality before the war, but after falling into the hands of the Japanese Propaganda Corps, it became widely perceived as part of the Japanese propaganda machinery. Ultimately, its pre-war clout and image never recovered, even after the occupation and war ended (Jose, 1990).

The Japanese Occupation of the Philippines later became one of the most studied periods in Philippine history, with numerous scholars discussing the military, political, and economic aspects of the war. Furthermore, there have been a great number of publications and memoirs detailing incidents of collaboration and the experiences of witness-participants. Two examples of these works were, first, the book *Honor: The Legacy of Jose Abad Santos* by Desiree Ann Cua Benipayo (2018), which puts into perspective the character and role of Jose Abad Santos during the war. Another example was the book *The Years of Enemy Occupation: The Issue of Political Collaboration in the Philippines* by Claro M. Recto, which was published in 1946. In this book, which is a direct response to the collaboration and treason charges filed against him after the war, Recto defended his and other Filipino officials' actions during the Japanese Occupation and argued that the so-called collaborators did it out of patriotism and the desire to protect his fellow Filipinos during the war. However, studies on the cultural aspect of the war remain underexplored, though several researchers have investigated wartime religion, media, and even propaganda. For example, Dr. Ricardo T. Jose (1990) has published articles in the *Tribune* and its propagandistic role during the Japanese Occupation, while Terami-Wada (1990) has written about the Japanese Propaganda Corps. Further studies on the content of the propaganda materials in the Philippines were also written by Cheng Chua (2005), who examined the sequential comics published during the Japanese Occupation of the Philippines. Another research on the subject was made by John Lee Candelaria (2021), who analyzed images published by the *Tribune*,

highlighting themes of Japanese militarization and technological advancement. This study will further build on the extant literature, particularly that of Cheng Chua (2005), by specifically examining one comic strip published in the *Tribune*, “The Kalibapi Family” penned by Antonio “Tony” Velasquez.

Research Questions

This study focuses on one of the features of the *Tribune*, the comics series “The Kalibapi Family” by Tony Velasquez, which was published from October 10, 1943, to June 1944. It was guided by the following objectives:

1. What was the role of the *Tribune* during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines?
2. How did Tony Velasquez illustrate the following aspects of life under the Japanese Occupation:
 - 2.1. Economic (Problems and solutions)
 - 2.2. Political
 - 2.3. Socio-cultural (Holidays, traditions, clothes, languages)
 - 2.4. Military
3. Did Velasquez try to satirize the Japanese or not? Did he put some elements of resistance in the comic strips?

Framework

The analysis of propaganda primarily requires research that provides historical context, examines propaganda messages and media used, and studies its possible long-term effects. Taking into account these factors, this study’s framework was based on Jowett and O’Donnell’s (2005) proposed ten stages in analyzing propaganda (see Figure 1). The discussion chapter of this study will be organized around these stages to evaluate whether Tony Velasquez’s “Kalibapi Family” was indeed a genuine form of propaganda.

Methodology

In this study, I used the qualitative method involving three distinct approaches. The first was archival research, in which the Kalibapi Family

Figure 1.

Jowett and O'Donnell's Ten Stages in Analyzing Propaganda

Jowett and O'Donnell's Ten Stages in Analyzing Propaganda (2005)				
<p>1. Ideology and Purpose of the Propaganda Campaign</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Locate its ideological basis and purposes 	<p>2. The context in which the propaganda occurs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Seeks to understand the historical or prevailing climate 	<p>3. Identification of the 'propagandist.'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Institution or individual as lead or independent agent. 	<p>4. Organizational Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A strong and centralized decision-making authority. 	<p>5. Target Audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Selected audience to maximize the propaganda's success.
<p>6. Media utilization techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Includes all available media, such as the press and radio, among others. 	<p>7. Special techniques to maximize effect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visual symbols of power, language used, and resonance. 	<p>8. Audience reaction to various techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluates how the audience takes the propaganda's message. 	<p>9. Counterpropaganda (if present)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May be formed underground. 	<p>10. Effects and Evaluation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If not all of the purposes, then perhaps some goals were achieved.

Note: This figure is created based on the framework provided by Jowett and O'Donnell (2005) in analyzing the ten stages of propaganda.

comic strips were sourced from the online archives of the National Library of Australia and the Filipinas Heritage Library. The strips were purposively selected, resulting in 30 strips collected from the target dates. An artificial intelligence-assisted tool, specifically Google Gemini, was used to enhance the overall appearance of the comic strips gathered from the archives. Content analysis was also utilized, a nonreactive research technique used to examine the content, information, and symbols contained in written documents or other communication media such as photographs, films, and song lyrics (Neuman, 2014). In conducting the content analysis, I manually looked through the comic strips, identified them, and then analyzed the presence of certain words or concepts in the comic strips.

In addition to content analysis, discourse analysis was applied to deepen the investigation of the selected comic strips. As a method, discourse analysis is defined as a series of approaches to qualitative research that explores how language socially, culturally, and politically mediates constructions and understanding of reality (Aguillon et al., 2022). The available data were then examined and coded manually. From these coded data, themes were drawn, and comic strips with similar themes were grouped and labeled. In this study, the categories

were identified according to different aspects of life during the Japanese Occupation of the Philippines; the first was economic, which covered the various economic problems Filipinos encountered (including food shortages and inflation), as well as the solutions Filipinos resorted to survive the war. Second was the socio-cultural aspect, which underscores the language used by the characters in the comic strips, holidays implemented by the Japanese, and even the clothes that ordinary people wear. Third was the political aspects, which featured the various policies that the Laurel Administration implemented, as depicted in the comic strips. Last was the military aspects, where the display of military power and civil defense was shown.

