



Which Is the Oldest University? Revisiting the Conflicting Claims of the University of Santo Tomas, Manila and University of San Carlos, Cebu in Light of the History of Seminario (Mayor) de San Carlos of Cebu

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The historical fact that the University of Santo Tomas in Manila is the oldest university in the Philippines if not in Asia has been contested by repeated claims of the University of San Carlos in Cebu City. While earlier studies by Villarroel, OP and De la Goza, CM have convincingly shown that the latter claim is wrong, this paper would nonetheless like to offer additional evidence and further clarifications. The earliest roots of the University of San Carlos in Cebu is not the Jesuit Colegio de San Ildefonso of 1595 but the Seminario de San Carlos which, under the Vincentian Fathers, began to admit lay students in 1867. The year 1867, not 1595 as claimed, appears to be the auspicious beginning of an educational institution that would later become a university.

Keywords: *Colegio, Seminario-Colegio, Seminary, University, Jesuits, Dominicans, Padres Paules, Vincentians*

Stating the Issue

The University of Santo Tomas in Manila is less than a year away from celebrating the four hundredth anniversary of its foundation. In 2011, it will turn 400 as the oldest university not only in the Philippines but also in Asia. Its achievements both in the ecclesiastical and civil domains underscore that its fourth centenary is an auspicious heritage event not only of the university community and the Dominican Fathers who administer it but more so of the whole Filipino nation.¹

¹ The present Rector, Fr. Rolando de la Rosa, OP says “UST is the heritage of all Filipinos”. See, Lito Zulueta, “UST’s countdown to 2011 is heritage event of 2009,” *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (12 December 2009), C3.

Such claim however is seemingly contested by an earlier contention. On 20 August 1995 an essay entitled “San Carlos, not UST, is oldest university” declared that the University of San Carlos in Cebu City was set on solemnly celebrating the 400th year of its foundation.² In the same vein, another paper offered a historical background: “Administered by the Jesuits, its school (of San Ildefonso) was later operated by the diocesan clergy, who renamed it Colegio-Seminario de San Carlos. In 1852, the Dominicans took over and entrusted it to the Vincentians in 1867.”³

The claim was not however the first. It is one more added to a string of similar declarations that seem to have “started circulating in the wake of the elevation of the College of San Carlos to the rank of University in 1948.”⁴ The official gazette of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP), *The Sentinel* (1 November 1952), seems to have started it all. A month after, and in the following year, a series of articles by a Vincentian historian⁵ tried to correct the mistake but to no avail. In its 1983, 1986 and 1993 editions, the Catholic Directory of the Philippines consistently presented the University of San Carlos with three dates – 1595/1935/1948, the first one obviously given as foundation year. On 17 February 2003, in the heritage section of a local daily in the city of Cebu, someone claimed that “starting as a parochial school in 1595, the University of San Carlos is today the oldest school in the country.”⁶ In 2005, what was once a historical supposition that passed to historical claim has become official and institutional, as the University of San Carlos published a book that “chronicles over 400 years of (its) history... from its humble beginnings as a small Jesuit colegio in 1595.”⁷

There is however another educational institution whose untold story intertwines with the San Carlos University and thus holds the key to shed light on the conflicting historical claims. This paper contends that the history of Seminario (Mayor) de San Carlos can aid in clarifying some facts which for some reasons may have been misunderstood or misread. Hopefully this paper will help the historians of San Carlos University, as Villaruel puts it, “arrive at the clarification of the origins of (the) institution beyond any reasonable doubt.”⁸

² F.C. Borlongan, “San Carlos, not UST, is oldest university,” *Manila Bulletin* (20 August 1995).

³ Fidel Villaruel, “Which is older: UST or San Carlos,” *The Philippine Graphic* (11 December 1995), 30 citing a report in *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (26 August 1995).

⁴ *Ibid.*; also see, Rolando de la Goza and Jesus Ma. Cavanna, *The Vincentians in the Philippines, 1862-1982* (Manila: Congregacion de la Mision en Filipinas, 1985), 617.

⁵ See Fermin Campo, “Los Colegios de San Carlos y San Ildefonso de Cebu,” published in *Seminarium* 8 (December 1952), 2-3, 22; *Seminarium* 8 (January 1953), 12-14; *Seminarium* 8 (March 1953), 2-5.

⁶ Trizer D. Mansueto, “University of San Carlos,” *Cebu Daily News* (17 February 2003), 21.

⁷ See Jose Eleazar R. Bersales, Erlinda Alburo, and Resil B. Mojares (eds.), *University of San Carlos: A Commemorative History* (Cebu City: San Carlos Publications, 2005).

⁸ Fidel Villaruel, “Which is older: UST or San Carlos,” 32.

In broad strokes this essay shall first (1) clarify what the Colegio de San Ildefonso was by comparing it with the other Jesuit Colegios at the time, after which I will try (2) to sketch the origins of Seminario Conciliar de San Carlos based on church practice at the time. This will be followed by an attempt to (3) describe the Seminario-Colegio as an institution administered by the Vincentian Fathers which (4) through the years resulted into four institutions of learning all named under the patronage of San Carlos. I will conclude by stating what I think is a more accurate view and by drawing lessons from the controversy.

The Colegio de San Ildefonso de Cebu and the other Jesuit Colegios in the Philippine Islands (1595-1769)

“The first three Jesuits to come to the Philippines landed near Baler on the Pacific seaboard of Luzon, tramped down that storm-swept seacoast, broke through the wilderness of the Sierra Madre, and entered Manila on September 1581.”⁹ They were the latest addition to the Augustinians who had arrived with Miguel Lopez de Legazpi in 1565 and the Franciscans in 1578. The Dominicans would join them in 1587, and finally the Recoletos in 1606.

The earliest Christianization of the Islands obtained better results by each religious order having a mission territory of its own and, for logistical reasons, a central place of residence inside the walled city of Manila. By tradition, Jesuits all over the world would call their central house *Colegio* and, most probably by being within the walled city of Manila, the house came to be called *Colegio de Manila*. Much later, most probably after their founder was declared saint in 1622, the house would also be referred to as *Colegio de San Ignacio*. It was from there that they organized and conducted Christianization in their mission territory of Cavite, Taytay and Antipolo. As Jesuit tradition has it, the Colegio is also the residence of Jesuit scholastics or those members of the Society studying for the priesthood.

Meanwhile, in response to an earlier request by the Dominican Bishop Domingo Salazar, the first Bishop of Manila, to the General of the Society on 18 June 1583, a primary school was established in 1595.¹⁰ It had as yet no building of its own and the classes were held at the Jesuit house but the students were not boarders. No sooner the school adopted the name of the Colegio to where it was attached. In 1601 another school was established. Named *Colegio de San Jose*, it was a boarding school

⁹ Horacio de la Costa, *Light Cavalry* (Manila: National Media Office, 1997), 5-6.

¹⁰ Two years after his arrival, the Bishop pleaded to the King to order the Jesuit General “to send others ... and inaugurate a college where they may have persons to teach the children of the inhabitants of the city and those of the inhabitants of the Islands as well as the mestizos and the sons of the chief Indios.” For an English translation of the whole letter, see William Repetti, *The Beginnings of Jesuit Education in the Philippines: The College of Manila* (Manila: Manila Observatory, 1940), 5-6.

run but not owned by the Jesuits and its resident students attended lectures at the nearby *Colegio de Manila*.

It is important to note that the superior of the Jesuit missions in the Philippine Islands and his staff did not reside within the walled city. They had their own residence somewhere in what is now Sta. Cruz district. The house was called *Colegio de San Ildefonso*.

The much bigger mission territory of the Society of Jesus embraced the Visayan islands (Bohol, Leyte and Samar) and that of Northern Mindanao (Butuan and Dapitan), all of which were part of the huge expanse of the newly erected Diocese of Cebu (1595). The island of Cebu, like Panay, was Augustinian territory. But establishing a Jesuit Colegio or residential college in Cebu was necessary and opportune. It would serve as a launching pad from where they could organize and conduct their missions. The Jesuit missionaries from Cebu would also open “mission schools,” also called *colegios* or *seminarios de Indio* (boarding school for natives), in the residences of their mission stations in at least Leyte and Bohol.¹¹

From the foregoing, it is clear that there are many levels of meaning attached to the term *colegio*, particularly as it is used by the Society of Jesus during this era. So what was the *Colegio de San Ildefonso de Cebu*?

The Colegio de San Ildefonso de Cebu (1595)

According to an historical account¹², the Jesuit Portuguese Antonio Pereira happened to pass by Cebu in the year 1594 on the way to Manila from Ternate in the Moluccas. While lodging at the convent of the Augustinians he received requests from the residents of the city asking the foundation of a Colegio of the Society of Jesus. Since Cebu at the time was not as yet a diocese and thus without a bishop, the matter fell into the responsibility of the Regidor of Cebu, Alonso de Henao. He took the petition to Manila and returned on June 30, 1595 successfully bringing the Jesuit Vice-Provincial, Antonio Sedeño, Alonso de Humanes, Mateo Sanchez, and a lay brother.

