

The Spanish Legacy in the Philippine Educational System

Introduction

Before explaining the nature of my study, I will try to set before my readers some basic presuppositions which I consider essential for a right understanding of my study. Without a clear grasp of these presuppositions we are bound to misunderstand the subject under study.

First of all, I would like to remind my readers of the need to understand two basic concepts in history: the concept of *time* and the concept of *space*. We are trying to study the legacy of the Spanish educational system. We must not lose sight that Spain came here in 1565. It is well over four hundred years since the first missionaries came to the Philippines and began to educate the people in the ways of God and in the ways of a different civilization. Four hundred years is a long time. The changes that have taken place since then are enormous and of vast proportions. We have a tendency to read history backwards, that is, to project into the past our present knowledge and experiences. It seems we cannot escape the present, with its own ideas and methods. Oftentimes we transport these ideas to the remote past and wonder why things were so different from the way they are today. In so doing we lose sight of the basic concept of time. It was in time that the Philippines became what they have become.

When Spain came here in 1565 there was no formal education, no elementary, secondary or tertiary schools. People in some places knew how to read and write in the old, but now extinct syllabic manner of the early inhabitants, but formal, proper education there was none. The nation was inhabited by different races and tribes. There was no common frontier or centralized authority. The Philippines was a babel of languages. The first need of any newcomer, in this case the missionary, was to learn the local language or dialect if he wanted to enter into contact with the local people. There were no books, no schools, no teachers.

In order to understand the nature of education during Spanish times we have to avoid modern terminologies. What I mean is this: we are not allowed to speak of elementary, high school and college education during the Spanish times. These names and denominations are modern. They have been coined during the modern age and they do not fit the Spanish system of education. We need to understand the nature of Spanish education in order to have a clear picture of its birth, growth and development. The modern denomination is of American creation and does not fit the Spanish system. I ask my readers to keep this in mind before passing judgement on the merits or demerits of the Spanish system of education.

I would also like to remind my readers of a basic historical fact not found in the Saxon tradition. And this historical fact is the existence of the so-called *Patronato Real*. This historical and juridical entity is a peculiar Spanish creation and stands at the very root of the Spanish enterprise in her overseas dominions. It means a close union between Church and State. The State intervened oftentimes in Church affairs and the Church had civil and political responsibilities well outside the sphere of her basic ecclesial responsibility.

The missionaries who went to America and the Philippines were priests and evangelizers. They were also citizens of Spain. As they left their mother country and set out for the Americas and the Far East they were paid and sent by the government under the *Patronato* system. Thus they were under the jurisdiction also of the civil authorities.

A clear understanding of the workings of this peculiar Spanish entity is necessary in order to understand the Spanish system of education in the Philippines.

The priests, the Friars, the missionaries came to the Philippines in answer to Christ's call "go and preach to the whole of creation. Baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you". They came to the Philippines as evangelizers, as preachers of salvation in Jesus, not as educators in the proper sense of the word. The task ahead of them was fundamentally evangelical, missionary, spiritual. But in the system we have just written about, and in the situation in which the Philippines were found, the missionaries began to exercise a role, though not totally alien to them, at least not basic to their vocation. In fact they began to do what the monks had done in Europe after the collapse of the Roman Empire and the irruption of the Barbarian Invasions. They became evangelizers and *civilizers*. The Friars, like the monks of Europe before, taught the people the arts and the trades, how to cultivate the land, to open new lands for irrigation, dry up the swamps, cut down the forests, build roads and bridges. In one word: the Friar, the missionary became an educator of the people in all the fields of human endeavour. But as it happened to the monks of Europe during the youth and creation of Christian Europe, they went beyond what was originally their vocation. Their *religion* became, in the last analysis, a potent and *dynamic historical force* that changed the course of history of the people and set them on a road they had never travelled before.

We must not forget that the XVI century, when the Spaniards came to the Philippines, was the *age of faith*. Thus the close union of Church and State. The fundamental task of the government, that of educating its citizens, was left into the hands of the Church. In fact, it was the Church that created most of the educational institutions in Europe. The university was fundamentally a Christian, clerical creation. This was true in Europe during the Middle Ages. It was very true of Spanish America and of the Philippines.

We have to look at the missionaries who came to the Philippines as evangelizers and educators. Most of them had studied

in the most famous universities of Europe. Some of them were outstanding scholars. We must never lose sight of the fact that the XVI century, the time of the conquest of America and the discovery of the Philippines, was the time of a glorious spiritual, theological, cultural and intellectual Renaissance in Europe and in Spain. The universities of Salamanca, Alcalá, Bologna, Paris and many others sent to overseas territories theologians and scholars comparable to any other in the scientific world of the time. Andrés de Urdaneta, Martín de Rada and Juan de Plasencia were not only good theologians, but mariners, cosmographers, mathematicians and anthropologists. We are indebted to them not only for their theological knowledge and missionary contributions but also for their expertise in cosmography, cartography, navigation and anthropology.