Findings and Discussion

Ideology and Purpose of the Propaganda Campaign and the Context in which the Propaganda Occurs

On January 2, 1942, units of the Japanese Imperial Army first entered the capital city of Manila, which was later declared an “Open City” (Cheng Chua, 2005). Terami-Wada (1990) described the situation at that time when the Japanese forces captured the city of Manila; they also seized both state and privately—owned facilities. Due to this significant loss as well as General Douglas MacArthur’s retreat to Australia, remaining Filipino and American forces who chose not to surrender shifted to guerrilla or unconventional warfare. When the Japanese troops settled, their primary concern was to restore order and foster a semblance of normalcy in all occupied areas, as well as to attract the Filipino people to support the Japanese war cause. He also stated that this task fell into the Japanese Propaganda Corps, which received the following orders: first was to gain control of newspaper publishers and reopen these stations as soon as possible; second was to capture the radio stations, fix broken broadcast equipment, and return them to air; last was to reopen the theaters and movie houses. The propaganda corps took only some time to implement these orders and began solidifying its control over the Philippines. By the end of 1943, the Japanese-sponsored Second Philippine Republic was inaugurated, and Philippine independence was proclaimed, with Jose P. Laurel serving as President. It should also be noted that when the Laurel government “took charge,” the country was beset by various problems, most notable of which were the food shortages and high inflation rate, particularly in urban areas, as

well as the oftentimes harsh treatment that the Filipinos experienced at the hands of the Japanese officers (Terami-Wada, 1990).

Identification of the alleged “Propagandist:” A Short Background of Tony Velasquez

The “Kalibapi Family”’s creator, Antonio “Tony” Velasquez (1910 – 1997) had a long career that spanned the birth, development, and triumph of the comics industry in the Philippines. One of the highlights of this career was his creation of the first serialized comic strip titled “Mga Kabalalan ni Kenkoy,” which ran from January 11, 1929, until 1934 in the *Liwayway Magazine*. Baguisi (2018) studied this pioneering work and stated that among its legacies is that it opened the tradition of comic strips in the Philippines and bolstered its newfound value as a form of art. These are among the reasons why he is known in the artistic community as the “Father of Filipino Komiks” (Baguisi, 2018). Velasquez’s most popular creation, the character of Kenkoy or Francisco Harabas, is a character that is abusive and astute, and was described as a Filipino who loves to wear foreign clothes and speaks in “Carabao English” (Baguisi, 2018). Kenkoy became popular primarily because he struck readers as a kind of parody; he was a mirror of Filipinos who, after becoming thoroughly colonized, proceeded to wear tuxedos instead of native clothes. The character was so popular that during the Second World War, when the offices of the Roces Publications were seized by the Japanese Propaganda Corps, Velasquez was ordered to reinvent and use the character of Kenkoy as part of Japan’s propaganda machinery. Velasquez refused this order due to his loyalty to the Filipino cause and principles. However, he eventually gave in when then-President Jose P. Laurel requested that he use Kenkoy just to promote the administration’s health programs for the Filipino people (Yu-Rivera, n.d.). Eventually, Velasquez continued creating other comic strips during the Laurel administration, the most prominent of which is this paper’s topic, the “Kalibapi Family.”

The Structure of the Propaganda Organization, Target Audience, and Media Utilization Techniques

As soon as the Japanese entered Manila, they immediately seized the offices of the pre-war Manila Bulletin, the Philippines Free Press, and the TVT (Terami-Wada, 1990). Out of the three newspaper chains, the only ones permitted to run during the entire war were the *Taliba*, *La Vanguardia*, and the *Tribune*, or “TVT” chain owned by Alejandro

Roces (Cheng Chua, 2005). Most of the *Tribune's* prewar contributors and staff were retained or rehired by the Japanese, who later added new staff members and contributors (citation). During the early years of the war, the *Tribune* was also permitted to publish American comic strips that “served as entertainment and an escape for readers who found the news about the war as gruesome and tragic” (Jose, 1998 p. 256) To solve this issue, the Propaganda Corps had no other choice but to “continuously print the American comic strips until they could produce their comic strips” (Cheng Chua, 2005, p. 7). The American-made strips were replaced by four comic strips that were permitted by Japanese censors to appear on the pages of the *Tribune* from 1942 to 1944, namely “*The Philosopher of the Sidewalk*” by Gat; “*Now I’ve Seen Everything*” by Ros; “*The Boy ‘Pilipino*” by Keizo Simada; and “*The Kalibapi Family*” by Tony Velasquez, which will be covered by this study (Cheng Chua, 2005).

Special Techniques to Maximize the Effect: The Use of Comics as Wartime Propaganda

During wartime, governments and even occupying forces knew that it was important for them to have the public’s support for their war efforts and that if the opposite scenario happened, they would lose the war. In modern times, one of the means to achieve this is through propaganda. Jowett and O’Donnell (2005, p. 36) defined propaganda as “the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.” (p 36). Since the advent of the modern era, propaganda has come in the form of various media. Due to its large following and wide cultural impact, print media was one of the most popular forms (Sostaric, 2019). The use of comics as wartime propaganda has been widespread, with governments such as that of the United States disseminating print propaganda through comics, images, periodicals, and advertising to sell the war to the Americans. An example of this is the “Captain America” and “Wonder Woman” comics, both of which fostered a sense of patriotism and political obligation, urging citizens to contribute to the US’ war efforts by any means possible. At the same time, the Axis powers were portrayed in the comics as the antithesis of American values and ideals. These themes and rhetoric mirrored government propaganda and government programs during the war (Sostaric, 2019).