¹¹ For an account of the schools in Dulag (Leyte) and Loboc (Bohol), see Horacio de la Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-1768* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 159-160, 312-313.

¹² On this, see *Reseña Histórica del Seminario-Colegio de San Carlos de Cebu, 1867-1917* (Manila: E.C. McCullough & Co., Inc., 1917), 3-6. An earlier account done by Pablo Singzon, an alumnus of the Seminary and Vicar-General of the Diocese at the time, appears in the Catholic periodical of Cebu, “Ang Camatuoran” on its 4 October 1905 issue. This was reprinted in the *Programa de Estudios del Seminario-Colegio de San Carlos* in 1909 (pages 3-6), and also in *Breve Reseña Histórica de la Labor Realizada en estas Islas de doble Familia de San Vicente Paul, 1862-1912* (Manila: Imprenta de Santos y Bernal, 1912), 53-54. Singzon was mistaken in setting the year 1575 as the foundation of the Colegio instead of 1595.

It is most likely that the first four Jesuits lived temporarily in the house of the gracious Henao. Unfortunately after a few weeks in Cebu, Sedeño had fallen ill. So he sent Humanes to tell Chirino, another confrere who had in the meantime arrived in Leyte on 16 July 1595, to come to Cebu “to start the building of their own house, because foreseeing that his days on earth were few, Father Sedeño wanted to die in his own house.” By 21 August 1595 a small wooden house where the Jesuits would reside was ready for use. It was located “between the seashore and the street that came to be called Calle Enrile-Serrano”, not far from where Legazpi had established a small triangular wooden fort in 1565.¹³ Two years later, in 1597, the Colegio, as what Jesuit residences were then called, was formally dedicated to the patronage of San Ildefonso after a small church of native materials was finished right beside it. Named rector was Pedro Chirino; he was assisted by Antonio Pereira and Brother Gaspar Garay.

In response to the requests of the city’s residents, a free primary school for boys was opened by Pereira in the small and poor house in the same year. As in other schools during the age of mission, classes were in the primary level consisting mainly of reading, writing and arithmetic as well the basics of Christian doctrine and deportment.¹⁴ Brother Gaspar Garay took over when P. Pereira was recalled to the Moluccas mission. While its primary students were sons of the few Spanish residents in the city, Visayan and Chinese boys were apparently admitted as well.

When the first Bishop of Cebu, Pedro de Agurto, arrived in 1598, he requested the opening of a grammar school for the boys in his household, his nephews and sons of Spanish residents. From the usage of the term during this period, it seems that *Latinidad* is a grammar school where the rigors of the Latin language is taught and learned, certainly a level of learning which in today’s standards ought to be qualified as secondary education. A Jesuit scholastic who arrived with the bishop, Francisco Vicente Puche, handled the young students. No sooner in the same year, the newly arrived Mexican Augustinian bishop and his entourage were entertained by a drama staged in Latin and Castellan prose by the first students of Puche. These Spanish boys presumably did not need *primeras letras* in their own language. No doubt after most of the Spaniards abandoned Cebu for the galleon trade in Manila, this did not continue, and most if not all of the teaching was to teach Filipino boys Spanish on a primary level.

¹³ Resil Mojares, “Beginnings, 1595-1867,” 17.

¹⁴ The Jesuits were not the first to open primary schools in the Islands. “The Franciscans, who had arrived in 1577, were probably the first to establish this practice. Living in quarters near the priests’ residences, carefully chosen boys were taught Spanish and basic academic skills, Church music and liturgy, and the Christian catechism,” says Cristina Pantoja Hidalgo, “Schools for the Elite,” in Jose Arcilla (ed.), *The Spanish Conquest*, Volume III of the series entitled *Kasaysayan: The Story of the Filipino People* (Hongkong: Asia Publishing Company, 1998), 267-269, 272-279.

At any rate, the Colegio and the school attached to it were ably supported by government assistance and private donations.¹⁵ An annual subsidy of 200 pesos and 200 *fanegas* of rice were provided by the local government. In 1605, Alonso Henao, the Regidor who had housed the first Jesuits in his house, died leaving the Colegio heir to his properties. In 9 December 1606, the Ensign Pedro de Aguilar, a rich Spaniard, donated 7,000 pesos to improve the wooden house and church of the Colegio and invested 7,000 in houses for rent in Manila whose interest was to secure the sustenance of the fathers. Earlier, in 15 December 1605, a certain Alonso Freire de Cespedes donated a cattle ranch in Caburulan, Inabanga (Bohol). Other donations were made on 23 May 1663 by some benefactors of the Jesuit *visita* in Talibon (Bohol). Later on estates in the city of Cebu and a hacienda in Mandaue were added to secure the Colegio's existence. With all these means at their disposal, the Jesuits were able to gradually replace the old house and church with larger and spacious stone buildings.

The Expulsion of the Jesuits (1767) and the Colegio's extinction (1769)

No one seems to have ever thought that the strategic value of the Jesuit residence and the fruitfulness of its school would come to a sudden unfortunate end.

On the 17th of May 1768 Don Jose Raon, then Governor-General of the Philippine Islands, "received an ominously bulky official communiqué" from the Count of Aranda, the minister of state to His Majesty Carlos III of Spain. "The message of the King was curt and to the point: the banishment of the Order of the Society of Jesus from all Royal Dominions." The royal order had been executed in Europe a year earlier. Dated 27 February 1767 and addressed to all civil and military authorities in all the Spanish dominions, the royal dispatch was not to be opened, under the pain of death, "until April 2, 1767, at the setting of the sun."¹⁶ And "the expulsion was to be swift (for which secrecy was necessary), sure (and therefore force was to be used in case of any resistance), and complete."¹⁷

¹⁵ On this, see *Reseña Historica, 1867-1917*, 5; also see the *Clausula del testamento del Alferz Pedro de Aguilar haciendo una importante donacion al Colegio de Cebu el 9 de Diciembre de 1606* as appended in *Ibid.*, 233.

¹⁶ The message read: "I invest you with all my authority and all my royal power to descend immediately with arms on the Jesuit establishments in your district; to seize the occupants and lead them as prisoners to the port indicated inside of twenty-four hours. At the moment of seizure, you will seal the archives of the house and all private papers and permit no one to carry anything but his prayer book and the linen strictly for the voyage. If after your embarkation there is left behind a single Jesuit either sick or dying in your department, you shall be punished with death. I, the King." See Horacio de la Costa, *Light Cavalry*, 9-10.

¹⁷ See *Ibid.*, 7-8.

Upon orders of Raon, one of the *oidores* of the *audiencia*, Don Manuel Galban, “proceeded to the residence of the Jesuit provincial, which was at the time the College of San Ildefonso in the district of Santa Cruz.”¹⁸ Simultaneous arrests were made at the Colegio de Manila and Colegio de San Jose. In his letter to the King dated 23 July 1768, Raon reported sixty-four Jesuits were on board the galleon *San Carlos* for exile, and he dispatched four more vessels for their removal from the Visayas Islands.¹⁹

The task of executing the royal decree in the province of Cebu fell on the shoulders of Don Jose Andres Velarde, the *alcalde mayor*, on 17 October 1768. He was instructed to take possession of the properties of the Jesuits who resided in the city and their temporalities in Mandaue, Inabanga and Talibon.

The Jesuits in Cebu and those ministering in Bohol, Leyte and Samar were brought prisoners to Manila. There they were held incommunicado together with their confreres from all over the country, 154 in all. The Jesuit writer and historian Miguel Bernad, informs us that “with the scarcity of ships, it took three years before all of them could be put on board for exile to Sardinia (Italy) and later to the Papal States.”²⁰

On 1 June 1769 the Colegio de San Ildefonso had to officially close and its temporalities became properties of the royal crown. The last rector was P. Domingo Inchausti,²¹ a native of Pamplona and the Vice-Provincial of all Jesuits in the Visayas and Mindanao. He was arrested with five more companions.²² Such was the end of the Colegio de San Ildefonso, the residence of the Society of Jesus in Cebu. In its entire existence it served as a central house for Jesuit missionaries working in the outlying islands of the Visayas and a school for the training of young boys specifically in the rigors of the new language and the basics of the new religion.

¹⁸ Horacio de la Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-1768* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961), 583.

¹⁹ Horacio de la Costa, *Light Cavalry*, 8. For an account of the voyage of the first batch of exiles on board the *San Carlos*, see Horacio de la Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-1768*, 588-593.

²⁰ Miguel Bernad, “Colegio de San Jose, 1601-2001: The Turbulent 400-year History of an Educational Institution,” *Insta* 62 (2001), 16.

²¹ Available documents narrating the events from 1595 to 1768 mention the following as rectors of the Colegio in Cebu: Pedro Chirino, Luis Gomez, Valerio de Ledesma, Alonso de Humanes, Francisco de Otazo, Francisco Gonzalez, Cristobal de Miralles, and Domingo Inchausti. Cf. *Reseña Historica, 1867-1917*, p. 6.