I say this to set my study of the Spanish contribution to the Philippine System of Education in its right historical perspective. The early missionaries were evangelizers, scholars and true Christian humanists. They came to impart that total and full knowledge to the people of the Philippines. Hence the creation of schools from the very beginning. This we are going to see right now.

First Schools in the Philippines

The first missionaries to come and settle in the Philippines were the Augustinians. As soon as they settled down in Cebu, just after 1565, they established what we today would call elementary Schools. The Augustinians Friars

“asked the islanders to let them have their children in order to raise them in their customs and doctrines... The natives who loved the missionaries and were accustomed to their spotless life gave very willingly their children whom the missionaries taught the Christian doctrine, reading, writing and singing and especially to fear God.”¹

The Augustinians were not the only ones to start elementary schools. The Franciscans arrived in the Philippines in 1578. With the first group of missionaries came Juan de Plasencia, one of

¹ GRIJALVA, *Crónica de la Orden de Nuestro Padre San Agustín*, México, 1624, quoted by E. BAZACO, O.P., *Disputed Questions on Philippine Historical Pedagogy*, Manila, 1941, p. 40.

the most famous and greatest missionaries ever to come to the Philippines. Plasencia, renowned for his anthropological and cultural studies, is also famous as a pioneer in the field of education in early Philippines. In the synod of Manila that started in 1582 and in the different meetings with his fellow Franciscans, Plasencia always pressed for the need to open elementary schools in which the Filipinos could learn how to read, write, arithmetic, singing, dancing and many other things. Not happy with this kind of basic and elementary education he taught them the arts and trades. This was fundamental in a society which was predominantly primitive, whose methods of cultivation were rudimentary and not appropriate for good exploitation of the soil. He taught the people how to develop new crops, to plant new seeds, thus changing the agricultural pattern of the early inhabitants which was fundamentally slash and burn, that is what experts call *swidden* cultivation.

Plasencia was an innovator and pioneer, like most of his contemporaries. This is due to the fact that many of the early Spanish missionaries and *conquistadores* believed in the limitless resources and power of their own nation.

During the XVI century Spaniards crossed uncharted seas and conquered empires. Wherever they went they seemed to be possessed with unboundless zeal and dedication. Plasencia is one clear example of this type of people. He envisioned himself as a town planner, civilizer, evangelizer and anthropologist. He deserves to be called "the pioneer" in the field of education for his continuous efforts and zeal in the establishment of schools in the Philippines. And this at a time when most of the people preferred to live in the hills and lived scattered in thousands of 'barangays' or small settlements.

In a provincial chapter of his own order he "admirably proposed and explained the convenience of founding towns and primary schools, which proposal was accepted by the Chapter and approved by the Government."²

The Dominicans were not slow in establishing schools in their own mission posts. They came to the Philippines in 1587. Soon after, one of those Dominican missionaries, Fr. Pedro Bolaños,

² Ibidem, p. 274

went to Bataan and there, in the words of the famous historian Aduarte:

“put up a school of reading and prayer, and he taught both things to the children, and to the more proficient ones he also taught singing, so that fulfilling the office of the angels they could praise the Lord in the Church.”³

We cannot forget the Jesuit Order if we are to have a complete view of the beginning of education in the Philippines. The Jesuits irrupted in history in the XVI c. with new techniques in many fields, especially in the field of education. Even today, in the modern age, when lay institutions of learning have received so much technical and economic assistance from government agencies, the Jesuits excel in this very field of endeavour, that is, in the field of education.

Faithful to their vocation and tradition the Jesuits, as soon as they came to the Philippines, began some elementary and other types of institutions for education. They opened schools in Manila, Antipolo, Iloilo, Cebu, Samar, Leyte and many other regions of the Philippines. In a letter written by a Jesuit at the beginning of the XVII c. we read: [the children are taught]

“good morals . . . ; their occupations are learning to read and to form letters and to do such other things as are appropriate to their childish years.”⁴

The Dominican historian, Fidel Villarroel, who has made special researches on the matter under study, tells us the following:

“Finally, the first bishop of the Philippines, the Dominican Domingo de Salazar clearly confirmed the establishment and good march of elementary schools in the Islands in a Memorial to the King in 1586, in which he said that by that time, the parish priests acted as primary school teachers, adding that the missionaries taught the children how to read in their own dialect, holding a morning class in which all children in town were given instruction, and

³ DIEGO ADUARTE, O.P., *Historia de la Provincia del Santo Rosario de la Orden de Predicadores en Filipinas, Japón y China*, E. M. FERRERO, O.P. Madrid, vol. I, Madrid, 1962, p. 118.