In the context of the Philippines, comics are considered as a simple medium that is easy to understand, hence their popularity with the general public. For Reyes (1997), comics have been integrated into the Filipino people's lives and psyche because its messages and characters are more understandable than any other medium. It has also been argued that comics can help shape the mindset of their readers, which is why they have been extensively used to promote policies, commercial products, and electoral candidates (Reyes, 1997). Examples of wartime propaganda comics in the Philippines can be found in the different comic strips published in the *Tribune*, with the Japanese Propaganda Corps utilizing the said newspaper as its mouthpiece. Published cartoons and comics were inundated with Japanese cultural content since the goal of the Japanese Propaganda Corps was to integrate Japanese culture into the Filipino people's everyday life while also erasing American influences (Cheng Chua, 2005). Comics can be used as propaganda to exert influence on the lives of people like Filipinos, which explains the reason why it was extensively used by various institutions, politicians, and in this case, enemy forces to advance their objectives. However, the medium of comics itself also has the potential to provide valuable insights and new glimpses into the lives of ordinary people, and how they responded to the challenges during the time in which they lived.

Komiks in Focus: Background on the 'Kalibapi Family'

Tony Velasquez's "Kalibapi Family" became a daily feature in the *Tribune*. The said comic ran from October 10, 1943, to June 25, 1944—a relatively long period since other comic strips only lasted for a month, culminating in 146 strips. Throughout its entire run, its strips were peppered with short yet witty and subtle commentaries referring to the difficult everyday life experienced by ordinary Filipinos who struggled to eke out a living during the Japanese occupation. The comic also depicted different problems at that time, most notable of which was food shortage. This makes the Kalibapi Family a kind of slice of life genre in comics since its depictions center around people and its plot usually arises from everyday life experiences (Kench, 2022). This kind of genre also typically does not need a coherent plot, conflict, and clear ending, hence its popularity among comic artists and other authors.

In terms of characters, the series featured a family consisting of the following members who appeared alternately: "Kalibapi," the father; "Inday," the mother; "Bayani," the oldest son; "Nene," the older sister; "Totoy," the youngest son; "Tio Tasyo," husband of Upeng; "Tia Upeng," an

aunt; and “Nena,” daughter of “Tasyo” and “Upeng.” The Kalibapi Family had a format of the normal four-panel strips, and in terms of language, Velasquez used a combination of English, Filipino, and Romaji dialogue (Cheng Chua, 2005). Interestingly, the family name of the characters and title of the strip resonated with the acronym “KALIBAPI,” which means “Kapisanan sa Paglilingkod sa Bagong Pilipinas.” The KALIBAPI went on to become the only political party permitted to operate throughout the Second Philippine Republic (Jose, 1998). Aside from the resonance with the political party’s name, Tony Velasquez’s choice of Filipino names or terms for most of the strip’s characters should also be noted. These are names such as Inday (“miss” in Visayas), Totoy (roughly means little boy), Bayani (“hero” in Tagalog), and Nene (little girl), which are all recognizable to Filipino readers, but may be unfamiliar to the Japanese individuals who cannot fully understand the meaning of these names.

Figure 2.
First Issue of the “Kalibapi Family.”



Note: First Issue of “The Kapibapi Family” published by The Tribune on October 10, 1943, Sunday (Velasquez, 1943a). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

Illustrations of the Condition of the Philippines, 1943 – 1944

The introductory issue of the “Kalibapi Family” was published on a Sunday, October 10, 1943, four days before the inauguration of the Second Philippine Republic (see Figure 2). The strip showed all of the characters that will successively appear in the issues of the Kalibapi Family, such as Bayani, Inday, Nene, and Tiyo Tasyo. They were depicted as a normal Filipino family from the upper or lower middle class, complete with a pet dog, and all of them were dressed like typical Filipinos: Inday and Tiya Nena are depicted wearing a patadyong, and Nene wears a child’s dress with polka dots.

However, readers should note the use of combined Nihonggo and Tagalog languages in the dialogue boxes: Totoy opened up with the phrase “Ohayo Gozaimasu! Watashi wa Toto desu!” followed by “My nanay, Inday, and Kalibapi san, my tatay!” followed by the introduction of the other family members (Kalibapi Family, 1943).

1. Economic Problems: Scarcity, Shortages, Inflation, and Profiteers

Figure 3.

Philippinize, Economize



Note: Published by The Tribune on November 14, 1943, Sunday (Velasquez, 1943b). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

The strip issued on November 14, 1943 (Sunday) has an explicit title: “Philippinize, Economize” (see Figure 3). In this issue, it can be seen that Nene seems to have broken a female statue in their house. Her mother, Inday, laments the incident because the statue had been in their home even before Nene was born. However, her husband, Mr. Kalibapi, responds that what happened could not be undone, and instead suggests that they Philippinize or replace the statue with something from local sources. Philippinizing was aligned with the Laurel Government’s policy of substitution at that time, and people resorted to cost-cutting measures and substituting prime commodities with whatever they could find. Camote became the substitute for rice, buses ran on charcoal instead of gas, rice replaced coffee, and banana catsup was used as a substitute for the imported tomato ketchup (Jose, 1998).

The November 30, 1943 issue (see Figure 4), features the entry of one of the Kalipabi Family’s extended members, named Tio Tasyo, a brother of Mr. Kalibapi who came from the province to pursue and enter into the so-called “buy and sell” business that became dominant during the Japanese Occupation. This kind of business involved middlemen who sought out second-hand or even looted goods and offered them to possible buyers at higher prices (Jose, 1998). According to Tasyo, he had

Figure 4.