²² According to Horacio de la Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-1768*, 604-605, they were Daniel Josef Geltel, Jose Salvador, Lorenz John, Ramon Barnadas, and Silvestre Puigvert. But the *Reseña Historica, 1867-1917*, 236 offers a partially different list: Domingo Inchausti, P. Raymundo, P. Daniel Joseph Petrel, P. Lorenzo Yhong, and Bro. Miguel Marcos. The northern European Jesuits often Hispanized their names or even adopted a different Spanish one. “Raymundo” is probably R. Barnadas, “Yhong” is a Spanish mispronunciation of John, while Daniel Joseph Petrel is “Daniel Josef Geltel”.

The extinction of the Society in the whole world became complete on 16 August 1773, when Pope Clement XIV, under threats of schism and persecution by the enemies of the Church at that time, was pressured to issue the papal brief *Dominus ac Redemptor* suppressing the Society of Jesus throughout the world.

What was the *Colegio de San Ildefonso*?

What was the *Colegio de San Ildefonso de Cebu*? A comparison with other *Colegios* at the time is necessary in order to avoid confusion and understand better the specificity of the *Colegio* in Cebu.

Firstly, the primary school that Pereira opened at the *Colegio de San Ildefonso* was not a “boarding school”. It was apparently a “day school” like *Colegio de Manila* (1595) where students do not have to reside after attending lectures. The classes that the pupils of Manila and Cebu had to attend were held in their respective Jesuit *Colegios*. But shortly thereafter the primary school at the *Colegio de Manila*, unlike the *Colegio de Cebu*, would appear to have a building of its own. Later on it offered a program beyond the primary level of studies and, from 1621 until the Jesuit expulsion, it had the papal privilege to grant university degrees in philosophy and theology. It started to be called university, hence the *Universidad de San Ignacio*, when the crown set up a chair of canon and civil law in it in the 18th century.²³ The *Colegio de San Ildefonso* in Cebu clearly did not reach such level of studies.

If we are correct that it was a “day school”, *Colegio de San Ildefonso* was different from *Colegio de San Jose* (1601) where students lived and followed a “regular community life calculated to help residents develop good character traits” while attending classes at the *Colegio de Manila* nearby and earn their academic degrees.²⁴ In other words, while San Jose was a residential college without a school, the *Colegio de San Ildefonso* had a school but, apparently, was not a place of residence of the students. But like San Jose in its early years, the *Colegio de San Ildefonso* was not, strictly speaking, a “seminary” in the sense used by the Council of Trent, that is, a boarding school where aspirants to the priesthood live and study.

Secondly, the *Colegio* in Cebu was owned and maintained by the Jesuits. It had to surrender its facility and supporting temporalities to the Royal crown by virtue of the expulsion. The *Colegio de San Jose* did not suffer such ignominy because in 1610 it was legally converted into an educational institution “administered by the Jesuits

²³ On this we rely on Miguel Bernad, “*Colegio de San Jose, 1601-2001*,” 9-10; and John Schumacher, *Readings in Philippine Church History* (Quezon City: Loyola School of Theology, 1979), 142-143; 147-148. It may be recalled that during this era a university in the strict juridical sense is one that had four faculties of a *studium generale* (philosophy, theology, law and medicine).

²⁴ Miguel Bernad, “*Colegio de San Jose, 1601-2001*,” 4-5.

but supported by an endowment”, thanks to the Will of Don Esteban Rodriguez de Figueroa.²⁵ While the endowment had to be preserved intact, it would pass to other hands and be used for other purposes. But, after a series of long legal and ecclesiastical battles, it was eventually to be returned to the Jesuits in 1911 and the Colegio de San Jose reopened on 15 June 1915 as a “minor seminary,” to which was added a “major seminary” in 1921.²⁶

The Jesuits did in fact own the Colegio de Manila; they administered it and taught there. It was erected in 1595 upon the request by Bishop Salazar in 1583. Although it was founded by a gift from Esteban Rodriguez de Figueroa, it had been financially supported by funds, at least for a few years, from the royal treasury by virtue of the royal cedula of 1585. The Colegio in Manila had also to close, this time as *Universidad de San Ignacio*, when the Jesuits had to leave their administrative and teaching posts by virtue of the royal expulsion. Its building was left empty until the King gave it to the Manila Archbishop Basilio Sancho de Santa Justa in 1770 or 1771 for his seminary. The Colegio facility in Cebu would, as we shall later explain, suffer a similar fate.

Thirdly, while the Colegio de San Ildefonso served as a central house for the Jesuits in the Visayas, it was hardly a *colegio*, “in the sense used by Saint Ignatius in the Constitutions”, that is, a residential college where Jesuit scholastics were trained for the priesthood.²⁷ “No Jesuit scholastic was trained there, and the grammar school, which had been started chiefly at the request of Bishop Agurto, was closed down for lack of students just before he died. Only the primary school for boys remained in operation.”²⁸ Except for the Colegio de Manila and Colegio de San Jose, all other Jesuit Colegios were “inchoate” colleges.

This seems to be the missing ingredient in the Colegio de San Ildefonso. The school that it opened did not prosper to the level attained by Colegio de Manila and Colegio de San Jose. That it did not develop due to less than ideal circumstances is correct. There was a lack of students for higher learning and the Jesuits stationed in Cebu could not attend fully to such task because of other duties specifically assigned to them in the city and its environs, and, if I may add, because of the demands of the outlying islands being their priority mission areas. It did not also prosper to be like the Colegio de San Ignacio in Manila where Jesuits preparing for priestly ministry in the islands went through the rigor of philosophical and theological studies.

Be that as it may, records seem to suggest that it did expand in size and gain more durability. “A new church-and-residence was inaugurated on 29 November

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

²⁶ Miguel Bernad, “Colegio de San Jose, 1601-2001,” 18-24.

²⁷ Horacio de la Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-176, 277-278*.

²⁸ *Ibid.*; also see Resil Mojares, “Beginnings, 1595-1867,” 19.

1625” to replace the original house and church built of light materials, and “in 1725 this was further replaced with a larger and fine-looking stone-building.”²⁹ In fact, a document, dated 26 September 1772, that attests the passage of the Colegio church to become the *Santa Iglesia Catedral* of Cebu after the Jesuit expulsion, show the grandeur of a highly crafted place of worship.³⁰

Why the gradual expansion of the facility? In the absence of records, one can only make a probable guess, namely: that the school may have begun to have classes in the secondary level of education by the 18th century, when basic Spanish was already known to a certain number of Cebuano boys. The fact that the facility, particularly its big church, served as a religious center for Cebu at the time is another probable explanation.

Be that as it may, documentary evidence provided by Jesuit historians gives us a clear and definite explanation: the Colegio was the vital springboard from where the Jesuit priest and lay missionaries would launch their mission assignments in the Visayas and northern Mindanao and a vital home for them to return to after long years or months of tirelessly laboring in unknown and sometimes hostile mission territories assigned to them. The Colegio de San Ildefonso was, in the words of Horacio de la Costa, “the central house of the Visayan missions (that) had to take care of the men who got sick or needed rest or awaiting assignment.”³¹

One needs to recall some examples.³² It was in this Colegio that Juan de Torres and Gabriel Sanchez prepared for their missions in Bohol and left Cebu on 17 November 1596. The same can be said of the missions to Leyte (Dulag, Palo and Carigara) and Samar (Tinagon) as well as Butuan in northern Mindanao in about the same year. When the short-lived mission of Butuan was restored in 1611 at the urgent request of the government, Francisco Vicente was sent there from Cebu to be succeeded by Juan Lopez. The Cebu Jesuits also undertook a mission in Dapitan in northern Mindanao and Ilog in western Negros later on. The Colegio was also the place where Jesuits would gather for occasions very special to the Society, such was the case in December of 1621 when almost all of the Jesuits gathered in Cebu to celebrate the beatification of Saint Francis Xavier.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁰ See a copy of the *Testimonio de las diligencias practicadas sobre la acepcion e la Iglesia e los expulsos Jesuitas para pasar en ella Catedral* appended in *Reseña Historica, 1867-1917*, 237- 240.

³¹ Horacio de la Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-1768*, 167. This was also the case of the Augustinians in 1565 and, much later, the Recoletos in 1621 who “fundaron en Cebu sus respectivos conventos, de donde partian a las islas vecinas y del Sur los misioneros que la cristianizaron y redujeron la vida social”. See *Reseña Historica, 1867-1917*, p. 3. It may be helpful to inform the reader that friar orders such as Augustinians, Dominicans, Franciscans, and Recoletos called their houses *conventos* but the Jesuits, being not friar orders, called theirs *residencias*.

³² *Ibid.*, 159-166, 315, and 318.