⁴ HORACIO DE LA COSTA, S.J., *The Contribution of the Catholic Church to Elementary Education in the Philippines during the Spanish Period*, published in *Report of the Fourth National Convention of the C.E.A.P.*, 1952, p. 89.

an afternoon class in which a repetition of the morning lesson was demanded."⁵

I have tried to give to my readers an overview of the early beginning of education in the Philippines. It is very difficult for us today, educated in big and modern institutions, to visualize the tremendous difficulties experienced by the early missionaries in their noble enterprise. The birth, growth and development of education must have been slow and painful. It was done by the missionaries and not by the civil servants of the government. And this because, as I have written before, in the age in which we move, the government was not yet conscious of its social and educational responsibilities. These responsibilities were taken up bravely by the Church and the early missionaries. We say it must have been a painful task to bring people to classes and to convince the parents of the children of the need to bring them to school. There was a more fundamental task ahead of the missionaries, of which we do not seem to be aware of, and this task is the task of human settlement and urban civilization. The missionaries had to bring the people together into big settlements. The early population of the Philippines was scarce and scattered in thousand of small units. If evangelization and education were to become successful there was a more basic task ahead: and this was to bring people into compact villages and towns and there offer them the blessings and benefits of urban civilization. That is, the task of education could not be accomplished right away because there was a more radical one ahead, and it was the creation of a new civilization: the urban one. We seem to take this for granted, for we have been born in an urban atmosphere, though we may still live in a rural area. At the time we are dealing with, people had a tendency to go to the hills, move in search of food and hunt. And in the state of Philippine agriculture, which was of a very subsistence nature, there was a need to change the habits, the customs and the mores of the people before a meaningful global and total education could be offered them. That is why we say that the beginning of education must have painful and slow.

⁵ FIDEL VILLARROEL, O.P., *Elementary Education in the Philippines (1564-1898)* in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*. Vol. XXXIX, No. 435, p. 275; cfr. FRANCISCO COLIN, S.J., *Labor Evangélica*, ed. by Pablo Pastells, Barcelona, 1900-1902, vol. I, p. 448; cfr. H. DE LA COSTA, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

As we go over the mountains of documents which our ancestors left for us, we can draw a simple conclusion: neither the State nor the Church, which had taken over the responsibility of the State, had the economic resources to take good care of the education of the people. Still more, people were not in the habit of appreciating education as we appreciate it today. In the rural, agricultural, pre-industrial society in which the Philippines were to be found, education was not a brilliant career to take. And this was also true of education in the rest of the world, including Europe. This was due to the spirit of the times. People did not care much for education, even in cultured Europe, China or India.

Thus, in passing judgement over the realizations of Spanish education during the XVI, XVII, XVIII and early XIX centuries, we have to keep in mind these basic concepts and presuppositions.

GROWTH AND CHARACTERISTICS OF EDUCATION

As we can deduce from our exposition, education during the first period of the Spanish time, up to the middle of the XIX c., must have followed a parallel growth with Christianization. The growth of education was concomitant to the growth and planning of evangelization. In fact, the missionaries planned their education for evangelization. And so the growth of education depended much on the number of missionaries who were, oftentimes, the only teachers around. The five religious orders which bore the brunt of the evangelization and education – Augustinians, Franciscans, Jesuits, Dominicans and Recollects – received reinforcements regularly from Spain. They were sent to old towns and to new settlements. Thus new schools were open in the archipelago. As we look back, and see how the new towns were created and established, we also see how new schools were put up by the missionaries, for the schools were indispensable instruments for the evangelization of the people. In general each mission had a school near the *convento* or in the *convento* itself, and even in the new barrios – *visitas* – rudimentary schools were put up. As we travel up and down the country today, if we dare to visit the towns, we will still see today parish schools adjacent to most churches. Some have remained elementary; others are high school; still others have become important colleges

and universities. The roots are to be found in the early schools established by the missionaries. In the Philippine historical and educational system we find a tremendous and unbelievable continuity between the early Spanish schools and the modern Filipino ones. The number of schools during the first centuries of Spanish dominion have been probably a little exaggerated.

Characteristics of the Spanish Education

As our readers may judge from our study, education was markedly *Catholic* and Christian. And this is obvious, given the fundamental presupposition of which we wrote before: that Spain came here, *in the XVI century*, for the purpose of evangelizing the Filipinos and that the schools were established to give, in the last analysis, a Catholic view of life. It has been the aim of all catholic educators, all through the centuries, not only to form good professionals and citizens, but also to help man realize his everlasting destiny. And in order to achieve this, that is, to bring man to know Christ and His teachings, we have to create a Christian view of life, a Christian *Weltanschauung*. Catholicism holds still now that education must be full, total and global. And this means that education has to be geared towards providing man with the means and tools to reach his purpose in this life and in the life to come. Thus education, for a Catholic, will have to be professional and theological. It is in this context in which he, man, can reach the destiny for which he has been created.