Adventure of Tio Tasyo

ADVENTURE OF TIO TASYO

By TONY VELASQUEZ



Note: Published by The Tribune on November 30, 1943, Tuesday (Velasquez, 1943c). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

seen his neighbors become rich overnight because of the said business venture, and so he also wants to try to become a millionaire through easy money. Notice Inday's wearing of a patadyong, Tasyo's tsinelas, Mr. Kalibapi's coat and tie with a bowler hat, and his use of romaji words "so desu ka!"

Figure 5.

At the Rate Prices Soar We Need an Airplane, not our Salary

AT THE RATE PRICES SOAR WE NEED AN AIRPLANE, NOT OUR SALARY

By TONY VELASQUEZ



Note. Published by The Tribune on December 16, 1943, Thursday (Velasquez, 1943d). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

Given the strict censorship of the Sendenbu, the December 16, 1943 strip of the "Kalibapi Family" entitled "At the Rate Prices Soar, We Need an Airplane, Not Our Salary" (see Figure 5) was rather provocative. In the issue, Mr. Kalibapi has a conversation with a man about their Christmas bonuses. However, Mr. Kalibapi retorts that the bonus is not enough since the prices of goods "are getting higher and higher" and that they "will not be able to buy anything valuable with it." The contents reflected the economic issue of inflation, since its rate could no longer be controlled in late 1943 (Jose,1998). It should also be noted that in this strip, Mr. Kalibapi is seen wearing an American-style suit complete with

a hat, while the other man is wearing what looks like a Japanese Army-style uniform. Tony Velasquez portrayed the situation quite evocatively, not just based on the contents but also because of its title by indicating the phrase “at the rate prices soar.”

Figure 6.

The Result of Encouraging Profiteers
THE RESULT OF ENCOURAGING PROFITEERS

By **TONY VELASQUEZ**



Note. Published by The Tribune on February 3, 1944, Thursday (Velasquez, 1943e). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

Another issue with a provocative title was that of the February 3 strip entitled “The Result of Encouraging Profiteers” (see Figure 6). One of the causes of economic problems at that time was the dominance of the so-called profiteers, or people who sold commodities at a higher price (Agoncillo, 1965; Jose, 1998). However, these profiteers also tended to sell fake or even used products, as shown in the strip, where Inday buys a mosquito net worth 50 pesos that the profiteer markets as “slightly used.” However, the couple is surprised when they open the mosquito net to find that it has already been used and broken.

Substitution and Solutions

Figure 7.

Slipping – Spanking – Discovering
SLIPPING—SPANKING—DISCOVERING

By **TONY VELASQUEZ**



Note: Published by The Tribune on October 19, 1943, Tuesday (Velasquez, 1943f). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

In the October 19, 1943, strip, Nene breaks a foreign-made bottle of vinegar and is then punished by her mother for the mishap (see Figure 7). However, Nene sets things straight and solves the issue by giving Inday another bottle of vinegar made of bamboo tubes. Nene says that Inday no longer needs to worry about breaking the new containers, which are cheaper and more accessible since they are made in the Philippines. Nene could have replaced the broken bottle with a similar one, but the cartoonist chose to emphasize Filipino products by using bamboo containers, and suggests that these are more durable than glass bottles, which gives an impression that the local products portrayed are superior to foreign, Western-made brands.

Figure 8.

If Others Can, Why Can't We?



Notes: Published by The Tribune on October 23, 1943, Saturday (Velasquez, 1943g). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

In the October 23, 1943 strip, Inday and her sister can be seen chatting about the difficulty of purchasing kamisetas since the said apparel is not manufactured locally (see Figure 8). Nene overhears the conversation and tries to make kamisetas out of the available threads for her father and brother. Inday retorts that she is just wasting the threads, but Nene replies, “If they can make kamiseta and other things in other countries, why can’t we here in the Philippines?” Based on the contents of this strip, Velasquez again subtly emphasized the feasibility of local manufacturing in the Philippines. This was again in line with the policy of President Jose P. Laurel on self-sufficiency and the Philipinization of the manufacturing sector to avoid over-reliance on foreign products.

On October 27, 1943 issue of the Kalibapi Family, a bunch of children, including Nene, talk about which fruit they prefer (see Figure 9). The first child says he likes apples, the second prefers grapes, while Nene says she prefers mangoes. This leads to a further debate, and it

served, he overhears the other customer's conversation, saying that some restaurants use cat meat as a substitute for pork and chicken meat. This may be unacceptable to some Filipino readers who pay for sky-high prices only to find out that the meat was almost worthless.

Figure 11.

Tia Upeng Capitalizes Her Senses – and Her Silk



Notes: Published by The Tribune on December 23, 1943, Thursday (Velasquez, 1943j). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

The character of Tasyo had another appearance in the December 23, 1943 strip (see Figure 11). This time, however, he is no longer the desperate provinciano who came to Manila to engage in the buy and sell business. According to the letter he sent to Tia Upeng, Tasyo now wants the Kalibapi Family to spend Christmas in Bulacan and help him harvest rice and plant other crops. The strip concludes with an image of Tasyo harvesting palay and saying, “Future prosperity or poverty, that will depend on our self-sufficiency!” This message is aligned with some of President Jose P. Laurel’s policies, such as the need to depopulate the cities and for the people to return to the provinces. The return to farming is also related to President Laurel’s principle of economic self-sufficiency as a long-term solution to the problems that plagued the Philippines (Jose, 1998). It should be noted that in this strip, Tony Velasquez used overwhelmingly Filipino elements in the scenery and background, such as the Filipiniana attire of the female characters, the traditional Filipino farming hats used by the men, and the use of the carabao as part of the strip’s presentation.

The 1944 New Year’s Day strip shows the New Year messages of Mr. Kalibapi, who talks about returning to the provinces to plant and produce more crops (see Figure 12). Meanwhile, Tasyo affirms that the key to a stable future is resorting to agriculture.