What appears to be a modest expansion of the Colegio facility in Cebu during the 17th and 18th centuries suggests the clear intention to continue the main purpose and strategic value for which the Colegio was established. For the companions of Ignatius of Loyola, it was a home where they could rejuvenate each other through sharing each other's company, a hospital where companions who got sick in the mission stations are returned to be cured and healed, a school where they could update their theological knowledge and refine their pastoral acumen through books that were at par with those found in European *colegios*,³³ and a refuge where they could quietly retreat, rest and regain their total well-being ready to return to their mission territories.

For the Jesuits, the Colegio de San Ildefonso was more than the school they opened for extern students in response to a request. Its entire existence suggests that in the mind of the Society coming to Cebu was above all a very auspicious occasion for establishing a central house from where they could organize and sustain what would in about fifty years turn out to be the "most glorious" mission territory that the Society ever possessed in the Islands, "the ones which employed the greatest number of its members", and "the ones in which they did the most good to the greatest number of people."³⁴

The Seminario de San Carlos, Real y Conciliar (1783-1867)

It is auspicious at this point to inquire about the earliest beginnings of another educational institution in Cebu and its relations, if any, with the extinct Jesuit colegio.

The Seminario Conciliar and the Secular Clergy of Cebu

Obviously prompted by the decree of the Council of Trent (1563) that every diocese must have a seminary, the bishop of Cebu, Mateo Joaquin Rubio de Arevalo (1775-1786) made provisions for an institution devoted to the training of candidates to the priesthood in his diocese. In a letter dated 25 October 1777 the Bishop petitioned King Charles III of Spain for the legal bequest of buildings of the old Colegio de San Ildefonso (residence, church, and rooms of the school) which was left to fall into ruin.

³³ The Seminary Archives is in possession of at least nine books that it has inherited most probably from the Jesuit Colegio. See, Aloysius Cartagenas, "The Rare Books of Seminario Mayor de San Carlos (1634-1767): A Spanish Jesuit Heritage?" *Talad* (2008) 87-91.

³⁴ This is in brief how De la Costa captures the protest lodged by Fr. Alcina when his fellow Jesuits in Luzon suggested to Rome that the Visayan missions be given up. See Horacio de la Costa, *The Jesuits in the Philippines, 1581-1768*, 462-463.

The request was granted by virtue of a royal decree on 29 October 1779. It included not just the Colegio's facilities but also its temporalities such as the hacienda in Mandaue, parcels of land in the city as well as in Inabanga and Talibon (Bohol). The Royal Audiencia of Manila confirmed it on 16 October 1782. On 23 August 1783 the Spanish government officially turned over the properties that it had confiscated and hitherto owned. Representing the state during the formal turnover was Don Antonio Diaz, the *alcalde mayor* of Cebu province; standing for the Bishop was his special delegate, Jacinto Nepomuceno, parish priest of the Cathedral.

De jure or from a legal point of view, the *Real Seminario de San Carlos* was officially born. The title *Real* or royal meant that the seminary was under the auspices of the King; San Carlos stood for St. Charles Borromeo, the King's holy patron. It was also a *Seminario Conciliar* for it was for the rigorous training of diocesan priests which the Council of Trent strictly demanded.

But, *de facto*, the diocesan seminary could not take off. A sufficient number of secular priests who studied in the seminaries in Manila were assigned to Cebu for parochial ministry in the intervening years. But hardly anyone was trained for seminary administration and theological teaching. The dearth if not the absence of a seminary staff and statutes appeared to be initially resolved when the Dominican Francisco Genoves became bishop of Cebu (1825-1827) and in 1825 appointed P. Jose Morales del Rosario and P. Jose Hilarion Corbera as rector and vice-rector. A long list of diocesan priests followed them until 1867.³⁵ They were Miguel Nicolas Carmelo, Mariano de los Santos, Esteban Meneses, Bernardo Yubal, Clemente Espina, Laureano Rivera, and Leon Ezequil Aguilar. Professors would include Francisco Jaime, Pantaleon de Veyra and Gregorio Sosing.

The Dominican Assistance to the Secular Clergy (1852-1867)

Bishop Genoves was succeeded by Romualdo Jimeno, another Dominican. The length of time Jimeno was bishop of Cebu (1847-1872) saw the auspicious help rendered by his confreres from the University of Santo Tomas in Manila. The bishop has had a succession of Dominicans to serve him as personal secretary: Fray Mariano Cuartero (1852-1853), Fray Francisco Rivas (1853-1857), Fray Pedro Payo (1857-1863), and Fray Pedro Trasobares (1863-1867). When the Bishop had each take turns in also helping the conciliar seminary as professors of Moral Theology and even as Regent of Studies, the academic standard required of ecclesiastical studies significantly improved.

³⁵ *Reseña Historica, 1867-1917*, 7 and 15.

They were not ordinary Dominicans but men of exceptional qualities. After their respective stints in Cebu, Mariano Cuartero became the first bishop of the Diocese of Jaro, Pedro Payo was later named Archbishop of Manila, and Francisco Rivas was also nominated bishop; for his part, Pedro Trasobares became sub-prior of the convent of Santo Domingo in Manila.³⁶ The contention that the Dominicans took over the administration of the seminary in 1852 is wrong. The truth is, “none of these Dominicans administered the seminary, much less did any of them become Rector; and all of them resided in the Bishop’s palace.”³⁷

But the help, although necessary, did not seem enough. The seminary’s diocesan priests worked, in today’s parlance, only part-time. First and foremost, they were parish priests either in the Cathedral or its environs. Some of them even held administrative jobs of the diocese such as Provisor or Vicar-General. Such adaptation was far from the ideal set by the Church at the time but, similar to how the seminaries in Manila had started the Bishop of Cebu had also to make do with the resources available.

An Inchoate Seminary Curriculum for Aspirants to the Priesthood

From 1783 to 1867 the seminary’s curriculum of studies tried to live up to the standards set by the Universal Church for those preparing for priestly life and ministry. Reading the scant documents at hand, it would appear that the seminary’s *ratio studiorum* was specifically for aspirants to the priesthood. But it was in its modest and inconspicuous beginnings and constantly adapting to its present circumstances.

For instance, when the Vincentians assumed administration of the seminary in 1867, they received documents and authoritative testimonies showing the kind of courses offered by the seminary since it existed in 1783. Courses in Philosophy, Moral Theology and Humanities (called then *Latinidad*) were mentioned and, at one time or another, Mathematics, Geography and other subjects were also included.³⁸

³⁶ For the respective biographies of the said Dominicans, see the archival materials at the UST Archives marked *Mision* 65 (1837), 20-21; *Mision* 67 (1841a), 29-31 and 32-33; and *Mision* 72 (1844b), 56.

³⁷ Fidel Villaruel, “Which is older, UST or San Carlos University,” 31.

³⁸ *Reseña Historica, 1867-1917*, 8; “El Seminario de San Carlos de Cebu,” *Misiones Catolicas en Extremo Oriente* (Manila: Cachos Hermanos, 1937), 191; and Roland de la Goza and Jesus Ma. Cavana, *Vincentians in the Philippines, 1862-1982* (Manila: Congregacion de la Mision en Filipinas, Inc., 1985), 88.

The 1835 Report

An 1835 report³⁹ shows five teaching chairs in the seminary: one for Scholastic Theology and Morals, which used the standard theological works by Gonet⁴⁰ and Larraga⁴¹ respectively; one for Philosophy, which had Goudin⁴² as course book; two for Grammar that used Nebrija's textbook. Interestingly, the fifth one, devoted for *primeras letras*, was basically a course on reading and writing, and appears to be an addition, albeit necessary, to the curriculum. This seemed to be occasioned by the extinction of the school that offered *primeras letras* to the Cebuano community when the Colegio de San Ildefonso closed in 1768. No similar institution replaced it either. The absence did not bode well for young boys who could be very good ecclesiastics but could not read and write Spanish. This was not propitious also for a seminary, where courses are taught and learned in Spanish and Latin, being an ecclesiastical institution of higher learning.

But the Conciliar Seminary's *primeras letras* does not necessarily mean a "continuation of the service provided by the old Jesuit primary school".⁴³ It was most probably a necessary adaptation to a less than ideal circumstance. The school opened by Pereira in the 1595 Colegio did not have any pretension or intention, whether proximate or remote, of preparing young boys for ecclesiastical ministry. But the Seminario Conciliar did have. In this sense, no integral and direct link can be established between the two even if, in some usages, the institution as a whole was also referred to as "Colegio Seminario Conciliar" or "Colegio Seminario de Zebu."

It may be argued that it had "functioned as a mix of seminary and college"⁴⁴ as Mojares assumes, inasmuch as the 1835 document also reports that, besides the 32 resident seminarians, "many more students" live outside the seminary building. But it does not seem that it was not strictly a seminary institution. There were externs most probably because the seminary facility could not accommodate all the students

³⁹ See *Relacion de los estudios y catedras del Colegio Seminario Conciliar que se pide en la Circular No. 3 por El Excmo. E Ilmo Sr. Presidente de la Junta Eclesiastica D. Pedro Jose Fonce, Arzobispo de Mejico*, dated 19 December 1835 in *Reseña Historica, 1867-1917*, 252.