Literacy

We cannot avoid answering this question. What was really the degree of literacy in the Philippines during the XVII, XVIII and XIX centuries? If we are to believe some foreign visitors who passed through the country and lived in the Philippines for some time, it was pretty high. The state of literacy even at the time of the Spanish arrival was relatively high. In Chirino we read that the early Filipinos had a high degree of literacy. It was not difficult for the Filipinos to write in the early Filipino script or in Roman script. He writes:

“Our Filipinos are already able to write, and even to write to us, not only in their script but in ours, in a very fine hand, better than ourselves, like some of those

who are helping us to transcribe the rough drafts of this history. They have learnt our language and pronunciation and speak and write it like castilians, because of their great sharpness and quickness of wit; the men especially, of whom there are more who study how to read and write in the public schools of Manila and Cebu than the Spaniards. Moreover, their love for books is so great that, not satisfied with those printed in their language written by religious men with the sermon they hear and with the bible stories, lives of saints, prayers and sacred poetry composed by themselves, there is hardly any much less a woman who does not have one or more books in their language, and scriptwritten by themselves, a thing unknown among neophytes in any other nation... I can bear witness to this because I was charged with the examining of books this year of 1609 by the Treasurer of the Metropolitan See and Vicar General of the Archdiocese who ordered them censored in order that what was erroneous might be corrected."⁶

It would be very difficult to know the extent and depth of literacy and the nature of education during the first period of the Spanish occupation. But a perusal of the original sources makes us believe that many of the inhabitants of the Philippines had a great love for knowledge and furthermore had reached quite a high degree of intellectual development and knowledge.

Reforms: 1863

In 1863 the Government began to put into effect a thorough reform of the whole educational system. The Royal Decree of December 20, 1863 was not a condemnation of the previous educational system. Rather the government had come to realize that there had been a tremendous growth in population and new techniques and methods were necessary to bring the education to what the times demanded. The religious congregations, which up to them had been the ones mainly responsible for the education of the Filipino people, did not oppose these changes. Rather, many of them were included among the consultants and main agents for the reformistic movement. The university of Santo Tomas, of which we shall speak later in the course of our study, had long complained about the lack of uniformity in the schools,

⁶ COLIN-PASTELLS, *op. cit.*, I, p. 223; Cfr. DE LA COSTA, *op. cit.*, p. 89; VILLARROEL, *op. cit.* pp. 278-279.

the poverty of the buildings, the lack of books, the lack of qualified teachers. The times proved that the new reforms and changes entailed tremendous expenses. The religious congregations had no personnel, no money and no possibility to continue the role they had played up to then. The government, with more economic and political resources, should be the one to take over the control and responsibility.

It took some time before the new system was enforced and, according to a historian of education, these were their positive results:

*"first, the creation of a Board of Public Instruction duly represented by ecclesiastical and civil authorities, having under it Provincial Commissions of Instruction empowered to approve textbooks, assign competent teachers, classify schools, fix salaries, and inspect all elementary schools; second, the opening of new schools even in the remotest barrios; third, the establishment of a Normal School, entrusted to the Jesuits, which was followed by other normal schools for men and women in Manila and in the provinces, and providing the well trained teachers needed for all primary schools; and fourth, a system of inspection, more regular and formal, was made effective."*⁷

The curriculum was modernized. The basis for it was found in similar curricula found in European institutions. It was, however, changed in part to suit local conditions and needs. The Spanish government tried sincerely to create a system of education responsive to the needs of the times and, in so far as this was possible similar to other systems in the rest of the world, especially in Europe. As a result of these fundamental reforms, applied to the Philippine context, there was a great growth in the number of schools and students. By the year 1897, just before the arrival of the Americans, there were more than 2,500 elementary schools with an attendance of over 2,00,000 students.⁸

Assesment of Elementary Education during Spanish time

Spanish education has been very maligned among historians and writers of Philippine history. We cannot lose sight of the

⁷ VILLARROEL, O.P., *op. cit.*, p. 280.

⁸ Cfr. VILLARROEL, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

negative effects of the Propaganda Movement and the American writers who wanted to paint the Spanish period with black and dark colors. It seems there are two opinions when it comes to pass a judgement on Spanish elementary education in the Philippines. We have to distinguish well that the Spanish period covered almost *three centuries* and much was achieved during this time. It would be wrong and anachronistic to judge their performance by modern standards and criteria. We have to judge them with the methods and possibilities they had. Nor even are we allowed to judge them by the so-called American standards. America came to the Philippines when the fundamental task of urban civilization, human settlements, creation of towns, opening of roads, etc. had been achieved by the Spanish civilization. The Filipino nation, as we all know, was basically Christian when the Americans came. They came just to gather, in many ways, what the missionaries had planted in the previous centuries. We cannot separate the process of education from the process of evangelization. And in order to achieve the former the latter had to be achieved first. And it was profoundly achieved. The achievements of the missionaries have to be judged in comparison and in relation to their objectives, what I call basic religious presuppositions, in the light of the conditions they found in the Philippines and in comparison to other colonized nations of the world.

'Education under the missionaries can be called successful if it fulfilled the objectives which the missionaries intended to attain. They came to the Philippines to convert the Filipinos to the Catholic religion and procure their salvation. The results were truly admirable. The Philippines was Catholic one century after the landing of Legaspi and Urdaneta. And it must be noted here that this transformation was due not so much to a process of conversion as to one of education. We are not far from the truth if we state that the Philippines rather than converted to the Church, was born to the Church. Its Christianization was mainly done by the upbringing of children in the truths of Catholic religion, these truths having been imparted in the mission schools, in the towns as well as in the barrios. Thus Christianization was slow, but smooth, peaceful and steady, taking such deep roots that, humanly speaking, it will never be erased from the Filipino souls."⁹

⁹ VILLARROEL, F., O.P., *op. cit.*, pp. 282-283.