Figure 13.

Not Forever

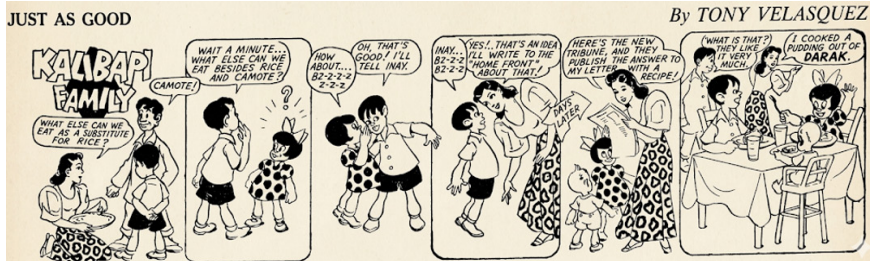


Notes: Published by The Tribune on January 6, 1944, Thursday (Velasquez, 1944b). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

In the January 6, 1944 issue, Inday can be seen arguing about the price of camote with a seller in the market who takes pride in making big money selling camote, which gives a hint that she may be a profiteer (see Figure 13). However, Inday retorts that these profiteers will soon be out of business when people start to grow camote in their backyard gardens. Food gardens were one of the solutions of the Laurel Government to combat inflation and profiteers, and to promote sustainable living.

Figure 14.

Just As Good



Notes: Published by The Tribune on January 14, 1944, Friday (Velasquez, 1944c). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

The January 14, 1944, issue with the title “Just as good” shows members of the Kalibapi Family discussing food that can substitute rice, which subtly reflects the rice shortage at the time of publication (see Figure 14). The children whisper to Inday, who later writes to one of the *Tribune’s* sections, “Home Front,” to ask for advice. The Home Front issued a reply and presumably suggests darak as a substitute for rice.

Figure 15.

Nene's Prayer



Published by The Tribune on February 20, 1944, Sunday (Velasquez, 1943d). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

In the February 20, 1944 issue (see Figure 15), Nene is shown reciting the Lord's Prayer, but she pauses after uttering the original part "give us this day, our daily bread." Realizing that they no longer eat bread, Nene corrects herself by saying "Give us this day our daily kamote." There are multiple issues during that time that are shown on this strip, such as the shortage of bread and other commodities, and the tendency of people to substitute them with available root crops like camote (Kintanar et al., 2006).

Figure 16.

Needs Brain to Make Nothing for Something



Notes: Published by The Tribune on March 25, 1944, Tuesday (Velasquez, 1943e). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

Aside from food, another commodity that experienced shortages during the Japanese occupation was clothing. For example, the strip of March 25, 1944, showed Mr. Kalibapi giving away a stack of used neckties (see Figure 16). Realizing the value of these, Inday does not throw them away and instead converts the used neckties into her children's clothes (Cheng Chua, 2005).

Figure 17.

An Idea Born out of Match Shortage



Notes: Published by The Tribune on April 2, 1944 – Saturday (Velasquez, 1944f). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

In the April 2, 1944 strip (see Figure 17), some men are shown lining up not to buy cigarettes but rather to wait for their turn to light their cigarettes. The source of light does not come from matches or lighters, but from another man who already has a lit cigarette stick. Nene observes this and decides to take the opportunity to “sell” fire from a candle for one centavo each light. Another interesting part of the strip is the title itself, which highlights the word “shortage.” Tony Velasquez had been subtly showing the different shortages in the previous strips, but this was the first time that he ever placed the word on the title bar.

Socio-Cultural (Language, Practices, Holidays, Clothes, etc)

Figure 18.

Daily “Taiso” Sturdy “Sundalo”



Notes: Published by The Tribune on October 17, 1943, Sunday (Velasquez, 1943k). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

The October 17, 1943, issue titled “Daily Taiso, Sturdy Sundalo,” features Nene waking her younger brother, Totoy, up to do the morning

exercise broadcast through Radio Taiso (see Figure 18). Their mother scolds Nene for waking the still sleepy Totoy, but Nene protests that “he must exercise to grow up to be a strong soldier!” The Radio Taiso was a daily physical exercise broadcast mandated by the Japanese authorities for Filipinos to follow. For Jose and Yu-Jose (1997), Radio Taiso was seen as an attempt made by the Japanese to assert their dominance over Filipinos. Filipinos were disciplined through morning exercises that can “only be done by following an invisible authority while being represented only by music and voices from the radio which gave a message that Filipinos must follow authorities even if the latter are practically absent” (Cheng Chua, 2005 p. 16).

Figure 19.

Requires “Pagsusumakit at Kasipagan” to Obtain “Kaligayahan”



Published by The Tribune on October 29, 1943, Friday (Velasquez, 1943). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

In this strip, Bayani and his father have a conversation about the feeling of getting tired (see Figure 19). His father then mentions a quote from Antonio Luna saying, “independence cannot be obtained from roses with comfort and without a risk.” Mr. Kalibapi follows this up by saying that since independence has now been achieved, “we must sacrifice first before we can live in comfort.” This is the first and only time in the entire duration of the Kalibapi Family that a Filipino historical figure is mentioned, which aligns with Japan’s strategy of using Filipino heroes such as Jose Rizal and Antonio Luna to promote Filipino and Japanese culture.

Figure 20.