⁴⁰ Jean Baptiste Gonet (1616-1681) was a French Dominican theologian who championed Thomistic theology and authored the famous "Clypeus theologiae thomisticae contra novos ejus impugnatores" (Bordeaux, 1659-69). See the *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967), vol. VI, 606.

⁴¹ Francisco Larraga (died 1723) was a Spanish Dominican moral theologian who published in 1708 the famous "Promptuario de la teologia moral" which was a series of 55 tracts on Sacraments, censures, ignorance, conscience, sin, law, Commandments and indulgences. See *Ibid.*, vol. VIII, 387.

⁴² Antoine Goudin (1639-1695), French Dominican philosopher who authored the standard compendium of scholastic-Thomistic philosophy entitled "Philosophia juxta inconcusa tutissimaque divi Thomae dogmata" (Lyon, 1671; Paris, 1674). See *Ibid.*, vol. VI, 649.

⁴³ Resil Mojares, "Beginnings, 1867-1917," 22.

⁴⁴ Resil Mojares, "Beginnings, 1595-1867," 22.

within its walls and/or that, of those who aspire for the priesthood, many of them may not have the means to pay the fees which internship demands.

Be that as it may, such arrangement by force of circumstance was certainly not without negative consequences! When Bishop Jimeno took over Cebu in 1847, he could only lament at what he perceived as laxity of admissions and discipline as well as the pervading demoralization, particularly because majority of the students were living outside the seminary in private houses.⁴⁵

The 1848 Document

Another report dated 13 December 1848,⁴⁶ almost a year after Jimeno's critical lamentation, shows the same arrangement. A total of 18 students were enrolled in Moral Theology, of which 16 lived inside the seminary and 2 who lodged outside. The Philosophy course had 20 externs and only 1 resided in the seminary by being a scholar. Those studying the Syntax of Latin grammar numbered 57, while 138 took the first principles of the same language, but all of them did not lodge or board in the seminary.

This academic curriculum has more order than that previously reported in the 1835 document. Above all, it shows courses specifically meant for the clerical state. That is why the 1848 document informs us that, "the principal purpose of this seminary is for the education and studies of the native youth of the diocese in order to receive them into Sacred Orders and serve the Ministries of souls. The studies done in the seminary are to instruct the students who have the vocation to the ecclesiastical state regarding the things necessary in the administration of the Sacraments and the preaching of the Holy Gospel."⁴⁷

In this sense, the number of externs does not necessarily suggest "that many students may have enrolled for the opportunity for higher education rather than out of a vocation for priesthood"⁴⁸ because how does one explain the 2 externs who were at the time taking Moral Theology and the 20 externs in Philosophy, both academic courses clearly meant for clerical life at the time. "Offering instruction to non-boarding boys, however numerous," cautions Villarroel, "did not constitute a formal college or secondary school, much less a school recognized by the government."⁴⁹

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ See a copy of the document entitled *Relacion y Noticias de la fundacion del Seminario Conciliar de S. Carlos de la ciudad de Cebu, de los estudios que en el se hacen y de sus rentas anuales* appended in *Reseña Historica, 1867-1917*, 253-254.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ This is the view of Resil Mojares, "Beginnings, 1595-1867," 24.

⁴⁹ Fidel Villarroel, "Which is older: UST or San Carlos University," 31.

Moreover, the same report mentions of a Seminario Conciliar “which is at the same time a *colegio* with the advocacy of St. Charles Borromeo”. This should not be associated with a *Colegio* different from the purpose of the *Seminario* because nowhere can one find in the same document an institutional purpose other than the training of future diocesan priests. The term *Colegio* seems to be used to mean a “boarding college” where students live and study. The document reports there were 17 *colegiales*, that is to say “boarders” or interns, 14 of which were on study grants.

More could not be admitted for lack of space since a part of the seminary was occupied by government troops. “There was not even a comfortable and decent room for priests who needed to stay there.” The same document also tells us of a seminary quite unstable in financial resources to pay for salaries, maintenance, and some expenses for the preservation of the establishment. At any rate, this documentation strengthens our case that some seminarians, at this point in the seminary’s history, had to live outside because of lack of seminary space and funds.

If our reading of the 1835 and 1848 documents is correct, one could not find, in the city of Cebu from the years 1783 to 1867, indications of the existence of a *Colegio* directly linked to the defunct Jesuit primary school nor a new and similar educational institution whose purpose was other than the long process of priestly training. What began to take shape in the building of the extinct *Colegio de San Ildefonso* from 23 August 1783 onwards was purely an ecclesiastical institution for the training of secular clergy from the earliest to the final stages of a long process.

In the “Book of Ordinations to the Minor and Major Orders”⁵⁰ of which our Seminary Archives is in possession, the first entry is a listing of those received into the minor order of tonsure on 18 March 1854; a few similar lists after, we see a first entry of someone ordained to the priesthood, a Recollect, together with 3 deacons and 5 sub-deacons by Bishop Romualdo Jimeno on 23 September 1854 at the Cebu Cathedral. The entries dated 24 December 1854⁵¹ and those on 22 September,⁵² 30

⁵⁰ The Book of Ordinations is issued from the Palacio Episcopal de Zebu and its entries begin on 1 January 1854 until 22 December 1940. Also to be studied is the *Libro de Cargas de este Seminario desde 1826* which records the income and expenses of the Seminary in almost every detail starting 1826, the year the seminary began in earnest.

⁵¹ Ordained priest was Saturnino Conlu of Molo, Iloilo and ordained deacons were Bernardo Gallareta and Pedro Lago, both Recollects, as well as native Cebuanos namely: Mariano Avila (Parian), Toribio Padilla (San Nicolas), and Feliciano Torres (Naga).

⁵² Ordained priests by Bishop Jimeno were Fernando Sanchez, an Augustinian Discalced, and Toribio Padilla (San Nicolas, Cebu).

September,⁵³ 4 November⁵⁴ and 22 December⁵⁵ in the following year would attest a seminary that has finally produced its first fruits.

To further prove our point, the letter of Manila Archbishop Gregorio Meliton Martinez to the Regent of Spain, informs us that about this time the huge diocese of Cebu had 237 parishes, of these 48 were run by the secular clergy. “Such factors as the limited size of the seminary, the lack of professors, and the ignorance of the Spanish language, the knowledge of which is indispensable for the study of Latin and moral theology,” the letter attests, “did not prevent the formation of a sufficient number of secular priests to take care of the above-mentioned parishes.”⁵⁶ The report is dated 31 December 1870, but considering the long years of priestly training the good Archbishop could very well be talking about some priests who were trained at the *Seminario Conciliar de San Carlos* a decade or two earlier. The letter therefore sketches for us a picture of modest success the seminary had achieved under the hands of the diocesan clergy despite the odds.

The *Seminario-Colegio de San Carlos de Cebu* under the *Padres Paules* (1867-1924)

The odds will be surmounted as the administration of the lone educational institution in Cebu would change hands. The succeeding years will also see the gradual birth of a new institution distinct in nature and purpose from the *Seminario Conciliar*.

The *Seminario Conciliar de San Carlos* and the Arrival of the *Padres Paules* (1867)

The royal decree of Queen Isabel II of Spain (1830-1904) dated 19 October 1852 mandated the establishment of the Congregation of the Missions in the Philippine Islands “so that they should take charge of the teaching and administration of the Conciliar Seminaries.” The Queen considered it to be “absolutely indispensable to improve the education given in the Conciliar Seminaries which, for lack of professors and resources, cannot duly fulfill the end for which the Holy Council of

⁵³ Two were ordained priests on this day: Anatalio Guzman (Parian) and Pedro de la Prosa (Jaro, Iloilo).

⁵⁴ A certain Miguel Alvarez, whose birthplace is not clear, was ordained priest.

⁵⁵ Ordained priests on this day were 6 diocesan clerics namely: Franco Rallos (Cebu City), Mariano Avila (Parian), Benigno Reyes (Talibon, Bohol), Diego Albao (Cebu City), Feliciano Torres (Naga), and Leon Contineliber (?); and 2 Recollects, Bernardo Gallareta and Pedro Lago.

⁵⁶ See John Schumacher, *Readings in Philippine Church History*, 218-220.

Trent established them.”⁵⁷ However, due to some obstacles that had to be hurdled, it was not until 22 July 1862 that the first batch would arrive in Manila. Soon after, they took over the administration of the Conciliar Seminaries in Manila on 2 August 1862 and Nueva Caceres (Naga) on 7 May 1865.

But already on 2 March 1863 the bishop of Cebu, Romualdo Jimeno, OP invited them to take over the seminary in his diocese. About four years had to pass before the request was fulfilled. On 23 January 1867 the Conciliar Seminary of San Carlos in Cebu was turned over to Fr. Jose Casarramona, Fr. Gabino Lopez and Fr. Francisco Potellas. Formally representing the diocesan clergy which had administered the seminary the past 84 years were P. Bernardo Yubal, the incumbent rector and also Vicar-general of the diocese; P. Leon Aguilar, the vice-rector and parish priest of the Cathedral; and seminary professors P. Francisco Jayme, P. Pantaleon de Veyra and P. Gregorio Sosing.