We say that the education given by the missionaries was successful for it fulfilled the purpose they had in mind: the conversion of the Filipino people. That is why at the beginning of my study I reminded my readers of the basic presupposition that the missionaries had come to evangelize, with what it all entails, but not to open schools, though in the process of evangelization they realized that the best, safest, and fastest way to evangelize was the creation of schools and the establishment of a Catholic educational system.

We have to free ourselves, in order to judge dispassionately the level of culture of the Filipino people, from the prejudices of the Propaganda Movement and the negative and false reports of American officials. We have a Report by an official of the Spanish government who made a special study of the situation of the Philippines in the middle of the XIX century. Sinibaldo De Mas wrote thus:

"Primary education cannot be considered to be in a backward condition and I really believe that there are proportionately more persons who know how to read and write in these Islands than in Spain and in some other civilized countries."¹⁰

We would like to quote still a few more foreign observers who were positively impressed by the general level of culture and knowledge of the Filipino people during the last century. The American writer, McMacking observed:

"There are very few Filipinos who are unable to read, and I have always observed that Manila men serving on board ships and forming their crew have been much oftener able to subscribe their names to the ship's articles than the British seamen on board the same vessels could do."¹¹

The great friend of Rizal, F. Blumentritt, wrote in *Solidaridad* in 1899:

¹⁰ SINIBALDO DE MAS, *Informe sobre el Estado de las Islas Filipinas en 1842*, *Instrucción Pública*, p. 1, as quoted by E. BAZACO, *History of Education*, pp. 63-64.

¹¹ Cfr. A. COLEMAN, *The Friars in the Philippines*, Boston, 1899, p. 17.

"If the general condition of civilization of the Tagalogs, Pampangos, Bisayans, Ilocanos, Cagayanes, and Zambaleños is compared to that of the European constitutional countries of Serbia, Roumania, Bulgaria, and Greece, the Spanish-Filipino civilization of the said Indian districts is greater and of larger extent than that of those countries."¹²

Higher or University Learning

Of all the religious congregations which came to the Philippines during the early Spanish period, only the Jesuits and the Dominicans had institutions of higher learning. The Jesuits with a historical interruption when they were expelled from the Spanish dominions (1768-1859) and the Dominicans without any interruption at all, save one school year in 1898-1899.

As soon as the Jesuits came to the Philippines in 1581 they tried to establish an institution of higher learning. The times were not favorable yet for such an institution. There was a time when the Jesuits, unable to open up a school and not sure yet of their future in the Philippines, thought of abandoning the colony and return to Mexico and Spain. In order to dissuade them from this thought the governor, the bishop, and the Spanish colony begged the Spanish king to help them put up a college. Bishop Salazar wrote a long letter to Philip II¹³ urging him to erect a college in Manila under the direction of the Jesuits. In it the children of the *datus* and *principalia* class could study the Christian religion and take up humanities and arts. Furthermore, young clerics could finish philosophy and theology. The college would also be extremely convenient for those who arrived in the Philippines without having completed formal studies for the priesthood. Worth noting is the fact that Salazar foresaw the college as the best means to keep, study and learn the customs of the Filipinos.

Salazar's dream could not be fulfilled immediately. But at the end of the XVI century, when the Jesuits had decided to stay

¹² Quoted by E. BAZACO, O.P., *History of Education*, p. 63.

¹³ *Letter of Domingo de Salazar to Philip II*, Manila, 18 June, 1583, Archivo General de Indias (AGI, Filipinas 74).

in the Philippines and had received an increase in personnel, the erection of a college of higher learning took place. This was called the College of San Ignacio. Enrollment, as can be expected in a new colony, was small, but classes began seriously and in earnest, following the *ratio studiorum* or Jesuit code of teaching and learning. In the words of Fr. de la Costa:

"they consisted of five years of "grammar" (for which a year or two of primary schooling was a prerequisite) and a two-year arts course leading to the degree of bachelor of arts, and a four-year theology course leading to the degree of licentiate in theology. "Grammar" of course meant the study of languages and literature-Latin, Greek and Spanish. "Arts" meant philosophy and science. In 1603 there were 60 students in the grammar classes and 30 in the arts course."¹⁴

The Jesuits began another college which initially was only a residential college: San Jose College. But in the course of time, especially during the XVIII, and in modern times, it eclipsed the College of San Ignacio. The growth and development of San Ignacio and San Jose, like the growth and development of similar institutions of such a remote and isolated colony as the Philippines, were poor and painful, but they were always steady and progressing both in enrollment and importance. A brief of Pope Gregory XV dated July 9, 1621 authorized the conferral of academic degrees. The very next year the Spanish king approved this license by a royal decree of February 2, 1622. Soon after a new building was finished, spacious and modern, where the Jesuits established the printing press and, at the end of the XVII century, a Jesuit brother, George Kamel, of Czechoslovakia, established his famous pharmaceutical garden. The great Linnaeus named a flower after him: the camellia.¹⁵

The history of the university of San Ignacio during the XVII and XVIII centuries, up to the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Spanish dominions and from the Philippines in 1768, is not easy to reconstruct.