He Doesn't Need Any Help After All



Notes: Published by The Tribune on October 31, 1943, Sunday (Velasquez, 1943m). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

In the strip from October 31, 1943, Nene walks past a beggar wearing dark eyeglasses and a worn-out abaca hat, thereby giving the impression that he may be a poor, blind man (see Figure 20). Nene then gives alms to the beggar. However, before she walks away, she notices the beggar lift his glasses to look at the money he received. Realizing that she had just been a victim of fraud, Nene takes back the money. This strip shows the proliferation of beggars on the streets, and the problem of some beggars who allegedly take advantage of others by pretending to be persons with disabilities.

Figure 21.

Only a Privilege, not a Right



Notes: Published by The Tribune on November 3, 1943, Tuesday (Velasquez, 1943n). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

In this strip, Bayani and his father are shown riding a tranvia when Bayani asks his father why men should give up their seats to women on the train (see Figure 21). His father explains that it is because women are weaker than men. However, Bayani argues that there are some instances when women should also give up their seats for men, particularly the

elderly. Bayani points to an older man and says “I think it is human enough for a woman to stand up and offer her seat to that old man.” What Tony Velasquez probably intended to say here is that respect towards the elderly has always been a treasured Filipino social value, one that is also shared in Japanese culture. This may be a subtle showing of the idea that Filipinos must learn to connect with their fellow Asians in Japan’s Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.

Figure 22.

Adventure of Tio Tasyo



Note: Published by The Tribune on December 8, 1943, Wednesday (Velasquez, 1943o). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

The Kalibapi Family issue of December 8, 1944, shows Tasyo lamenting his poor dealings in the buy-and-sell business and deciding to just go home and call it a day (see Figure 22). Upon returning home, Tasyo is surprised by the sight of a good amount of food on the table and asks Inday if there is an occasion. Inday replies that it is the second anniversary of the “Greater East Asia War.” The strip ends with the entire family happily greeting “Mabuhay!”, which shows that, rather than condemning the war, the family celebrates it (Cheng Chua, 2005). The kind of celebration shown in the strip has been a part of Japan’s cultural propaganda, in which they imposed Japanese holidays or celebrations on the Filipinos. It should also be noted that the strip was issued on December 8, the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is considered the patroness of the Philippines. Instead, what was celebrated was the start of the war and Japan’s triumph against the Americans, thereby portraying the Japanese forces as liberators instead of oppressors (Constantino, 1994).

Figure 23.

Visit Your Relatives But Do Not Be A Burden

VISIT YOUR RELATIVES BUT DO NOT BE A BURDEN

By TONY VELASQUEZ



Note: Published by The Tribune on December 24, 1943, Friday (Velasquez, 1943p). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

The issue of December 24, 1943, shows the Kalibapi Family preparing for Christmas when Bayani suggests that they visit their relatives in Tondo (see Figure 23). His father disagrees, saying that they may just become a burden since their relatives are also trying to make ends meet, and that the rice ration may not be enough to feed them all. Bayani then quips that they should instead bring the food, especially rice. This particular strip was effective in conveying the feelings of Christmas while also depicting the dire situation at that time, as well as the government programs being implemented. First is the message that they may burden their relatives due to the lack of food supply, which echoes the scarcity of basic commodities even during the Christmas season. Second is the subtle showing of the government’s rationing program, but also the indication that it is not enough to cover the needs of even one family. Third is the depiction of the Filipino values of “pakikipagkapwa” towards the so-called “hindi ibang-tao”, such as relatives and other family members (Pe-Pua and Marcelino, 2000)).

Figure 24.

The Exception to the Rule Due to Rice Shortage

THE EXCEPTION TO THE RULE DUE TO RICE SHORTAGE

By TONY VELASQUEZ



Note: Published by The Tribune on April 22, 1944, Saturday (Velasquez, 1943g). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

The April 22, 1944 strip shows Inday telling Nene never to tell a lie or else she will spank her (see Figure 24). But when a neighbor asks if she was selling a ganta of rice, Inday denies that she has anything to offer. Nene then retorts that Inday just said that it is bad to tell a lie, and that in truth, they have a whole cavan or sack of rice. The strip ends with a bruised Nene who was presumably spanked by Inday for telling the truth. The content and message of the strip may be hilarious but in it, Tony Velasquez was probably implying the shortage of rice at that time, and the willingness of Filipinos to cover up the fact that they have supplies of rice to safeguard their own needs. This may subtly show the slow degradation of the Filipino value of pakikipagkapwa towards other people as the country's situation worsens.

Political (Government Policies, Government Leadership)

Figure 25.

Advantage of the Second Thought



Note: Published by The Tribune on October 16, 1943, Saturday (Velasquez, 1943q). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

In this issue, one of Nene's "enemies" can be seen waiting for her in a corner lot with a stone in his hand, ready to assault Nene (see Figure 25). However, the boy suddenly changes his mind and asks himself why he had to quarrel with a neighbor. He then remembers what his teacher told him, "Let us stand together and establish the New Philippines," and drops the stone. In the end, the kids hold hands and exclaim, "Long Live the Free Philippines!" Through this strip, Tony Velasquez stressed the importance of cooperation and friendship between neighbors, which subtly reflects the goals of Japan's Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (Candelaria, 2021).

Figure 26.

United We Stand...



Note: Published by The Tribune on December 29, 1943, Wednesday (Velasquez, 1943r). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

In this issue of the Kalibapi Family, the children can be seen constructing their “bahay-bahayan,” which falls apart when Nene tries to climb it before it is finished (see Figure 26). Their father explains that the frame would surely fall because it is just a skeleton of the house and therefore must be completed first before it could stand on its own. Mr. Kalibapi then compared the situation of his children’s playhouse to the Philippines, saying that the President and other officials act as the skeleton on which Philippine independence was framed, while it is the people’s role to cooperate with the said officials for the Philippines to stand on its own.

Figure 27.