Beginning with P. Casarramona, the first seminary rector, the Padres Paules set out to implement the plan of studies they had been known for in the seminaries of Europe, particularly in Spain. But one has also to bear in mind that the full implementation of the ideal plan had to adjust to circumstances, local needs, and personnel. Be that as it may, the Seminary’s general curriculum of studies, at least up until the end of the Spanish era, had three main stages.⁵⁸

The first level consisted of “preparatory instruction” in reading and writing or a “school of primary letters” given in a one year course. This was however not necessary in places where this need was already catered by institutions other than the seminary. In its absence in Cebu, P. Casaramona had no choice but to continue the classes on *primeras letras* of the Conciliar Seminary under the diocesan clergy. From 1870 to 1887 the school preparatory to secondary education in the Seminary became more organized and would be fondly called *Escuela de Hermano*, after Bro. Antonio del Rio Comitre, the school’s well-loved and indefatigable schoolmaster.⁵⁹

“Secondary education” follows and it consisted three years of mainly mastering the Spanish and Latin Grammar. In their formation program, the Vincentians, as they were also called, consider the second stage of crucial importance not only because

⁵⁷ Rolando de la Goza and Jesus Ma. Cavanna, *Vincentians in the Philippines, 1862-1982*, 29.

⁵⁸ See Rolando de la Goza and Jesus Ma. Cavanna, *The Vincentians in the Philippines, 1862-1982*, 184-185; 190-191; also see *Reseña Historica, 1867-1917*, 16-17. Based on this account by Vincentian historians, we aim to give more clarity to the sketch made in Resil Mojares, “Beginnings, 1595-1867,” 25-27. It is interesting to see how this program has changed in the Seminary’s 1909 program of studies. See *Programa de Estudios del Seminario-Colegio de San Carlos dirigido por RR. PP. Paules, Cebu 1909*, 26-31, 32-37, 38-41.

⁵⁹ See Rolando de la Goza and Jesus Ma. Cavanna, *The Vincentians in the Philippines, 1862-1982*, 164-165; and *Breve Reseña Historica, 1862-1912*, 58-59 and 299-301.

Latin and Spanish were essential medium of instruction particularly in ecclesiastical studies. More importantly, it was also “the mind of the Church, expressed first in the Council of Trent and later Popes Leo XIII, Pius X, and Pius XI, that young aspirants to the priestly vocation, from their early age, be trained as much as possible, in strictly Conciliar Minor Seminaries.”⁶⁰

While the Seminario de San Carlos under the diocesan clergy did not have a “minor seminary” with its own facilities and set of administration, what is clear is that it had a program for such purpose. But, for the same lack of manpower and facilities, the Vincentians could not have one either when it assumed administration of the Conciliar Seminary. What they did was to improve the program of secondary education for the “menores”. It consisted of Christian Doctrine and Latin, Translation and Analysis, Spanish, Arithmetic, History, Geography, Rhetoric and Music. This 3-year program was gradually enriched to include a year of Philosophy consisting of the foundational courses in Logic, Psychology and Ethics. Finally, a well-planned and more systematic transition to the stage of “higher learning” was put in place!

The stage of “higher learning” originally consisted of 3 years in Philosophy and Science, and a 2-year course in Theology and other ecclesiastical subjects. But, as the years progressed, the first year in Philosophy became part of the Seminary’s program of secondary education. Thus the Philosophy program for the *Mayores*, or those in ecclesiastical studies proper, evolved into a 2-year program mainly on Metaphysics and Theodicy as well as Physics, Natural Sciences and Geometry. “In the 2-year Theology course, special emphasis was given to Moral Theology, besides the fundamentals of Dogma, Sacred Scripture, Liturgy, Gregorian Chant, Sacred Oratory and Pastoral Ministry.”⁶¹ Like the other Vincentian seminaries in the Philippines, the Theology program was increased to one or two more years as more personnel began to arrive.

Seen from the vision of the Council of Trent and the standards set by the Church of this era, the Padres Paules had made the Seminario Conciliar de San Carlos fully-functioning and enduring in all respects for the first time in its existence since 1783. It was made possible by radically improving the Seminary program they had inherited from the diocesan clergy, by innovating and/or adapting to local needs and circumstances, and, most importantly, by their commitment to send a steady flow of qualified personnel.⁶² The legacy lives on. Mateo Joaquin Rubio de Arevalo,

⁶⁰ Rolando de la Goza and Jesus Ma. Cavanna, *The Vincentians in the Philippines, 1862-1982*, 184.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁶² Our seminary’s list of Vincentians who had worked in Cebu show that, to the three who arrived in 1867, one more was added late in the same year (P. Miguel Tarrasa), two more in 1868 (P. Jose Lopez Goicochea and Bro. Miguel Garcia), another two in 1869 (P. Juan Espelt and P. Fernando de la Canal) and one in 1870 (Bro. Antonio del Rio Comitre).

the bishop who had converted the Colegio building in 1783 into a fledgling seminary run by his clergy, had much to thank Romualdo Jimeno, the bishop who had invited his fellow Dominicans to help from 1852-1867 and confidently placed the same seminary in the hands of the Vincentians from 1867 into the 20th century.

A Colegio in the Seminario Conciliar de Cebu (1867)

There was however something quite new that was in the offing. Barely months after Casarramona began to implement the Council of Trent's vision, one adaptation had to be done, and a fundamental one at that, despite the fact that its intention is nowhere to be found in the Council of Trent and in the royal mandate of the Spanish Queen for which the Vincentians were sent to the Philippines. A textual analysis of available documents seems necessary in order to enter into the mind of the main actors of this adaptation.

A document dated 9 May 1867⁶³ shows a petition by the *Gobernadocillos* and *principales* of the city of Cebu requesting Bishop Jimeno to open the Seminary to “the sons of this city and of Parian the classes of *Latinidad* and the courses of Spanish grammar, arithmetic and religion” so that, while they may not aspire for the priesthood, they will nonetheless receive “an instruction and education proper to true Christians” that the Padres Paules are currently giving. The matter seemed urgent for the following day P. Casarramona, the rector, had already a written reply to the Bishop.

“Nothing is more just than to give in to the reply,” P. Casarramona wrote on 10 May 1867. But he was cautious: the students should be admitted as externs. And he gave his reason: the seminary does not have enough space for them should they wish to be interns and “to maintain free of charge all who seek to enter would be a burden that the Seminary could not support.” Aside from logistical problems he weighs on the benefits that can be accrued by those who study there but “do not wish to follow the ecclesiastical course.” Not only the benefit of education which they might gain, he writes, but more so “the advantage of discerning the fitness and goodness of those who will seek admission as interns in order to continue their studies in the Seminary.”⁶⁴

Enlightened by the Rector's reply, Bishop Jimeno resolved on 15 May 1867 to allow students to study and attend acts of piety in the seminary but, as the Bishop emphasized, “they have to live in the houses of their parents.” Jimeno knew very

⁶³ A copy of the original document is found in *Reseña Historica, 1867-1917*, 255.

⁶⁴ A copy of the letter is in *Reseña Historica, 1867-1917*, 255-256; also see a portion of it in *Ibid.*, 17. We are using the English translation in Rolando de la Goza and Jesus Ma. Cavanna, *The Vincentians in the Philippines, 1862-1982*, 91 citing the unpublished manuscript of the Vincentian historian, Manuel Gracia, “Los Padres Paules en Filipinas, 1846-1902,” 67.

well the standards set by Trent for seminaries and the mandate of the Queen to the Vincentians. But he had the support of other “ecclesiastical persons,” particularly P. Leon Aguilar, the parish priest of the city who knew very well the implications, having been a former vice-rector of the same seminary.

Indeed it was pastoral wisdom that, in the absence of a center of learning beyond Primary Instruction, Bishop Jimeno had to innovate because, according to him, “we desire as far as we can to give attention to the youth in order that they may be duly instructed in science and virtue.”⁶⁵ It was also pastoral courage on his part to respond to a specific need and thus enhance the spreading of the Christian message in his local church. By allowing the Cebuano boys to study in the seminary and thus acquire a level of learning beyond primary instruction, Jimeno prepared the ground for an institution that will educate boys not for ecclesiastical service but Christian leadership in a modernizing society.

Placed under the care of the Vincentians of the Seminario de San Carlos, the school had its own set of rules concerning the discipline of extern students with respect to their difference from those pursuing holy orders. On 1 July 1867 the seminary officially admitted them. From a *Seminario Conciliar*, that is an institution exclusively devoted to the training of future priests of a local church, the seminary in Cebu became a *Seminario Colegio*, a seminary with a program of secondary education for the future leaders of a Christianizing society. While the Seminario was in general complete in the three levels of priestly training as sketched above, the Colegio consisted of the 3-year program of secondary education that the *colegiales* (externs) had to share with the *seminaristas* (interns).