"In 1733 King Philip V of Spain founded two regius professorships in the college, one of canon and another

¹⁴ *The Jesuits in the Philippines (1581-1900)* in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, Vol. XXXIX, no. 435, Jan.-Feb., 1965, p. 121.

¹⁵ Cfr. De la Costa, *ib.*, p. 127.

of civil law. Starting from that date the institution is frequently referred to in contemporary documents as the University of San Ignacio. In 1750 Governor Ovando founded a chair of mathematics, a discipline which at that time embraced certain applied sciences such as navigation and military engineering."¹⁶

It was during the XVIII century when the university of San Ignacio reached its full development. If we are to believe Delgado¹⁷ by mid-century enrollment and student attendance were sizeable and regular.¹⁸

Unfortunately, the life of San Ignacio like that of San Jose came to a tragic end in 1768 when the Jesuits were forced to abandon all the institutions of learning in the Philippines. For a little less than a century, from 1768 to 1859 the Jesuits were out of the Philippines. In 1859 they came back to the Philippines. As soon as they came back the people and the authorities asked them to take up, once again, the task of education. After some hesitation, they finally agreed to take up in the capital what was then called the Escuela Municipal de Manila. It was an elementary school, but by 1865 it had been renamed the *Ateneo Municipal de Manila*. Enrollment increased rapidly. New subjects were introduced and in the span of a few years the Ateneo became one of the most important educational centers of Manila. Enrollment was initially open to Spaniards, but by the end of the XIX century most of the students were mestizos and pure Filipinos. Under the new management of the Jesuits the school grew in importance and influence. In the words of a historian:

"Other significant curricular improvements followed over the course of the next three decades, the two most notable being the introduction of vocational training and the fine arts. The former included programs of specialized instruction in the fields of business administration, surveying, and industrial mechanics, each lasting roughly three years and each leading to the title of *perito* (expert). The sequences in music, drawing, and painting taught by the most eminent professors available in the

¹⁶ De la Costa, *ib.* p. 126.

¹⁷ Cfr. JUAN JOSE DELGADO, *Historia General Sacro-Profana, Política y Natural de las Islas del Poniente llamadas Filipinas*, Manila, 1882, p. 147.

¹⁸ Cfr. FREDERICK FOX, S.J., *Jesuit Education in the Philippines until 1888*, *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, Vol. XXXIX, No. 435, Jan-Feb., 1965, pp. 139-140.

metropolitan area, aimed as much at actual art production as art appreciation."¹⁹

Students came to the Ateneo from all over the archipelago and they belonged to all social classes. Many of the students were scholars and received a free education. Enrollment grew as the years went by. In 1860-1861 enrollment was 210, but in the year 1895-1896, just before the beginning of the War of Independence, enrollment stood at 1135. In 1870 the first ten students to complete the secondary curriculum received the degree of Bachelor of Arts. In 1872, the year of the Cavite mutiny and the year of the garroting of Fathers Gomez, Burgos and Zamora at the field of Bagumbayan, Rizal entered for the first time the halls of the Ateneo de Manila. The degree of Bachelor of Arts, *Bachiller en Artes*, cannot be equated with an university degree, but neither can it be equated with a degree of high school. In the Spanish system, and in the nature of education in the Ateneo, and in Letran college for that matter, the *Bachiller en Artes*, Bachelor of Arts is closer to an university degree than to a High School Diploma.

The University of Santo Tomas

One of the institutions of learning which has left a great imprint upon the Filipino nation has been the university of Santo Tomas. The establishment of this venerable center of education is due to a great man named Miguel de Benavides. Benavides was born in Spain in the XVI century. Educated in the best colleges of Renaissance Spain he embarked himself for the Philippines in 1586 and arrived in Manila in 1587 with the first group of Dominican missionaries. A learned man and a scholar he set down to study Chinese and became very proficient in it. He is one of the founders of the Parian, Binondo and the apostolate among the Chinese people. He went to China in 1590. Disappointed on account of the lack of an institution which could offer higher studies for those aspiring to the priesthood and to a civil career he thought of creating one. He became bishop of Nueva Segovia (Lal-lo, Cagayan) and later on, at the beginning of the XVII century, he was chosen archbishop of Manila. It was as archbishop that he truly began his serious efforts to

¹⁹ Cfr. F. FOX, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

establish a college or a university. Before he died he gave his library and 1500 pesos for the establishment and endowment of a Seminary-College where religious, novices and lay people could study humanities, arts, philosophy and theology.