Exemplary Juvenile Reaction



Note: Published by The Tribune on May 14, 1944, Sunday (Velasquez, 1944h). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

The May 14, 1944, issue of the Kalibapi Family shows the family preparing for the first day of compulsory labor service, which was decreed by President Jose P. Laurel (see Figure 24). Under this program,

Filipinos aged 16 to 60 were required to render mandatory labor at food production services for one hour per day a week (Jose, 1998).

Military

Figure 28.

Salute to the Flag



Note: Published by The Tribune on October 14, 1943, Thursday (Velasquez, 1943s). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

The October 14, 1943, strip titled “Salute to the Flag” (see Figure 28) was published just days after Japan’s “declaration of Philippine independence,” where the Philippine flag was hoisted after two years of prohibition (Agoncillo, 1965). The strip shows Bayani running while also holding a toy rifle. Bayani then calls his sister, Nene, their younger brother Totoy, and a cousin named Nena to render a salute to the Philippine flag while it was being raised. The strip’s final frame shows Bayani doing the rifle salute while his companions render a 45-degree bow (Candelaria, 2021). It must be noted that the rifle salute has long been practiced by Filipinos as a way of giving respect to superior military officers as well as to the flag during ceremonies but interestingly, bowing to the nation’s flag is part of Japanese customs, not Filipino culture. As

Figure 29.

Safety First



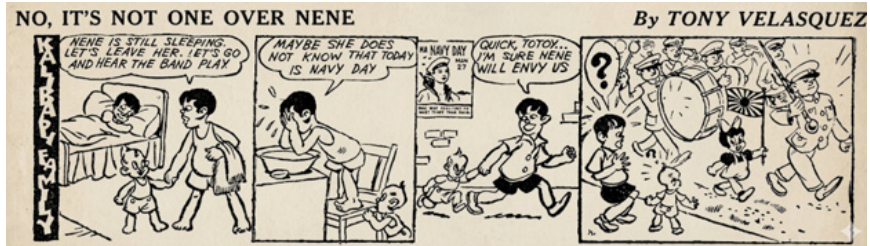
Note: Published by The Tribune on May 3, 1944, Wednesday (Velasquez, 1944i). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

such, the strip may imply that Filipinos are now willing to adapt parts of Japanese culture as their own.

The May 3, 1944, issue shows Nene playing with her dog named “Taliba,” who she sets loose in their backyard (see Figure 29). Suddenly, her mother scolds Taliba for damaging the plants, and immediately, Nene and Taliba run and hide in the igloo-like structure shown in the last frame. This structure is an air-raid shelter that was commonly constructed in backyards and neighborhoods to prepare for a possible air raid by the Americans. The Japanese even issued images that suggested the design of these air raid shelters (Jose, 1998).

Figure 30.

No, it's Not One Over Nene



Note: Published by The Tribune on May 27, 1944, Saturday (Velasquez, 1944j). Lifted from the National Library of Australia – Online Archives.

The strip published on May 27, 1944, shows the Kalibapi siblings deciding to leave sleeping Nene as they prepare for the Japanese Navy Day parade (see Figure 30). However, while at the parade, the siblings are surprised to see that Nene has already joined the lines of marching Japanese soldiers. The strip may subtly imply that, despite Japan’s weakened position against the Allied forces, their defeat in the Battle of Midway, and the bombing of Tokyo, Japanese forces continue to impose certain practices on the Filipino people. This includes participation in their military parades, which gives an impression of normalcy and control over their occupied lands.

Audience reaction to various techniques

The reception of the *Tribune* newspaper as a whole among Filipino readers, particularly those who read the paper even before the war started, was generally mixed and even hostile at some point. On one hand, provinces where the Japanese Propaganda Corps went for their “goodwill mission” had Filipinos who would scramble for the *Tribune*

newspapers distributed by the Corps since these “people were hungry for news, any news regarding the war” (Terami-Wada, 1990, p. 65). On the flip side, however, most Filipinos were also aware of Japanese “manipulation” of the newspapers, and some chided the *Tribune* for allowing itself to be used for such purposes (Constantino, 1994). As for The *Tribune* itself, the newspaper reached its end when the Japanese Imperial Forces burned the *Tribune’s* Building, destroying its offices, records, and printing presses. After the war, “the Roces family decided not to resurrect the *Tribune* as it was so badly tainted; rather, they relaunched the Manila Times, a weekly-turned-daily newspaper” (Jose, 1990, p. 46) (Jose, 1990b). That was the end of the once-mighty *Tribune* that had been the exemplar of journalism before the war, only to be turned into a widely perceived propaganda machine by the Japanese during their brief occupation of the Philippines.

Counterpropaganda

Counterpropaganda existed during the Japanese occupation in various forms. One example was the underground newspapers made and distributed by guerrillas who realized the need for alternative media that would bring the people news and truth as they saw it. With this in mind, these papers provided counterpropaganda against the Japanese as they responded to alleged falsehoods featured in the censored papers and pamphlets, maintained people’s morale and the spirit of resistance, which justifies the guerrilla’s causes, cultivated the people’s loyalty to the Commonwealth Government, and discouraged opportunism and collaboration with the Japanese. Like the guerrilla resistance movement, these underground papers were scattered and localized in scale, depending upon the guerrilla group that distributed them. There were no fewer than 100 identified underground papers, with Manila and Panay having the largest number (Jose, 1992). Examples of these underground papers include *The Liberator* by President Quezon’s Own Guerrillas, *Ing Masala* and *Katubusan* by the HUKBALAHAP, *Thunderclap* by the Hunters ROTC, *Kalibo War Bulletin*, and many more. (Jose, 1992). The contents of these underground papers varied, but were considered highly effective despite some of the papers being crudely printed or even handwritten. Some surviving examples showed how the guerrillas made great efforts to make hand-colored illustrations, maps, and literary pieces to balance Japanese propaganda (Jose and Jose, 1997). More importantly, these papers also featured international news about Allied offensives against the Axis powers. This news was

picked up either from San Francisco, Radio Moscow, or the BBC, thus challenging the claims made by the *Tribune* and proving that it was only a matter of time before the Americans would return to liberate the Philippines (Jose, 1992).