How is this development related to the Colegio de San Ildefonso? Aside from the fact that both were “day schools,” it may appear that there is another similarity because at one time the Jesuit Colegio also offered classes for what was secondary education then. But the fact that both have secondary education programs cannot be a solid basis to argue that the latter is a direct institutional growth of the former. Moreover, the program for externs at Seminario de San Carlos under the Vincentians does not seem to be a continuation of the program of education in the same Seminario when it was administered by the diocesan clergy early on (1783-1867).

Firstly, the Seminario under the Vincentians no longer offered a program for “primeras letras” for by this century the basics in reading and writing using the Spanish medium were already known to a certain number of Cebuano boys and even the inhabitants of neighboring islands. Secondly, and as argued earlier, the

⁶⁵ For Bishop Jimeno’s decree, see *Reseña Histórica, 1867-1917*, 18. An English translation is found in Rolando de la Goza and Jesus Ma. Cavanna, *The Vincentians in the Philippines, 1862-1982*, 91-92.

externs mentioned in the documents during the earlier period were, like their intern classmates, all aspirants for the priesthood at different stages of their intellectual preparation. They were externs by force of circumstance.

In this sense, no institution “re-opened to externs” in 1867 because no similar institution had previously closed down. If it were the case, the petition by the residents, the reply of P. Casarramona, and the decree of Bishop Jimeno should have mentioned such important consideration. The fact that when the Vincentians took over the seminary in 1867 there was immediately a petition that they also teach to lay students would seem to confirm that there had not been such level of education for non-seminarians before that.

As regards their respective vision statements, the Seminario would mould “learned and zealous pastors of souls, virtuous priests ready to sacrifice and consume their lives in the remotest towns and villages, in the obscure service of poor and humble people who were scattered like sheep without a shepherd,” while the Colegio would envision the youth “duly instructed in science and virtue.” In this sense, the Seminario under the Vincentians was not a new institution but the same seminary run by the diocesan clergy of Cebu since 1783. Whereas the Colegio attached to it in 1867 was the stable and robust beginnings of an institution entirely different and without precedence in the city of Cebu and the neighboring islands of the Visayas and Mindanao.⁶⁶

By having persuaded the Vincentians to come to Cebu, Bishop Jimeno had, so to speak, hit two birds with one stone. As bishop of an expansive diocese, he was able to reinvigorate an inherited institution for the training of his clergy and establish a new one for the Catholic education of the lay leaders of his local church. Bishop Jimeno knew fully well that, given the Church’s rules, the mode by which two different institutions live together was at best a pastoral adaptation. How long the *modus vivendi* of a *Seminario-Colegio* would last is the focus of the next section.

The *Modus Vivendi* of a Seminario and a Colegio (1867-1924)

Offering instruction to non-boarding students, Villaroel reminds us, “did not constitute a formal college or secondary school.”⁶⁷ The 3-year secondary education

⁶⁶ We therefore disagree the view that “(the petitioners in 1867) were continuing a move local residents made when the old Colegio de San Ildefonso was established in 1595 and through the years when externs were allowed to study in Seminario de San Carlos” and that “the Seminary was formally re-opened to externs on 1 July 1867.” See Resil Mojares, “Seminario-Colegio de San Carlos, 1867-1934,” in Jose Eleazar Bersales, Erlinda Alburo and Resil Mojares (eds.), *University of San Carlos: A Commemorative History* (Cebu City: San Carlos University Publications, 2005), 32.

⁶⁷ Fidel Villarroel, “Which is older: UST or San Carlos University?” 31.

that both extern students and seminarians pursued was not recognized by the Spanish colonial government as valid for purposes of secondary education. Since ecclesiastical studies proper did not require government recognition, this posed a problem less for those who wished to become priests than those who aspired for a government-recognized academic degree.

Times were however changing and Spain was modernizing itself and its colonies. One immediate impact to our islands came by way of two successive royal decrees, that of 10 December 1863 and 20 May 1865, which ushered in the modern era of education. The latter decree “called for a system of Secondary Education (*Segunda Enseñanza*) which introduced a well-planned program for a five-year course of Humanistic Studies leading to the degree of *Bachiller en Artes*.”⁶⁸ It also vested to the University of Santo Tomas, through its Rector, the direction, supervision and responsibility for the good running of such schools; the conduct of final examinations at the end of the five-year course; and the awarding of all diplomas of the Bachelor of Arts degree.

Within the next five years, a total of 10 schools were recognized in Manila. As for its impact in the Visayas, the decree’s implementation saw the establishment of private schools for *Segunda Enseñanza*, duly recognized by the government, in Iloilo, Capiz and Leyte in 1884. No school of such kind functioned in Cebu, not until Miguel Logarta established one in 1887, only to close two years after.⁶⁹ It comes as no surprise then that, in the registry books of the University of Santo Tomas from 1865 until 1889, a number of boys from Cebu appear as enrolled in one or other of the Manila schools.

The Bishop of Cebu, Fray Martin Alcocer, had no choice but to comply with government reform and, in his letter of December 1887, pleaded to the Vincentians to send for more personnel for if not he could continue losing the youth in the city of Cebu to the “private colleges which were about to be established in the city (Cebu)” and also, if I may add, to the other schools in Manila, “leaving thereby the Seminario without students.”⁷⁰ Obviously the plea was not just about the “difficulties of Cebuanos and those in other provinces in going to Manila to study for a degree.”⁷¹ He sounded the alarm over what he perceived as an impending

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* For a succinct historical background of the educational reform, see Jesus Arcilla, *The Fine Print of Philippine History* (Makati City: Saint Paul Publications, 1992), 93-97, 151-154.

⁶⁹ It existed only during school years 1887-1888 and 1888-1889, says Fidel Villaruel, “Which is older: UST or San Carlos University?” 31. “Logarta’s school existed for five years,” says Resil Mojares, “Seminario-Colegio de San Carlos, 1867-1934,” 34.

⁷⁰ See the unpublished 1957 manuscript written by Manuel A. Gracia, CM entitled “Los Padres Paules en Filipinas, 1846-1902,” 159-160 as cited in Rolando de la Goza and Jesus Ma. Cavanna, *The Vincentians in the Philippines, 1862-1982*, 186-187.

⁷¹ This is the view in Resil Mojares, “Seminario-Colegio de San Carlos, 1867-1934,” 34.

threat of losing the youth of his flock to the rise of non-sectarian schools that may undermine their simple faith with the influence of Freemasonry and secularization that has invaded the islands. In this move, Bishop Alcocer, with the cooperation of the Vincentians, was continuing the tradition of *la ciencia y la virtud* (science and virtue) for which lay students were admitted to the secondary education program of the Seminario two decades earlier.

The Bishop's move yielded good results. Based on the records for *Segunda Enseñanza* of the supervisory institution, the University of Santo Tomas, four diocesan Seminaries based in the provinces, all of them run by Vincentians (Cebu, Vigan, Naga, Jaro), received government recognition of their respective 5-year programs of secondary education for externs in 1889. By 1894, five years after, "the first batch of Cebuanos from the Colegio de San Carlos arrived in Manila" and passed "the examination for an AB degree before a panel of examiners composed of Dominican professors." From 1889 until the remaining years of the Spanish period, "no other school was opened in Cebu and very few Cebuanos appear enrolled in the schools of the capital city."⁷²

The prestige of the Seminario and its newly recognized Colegio as center of learning in the Visayas increased in due time. Students came from Bohol, Leyte, Samar, Negros Oriental, Mindanao and even from as far as the Caroline Islands in the Pacific. From 1867 to 1899, a total of 119 priests were ordained for pastoral service. Among the distinguished first fruits were Juan Gorordo of Cebu⁷³ and Pablo Singzon of Samar,⁷⁴ who both became second and third Filipinos elevated to the episcopacy. The first batch of lay alumni were Sergio Osmena, who would later on become president of the Philippine Commonwealth; Dionisio Jakosalem, who would serve as Secretary of Commerce; Mariano Javier, Mariano Japson, and Cayetano Sosing.

But institutions are tested not only by the social honor and rank of its alumni. They are also measured by how their alumni respond to the trials of social upheavals. The greatest test of the Seminario-Colegio occurred during the dark years of transition from Spanish rule to American occupation which

⁷² Fidel Villarroel, "Which is older: UST or San Carlos University?" 32. Other accounts are more or less similar except for the dates. See Rolando de la Goza and Jesus Ma. Cavanna, *The Vincentians in the Philippines, 1862-1982*, 187; and Resil Mojares, "Seminario-Colegio de San Carlos, 1867-1934," 34-35.

⁷³ Born 18 April 1862, he had elementary education at the *Escuela de Hermano*; entered the Seminary under the Vincentians in 1874; ordained priest in 31 May 1885; elected Auxiliary Bishop of Cebu on 29 April 1909; and first Filipino Bishop of Cebu in 1910.