The foundation of the university is dated April 12, 1611 when the official foundation act was solemnly drawn. A building was began and the first students enrolled in 1619, August 15, Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The name originally given to the college, "Colegio de Nuestra Señora del Rosario", was changed into Colegio de Santo Tomas. On that very year of 1619 the Superior Government of the Philippine Islands gave its official approval to the Dominican foundation. The students belonged and were "sons of the noblest citizens and most deserving captains of this city". The faculty to grant university degrees was given by Pope Paul V in 1619. The Spanish King Philip IV gave his approval to the institution in November 27, 1623. Pope Urban VIII confirmed the right to grant degrees for another ten years (January 7, 1627). The university authorities could not feel happy with this temporary privileges and sought from the very beginning to make them permanent. Thus Pope Innocent X in answer to the Spanish King's petition and taking into account "the great utility with which the sciences and arts are taught in this college" gave to the College of Santo Tomas the solemn title of university, in which "the religious of the said Order may read and teach to the young, grammar, rhetoric, philosophy and scholastic and moral theology, and provide to the rest of the aforementioned things in conformity with this Apostolic See."²⁰

In this way the university continued to grow and make progress in the service of nation and Church. The Spanish King, Charles II, on May 12, 1680 put the university under his royal protection and tutelage, although the official title of "Royal" was granted to the university of Santo Tomas in 1785 as a recompense to the administration and the students for their loyalty and bravery in defending the Filipino nation against the British invaders. The students fought with distinction and the university authorities spent a lot of money in putting up some battalions of students for the defense of the nation and the Church.

²⁰ Fr. FIDEL VILLARROEL, *op. cit.*, p. 191.

The university of Santo Tomas was fundamentally erected to provide education for those students who wanted to finish their ecclesiastical career. But by the second quarter of the XVIII century new faculties were added to satisfy those people who wanted to take up civil studies, especially law. From the beginning the courses offered by the university were Grammar, Philosophy, dogmatic Theology and Moral Theology. In 1733 Philip V, the Spanish King, gave permission for the erection of two more faculties: Canon and Civil Law. In 1835 *Derecho Patrio* or *Spanish Law* was also established.

The character of the university was markedly Christian and Catholic. Enrollment was small during the first century and the professors of the university belonged to the Dominican Order. Education was free and the Dominican Order educated freely all those students who wanted to study and take up higher studies. The government granted the university some privileges which helped her in the fulfillment of her educational task, but the real burden of educating, maintaining and putting up library, museum, facilities, faculty and the rest was always done by the Dominican Order helped, no doubt, by donations from pious persons and generous people who wanted to have a hand in the educational growth of the youth of the country. Many of the professors of the university, before the great changes of the middle of the nineteenth century, were men of high intellectual caliber who blended together sanctity of life with professional excellence. Some of them even became martyrs in foreign nations, especially Japan and Vietnam.

What about the student population? We have been educated in the modern age and we see hundreds of institutions of learning around us. The number of students go into the thousands of thousands. This definitely was not so at the beginning of the history of the university. It is very difficult to know the number of enrollees and graduates during the first two centuries. But by the end of the XVII century the historian Peguero tells us that

“since the foundation many masters and doctors have graduated and still graduate with honour of our college and utility of the common good due to the great number of graduates who take charge of the parishes and pre-

bends of the Metropolitan Church, and others for the Religious Orders, so that the students of Santo Tomas, whether secular priests or religious, can be found all over the Islands... I have known four (cathedral) deans, three bishops and many canons who graduated from this college and University."²¹

By the middle of the XIX century the university was graduating great men who served the Church in high positions and good lawyers who excelled in the service of nation and justice.

It was in the third quarter of the XIX century when the university grew by leaps and bounds and enrollment jumped to unheard of proportions. People were complaining of the system of education in the Philippines and the relevance of many of the subjects. There was a need for a thorough reform and updating of the educational system at all levels, especially at the university level. That is why the local government of the Philippines asked the Metropolitan government of Spain to do something to modernize the educational system. Due to these changes and modernization the university became more than ever the educational nerve of the nation. From the early years of the XIX century to the end of the Spanish period the university produced hundreds of graduates from all over the nation who gave glory to the nation and to the Church. The university became the university of the State, that is, the university of Santo Tomas was made the only public school and all other educational institutions were under the direct supervision and control of the university. In the last decades of the XIX century dozens of new schools were open in the city of Manila and in the provinces, conferring an education that could positively compare with any in Asia and even in Europe.

The university was attacked for its method and system of education. Anti-Catholic and Free Masons wrote pamphlets and irreligious propaganda against the university and the Church. This was not without some blessings for the nation and the university. It forced UST to pick up the cudgels and introduce new faculties and departments. Medicine and Pharmacy were established in 1871, followed in 1875 by the School of Notaries. In

²¹ JUAN PEGUERO, O.P., *Historia de la provincia del Santísimo Rosario de Filipinas*, MS. in Archivo de la Provincia del Santo Rosario (APSR), t. 695, as quoted by F. VILLARROEL, *ib.*, p. 194.

1879 the school of Midwives was opened. In 1880 the school of Practitioners of Medicine and Practitioners of Pharmacy. New faculties were added, like the Academy of Fine Arts and a department of Vocational Studies. Finally in 1896 the university established the Faculty of Sciences and the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, this last distinct from the Ecclesiastical Faculty of Philosophy.