Effects and Evaluation

One of the most important aspects of propaganda analysis is to determine if its purpose has been fulfilled, which indicates whether it was a successful or a failed propaganda. In the case of the *Tribune*, particularly its comic “The Kalibapi Family”, it should be recalled that this media and its purpose only followed the overall objectives set forth by the Japanese Military Administration. Among these was the recognition of Japan’s leadership in the region as per the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, the return to normalcy in the people’s lives, the destruction of American influences in Filipino culture, the pacification of dissent among the people, and the enlistment of people’s support for the Japanese war efforts. Later on, the objectives and policies of the Philippine Government led by President Jose P. Laurel were added, such as the return of Filipino families to the provinces, the promotion of farming, and Laurel’s Philippinization program. These aspects were subtly shown in *The Kalibapi Family* by Tony Velasquez. However, it can be safely assumed that, based on this alone, the propaganda in question failed miserably to meet its objectives and instead attained the exact opposite, which was to fuel suspicion, even dissent among the people, and the rejection of support for the Japanese war efforts.

Conclusion

In this paper, I examined Tony Velasquez’s Japanese-era comic series, “The Kalibapi Family,” to determine whether it was a case example of propaganda material or not. Using archival research, I was able to gather and select thirty (30) comic strips published from 1943 to 1944 and studied them through the lens of both content and discourse analysis. The study’s framework was based on Jowett and O’Donnell’s (2005) Ten Stages in Analyzing Propaganda; hence, its discussion and findings were arranged according to the framework’s pattern and were summarized in Figure 31. Based on the findings of this paper, I can conclude that “The Kalibapi Family” is not a material with pure propaganda purposes. However, throughout history, its medium (the newspaper) and its special technique (comics) were vulnerable to being used as wartime propaganda in the first half of the 20th century. This conclusion that

“The Kalibapi Family” is not pure propaganda material boils down to Antonio “Tony” Velasquez’s ability to subtly show the real conditions of that time, including the people’s hardships with food shortages, product substitutions, and even the high inflation rate. This portrayal also makes use of the context in which the topic occurred, as well as the perception of its target audience, the Filipino people. Aside from this, Velasquez also showed the programs and policies of the Laurel Administration more often than those of the Japanese authorities, such as encouraging the Filipino people to plant vegetables in their vacant lots and neighborhoods, advocating for the return to the provinces, as well as the Philippinization Policy.

Figure 31.

Summary of Findings based on the Ten Stages in Analyzing Propaganda by Jowett and O’Donnell (2005).

Summary of Findings for “The Kalibapi Family” based on Jowett and O’Donnell’s Ten Stages in Analyzing Propaganda (2005)				
1. Ideology and Purpose of the Propaganda Campaign <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To restore order; ▪ To foster a semblance of normalcy in all occupied areas; ▪ To attract the Filipino people to support the Japanese cause. 	2. The context in which the propaganda occurs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ World War II ✓ Japanese Occupation of the Philippines ✓ Second Philippine Republic 	3. Identification of the ‘propagandist.’ <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Antonio “Tony” Velásquez 	4. Organizational Structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Tribune, a part of the TVT Publishing Corporation. - Japanese Propaganda Corps 	5. Target Audience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The general Filipino public.
6. Media utilization techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The press, newspaper 	7. Special techniques to maximize effect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comics, specifically “The Kalibapi Family.” 	8. Audience reaction to various techniques <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generally mixed and hostile at some point. 	9. Counterpropagand a (if present) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Underground newspapers created by various guerrilla resistance forces. 	10. Effects and Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generally failed. - Fueled suspicion among the people. - Rejection of Japan’s war goals.

Note: This figure is created by the author based on the framework provided by Jowett and O’Donnell (2005) and the findings of this study that correspond with each stage.

That Tony Velasquez’s “The Kalibapi Family” may have been easier to dismiss as propaganda material should be given a second, closer look. The comic strip is generally more pro-Philippine Republic, as shown by its portrayal of Laurel’s policies and problems rather than being a full-fledged, pro-Japanese strip. Its messaging also focused more on the Filipino’s civic duties and unity amidst the war instead of blatantly following the orders of the Japanese, while also courageously portraying

the hardships experienced by the Filipinos at that time, as well as the proliferation of profiteers and buy-and-sell businesses. I can also say that in this comic series, Velasquez penned a kind of commentary that also satirizes the dire state of affairs during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, not the Japanese officials themselves. Overall, Velasquez presented a more nuanced perspective wherein he showed how Filipino artists could portray the situation at that time through art in a more comical manner that can be understood by the general public. Furthermore, this study also shows the potential of Jowett and O'Donnell's framework for examining various alleged propaganda materials from the mid-20th century up to the present. This framework also enables future researchers and even everyday readers to evaluate the various materials that have been flooding the media and the internet to determine if they are propaganda materials or otherwise. Further studies are also recommended, especially in looking at the other controversial materials throughout the history of the Philippines.

Declaration of Generative AI in the Academic Writing Process

AI-assisted tools like Google Gemini and Grammarly were used solely for language refinement and archival image-enhancing purposes. All intellectual content, analysis, and interpretations were developed by the author, reviewed and edited the output as necessary, and took full responsibility for the final content of the publication.

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