It is but logical to think that the creation of these new faculties presupposed a tremendous increase in the enrollment and the faculty. The growth of faculties, of faculty members went hand in hand with growth of physical and laboratory facilities. Thus the university became a large center of education, unique in the country. The library began to multiply its volumes. The Museum, unique today in the whole of Asia, was enlarged and modernized. Some of the specimens owned by the Museum are to be found only here. The Museum is a repository of historical and anthropological wealth.

A count of some of the professors, called in Spanish *catedráticos*, would give us an idea of the intellectual role played by the university in the history of the nation and of the world, especially in the XIX century. Many of them are remarkable by any standard. Cardinal Zeferino González is called the "philosopher of the nineteenth century". We have archbishops Pedro Paya and Bernardino Nozaleda of Manila and Francisco Gainza, probably one of the most learned and greatest minds of nineteenth century Philippines. Theologian Norberto del Prado was internationally known. Lay professors like Cayetano Arellano, Antonio Trelles, Manuel Araullo, Baldomero Hazañas, Jose Vera, Mariano Garcia, Gumersindo del Valle and many others.

What is more outstanding is that UST produced a generation of heroes unequalled in the history of the Filipino nation. Nothing will better illustrate this than the mere mention of some of the most famous students who came from the halls of the university of Santo Tomas at the end of the XIX and beginning of the XX century. We are not concerned anymore with the XX century proper, for it falls outside the scope of the nature of our study. Limiting ourselves to the XIX century we have names which are very familiar even to high school and elementary students of the country today. Some of them were soldiers, other priests, still

others scholars and civil servants. Here is a partial list of them: Jose Rizal, the national hero and the greatest genius the Malay race has ever produced. Father Pelaez, the father of Philippine nationalism. Fathers Burgos, Gomez and Zamora, martyrs of Philippine independence. Emilio Jacinto, Sergio Osmeña, Manuel Quezon, Marcelo H. del Pilar, Apolinario Mabini, Rafael Palma, great politicians and leaders of the Filipino nation. Leon M. Guerrero, Cayetano Arellano, Felipe Buencamino, Manuel Araullo, Felipe Calderon, T. Pardo Tavera, Epifanio de los Santos, Felix Hidalgo, Victorino Mapa, Isabelo de los Reyes and many others.

Conclusion

We will not bring our brief study of the university of Santo Tomas down to the XX century. The university had produced outstanding alumni in all fields of human endeavour already by the XIX century. There is a biblical saying: by their fruits you shall know them. This which applies to ethical and theological principles and behaviour, will also apply to the intellectual field.

What was the nature of the education given in the university of Santo Tomas? In order to answer this we have but to look at the products that came out from the university. If we want to give a fair and impartial judgment we have to take the university in the context of XIX century Philippines and XIX century Asia. We cannot judge the university by modern standards, whether from Europe and America. We have to compare it to institutions of the XIX century and institutions in colonial and Asiatic nations. And it is here where we see the difference. The education given in the university of Santo Tomas, like the education given in any other institution in Manila and the Philippines, was progressive, open and meaningful. The professors, the administration and the leaders in education, the Friars, have been maligned by the Filipino Propagandists. They have ridiculed and insulted them in their writings and pamphlets. They bitterly complained of the uselessness of their education. They found the education given in the university irrelevant, medieval and trogloditic. But it was the very education they received which allowed them to become great, national heroes, internally recognized painters, lawyers of great repute, shapers

of national politics. When the new constitution was been framed in Malolos at the end of the XIX century the minds that were working towards the creation of a democratic and open constitution had been trained and educated in those same institutions maintained by the Friars. How can it be that they, the Friars, opposed the education of the people, if those same writers and propagandists, framers of new constitutions and creators of the First Republic in Asia, were accepted and educated in their own halls?

There is a need for a re-assessment of the nature of the education of the Friars during the Spanish period and the XIX century. We have to look at it with less passion and more historical precision. Historians have to escape the narrow limitations of nationalistic feelings and pass judgment on the historical moment in which the Philippines found itself at the end of the XIX century. It is useful to remark that for all the evils of education, so bitterly critized by the Reformers and Propagandists, theology was the fundamental reason for having open to them the eyes to struggle for the liberation of their nation. When do we find anything similar in any other Asiatic nation? India, millennial in its culture, became independent in 1946. China, a nation of a proverbial wisdom and philosophy, which has contributed so much to the growth of man's knowledge and perfection, did not liberate itself from the corruptions of Manchu government until this very century. Malaysia, Burma, Vietnam and Indonesia obtained their independence just after the Second World War. The Philippines was already an *independent* nation at the end of the XIX century. It was only the arrival of the American giant, the intellectual and social capitulation of the Propagandists and *ilustrados* to the Americans, that retarded the independence. But already by the middle of the XIX century the Philippines was well on its way towards achieving independence. When Spain was defeated and expelled, the Filipinos could have easily taken over the reins of the government of their nation and people. Who were the people ready to take over? Where did they receive the essential education for this? Was it not precisely in the halls of the Friars?

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