⁷⁴ Born 25 January 1851, he entered the Seminary in 1866 under the secular clergy and finished under the Vincentians; ordained priest on 24 February 1877; named bishop of the newly erected Diocese of Calbayog (Samar) on 10 April 1910, but consecrated as such on 12 June 1910.

was strongly characterized by hatred towards the friars and Spanish authorities, church defections due to the Aglipayan schism and illegal usurpation of American sovereignty.

Support of the leaders of the Filipino secular clergy in the Diocese of Cebu, most of which were alumni of the Seminary, was lukewarm to the Malolos Republic compared to those of Manila or Nueva Segovia. More than anything else, the lack of enthusiasm was due to Gen. Vicente Lukban, the chief emissary of the Revolutionary government in Eastern Visayas who ordered the revolutionary leaders in Cebu to put the bishop under house arrest. His anticlerical attitude and anti-friar policy was no match to the reasonably good relations the clergy had with the friars, particularly their bishop, the Franciscan Martin Alcocer, and with majority of Cebu's civil leaders, even revolutionary leaders. The friar-bishop was able to escape before the arrival of Lukban's troops. "In this close relation," according to the eminent Jesuit historian John Schumacher, "no doubt one major factor would be the fact that most educated lay leaders as well as clergy had studied together in the seminary of Cebu."⁷⁵

Moreover, "when the Aglipayan schism became a reality, only one priest of the diocese of Cebu definitely joined, Fr. Sinforoso Montemar, and he was actually a Tagalog." No doubt, "American sovereignty was accepted passively at best" in Cebu province given the severity of American repression, but "on the good number of priests at least... there was considerable sympathy for local guerillas,"⁷⁶ the kind of faith which had kept many a Cebuano fighting against overwhelming odds.

The Seminario-Colegio de San Carlos de Cebu had truly come of age. But the *modus vivendi* would not last for long!

The Separation of the Colegio and Seminario de San Carlos (1924)

The Seminario-Colegio survived the dark period of transition from Spanish rule to American occupation. It tried to keep up with the changes and standards of the new system of education prescribed by the Americans in order to obtain government recognition for the extern students attending classes with the interns. On 19 February 1912, it gained government approval, the first among the Seminario-Colegios in the country to receive such well-deserved honor, for its Primary (4 years)

⁷⁵ For an excellent study on this chapter of Cebu's history, see John Schumacher, *Revolutionary Clergy: The Filipino Clergy and the Nationalist Movement, 1850-1903* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1981), 135-156.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 153-154.

and Intermediate (3 years) programs as well as its Secondary or High School (4 years) and College (2 years) courses that lead to a Bachelor of Arts degree.⁷⁷

The Program of Studies for the Seminario also underwent adjustments, despite the fact that it did not need government recognition, at least during the time. The “Seminario Menor” curriculum became 5 years in preparation to another 5 years of theological studies in the “Seminario Mayor.”⁷⁸ As a result, the specific difference of the Seminario and the Colegio became much more pronounced than before and, consequently, their respective institutional needs and demands have to be met.

It was also about this time when the *modus vivendi* of a Seminario-Colegio was put into more serious question following the many repeated instruction from Rome against “mixed seminaries.” The reason can be gleaned from the 1919 letter of the Archbishop of Manila, Michael O’Doherty, to the Vincentian Fathers. He wrote that indeed a College “is an economical asset for the maintenance of the Seminary,” but “the College is gradually advancing and prospering... at the expense of the very life of the Seminary.”⁷⁹ The general perception of Philippine church leaders at this time was, the education provided to the externs or *Colegiales* was undermining priestly vocations among their intern classmates or *Menores*, thus decreasing the number of *Mayores* or those who would take the higher ecclesiastical studies. Such sad state of affairs is too heavy a price to pay for the supposed financial stability Seminaries can gain from paying externs, many of whom belong to well-to-do families.

No less than Pope Pius XI had to intervene and, in his *Officiorum Omnium* of 1 August 1922, decreed: “Seminaries should serve no other purpose than that for which they were founded.”⁸⁰ While other seminaries phased out their Colegios to follow the demands of the Holy See, the Padres Paules in Cebu continued the Colegio but separately administered from those aspiring for the priesthood. It was supervised by a team of Vincentians solely for the purpose for which it was founded in 1867. Thus, extern and intern students were classmates no more, and San Carlos became two completely separate institutions in 1924 but as yet occupying the same building.

⁷⁷ For the Program of Studies of the three levels, see *Reseña Historica, 1867-1917*, 26-27. Also see *Programa de Estudios del Seminario Colegio de San Carlos dirigido por los RR. PP. Paules, Cebu 1909*, 26-31.

⁷⁸ See *Reseña Historica, 1867-1917*, 29. Also see *Programa de Estudios del Seminario Colegio de San Carlos dirigido por los RR. PP. Paules, Cebu 1909*, 32-37; 38-41.

⁷⁹ Rolando de la Goza and Jesus Ma. Cavanna, *The Vincentians in the Philippines, 1862-1982*, 321. Archbishop O’Doherty was referring to the Colegio attached to San Carlos Seminary in Manila.

⁸⁰ For an English translation of the letter, see *Ibid.*, 318.

Four Institutions in Honor of San Carlos Borromeo

The institutional separation triggered a series of decisions and events that would, more than before, make the local church in Cebu a center for Christian education, both for priests and lay people, in the Visayas and Mindanao.

The Colegio becomes the University of San Carlos (1948)

Freed from its long institutional attachment to the Seminario Conciliar, the Colegio was now poised to become an institution for “science and virtue” in the modern era. To achieve that, the Vincentians, with the approval of Bishop Juan Gorordo, moved the school to a new place in 1932. There its administration would be turned over to the Fathers of the Society of the Divine Word two years after. With the SVD Fathers at the helm, the institution’s original vision of “science and virtue” would ripen as the *Colegio de San Carlos* would be granted by the Philippine government the rank and title of university in 1948. What began as a program to admit lay students to the secondary level of education in the Seminario Conciliar in 1867 has ripened into a full-fledged Colegio and continues to the present day as the University of San Carlos.

A Seminario Menor de San Carlos, later Pope John XXIII Minor Seminary (1952)

Having no more Colegio to administer, the Vincentians of Seminario de San Carlos was able to institute changes to respond to the demands of the new era. By this period, the Seminary’s school of primary letters had been closed inasmuch as they have been made redundant by the rise of public elementary schools particularly during the American period. In the level of Secondary Education, the Fathers retained the first four years to become a High School program of a full-fledged *Seminario Menor*. The 2-year Philosophy course which used to be part of secondary education was transferred to the Philosophy department. Together with the 5-year program in Theological studies, this became the *Seminario Mayor*.

When the Seminary moved to its new building in Mabolo in 1949 due to the destruction of its original building during the Second World War, both departments were still under one roof. Despite the steady rise of Catholic and public high schools in Cebu and the nearby islands, more and more young boys wanted to be nurtured in the seedbed of vocations. This prompted the construction of a nearby building in 1951 and the eventual transfer of the *Menores* (or High School seminarians) in 1952. Later, in a simple ceremony on 14 July 1969, the Vincentians turned over the school to the Archbishop of Cebu, Julio Cardinal Rosales, and the institution was renamed Pope John XXIII Minor Seminary, to honor the Holy Father who brought *aggiornamento* to the Church by convening the Second Vatican Council.

With the full separation of the Minor Seminary, the inchoate primary instruction that young aspirants to the priesthood followed in the Seminario Conciliar, first under the diocesan clergy in the late 18th and early 19th century and then under the Vicentians who improved it well into the 20th century, has even become a much clearer and well-planned program for the nurturance of the priestly vocation in its earliest stages.

The Philosophy Program of the Seminario becomes San Carlos Seminary-College (1973)

With no more a Colegio to administer and a Minor Seminary to maintain, the Seminario Mayor was left with two departments, the Philosophy and the Theology, which were also increasing in enrolment. Vocations to the priesthood came from as far as Mindanao, aside from the steady supply from Samar, Leyte, Bohol, and Negros Oriental. A program of formation for those enrolled in Philosophy was drawn up by the Vincentian Fathers of the Seminario Mayor and a new building for the “Philosophers” was inaugurated in 1971. It was initially called San Carlos Seminary Junior College and, two years later, in 1973, its 4-year college curriculum was approved by the government. Thus was born San Carlos Seminary College, an institution run by a competent team of diocesan priests and lay teachers, offering a Bachelor of Arts degree program major in Philosophy and also, later on, in English.

This institution traces its roots to the Philosophy program which was, in its fledgling stage, implemented by the diocesan priests in the Seminario Conciliar and was significantly updated and reformed by the Vincentians starting 1867.

The Seminario Mayor de San Carlos and Its Graduate School of Theology

The Theology program for the priesthood that began in 1783 under the diocesan clergy of Cebu and improved by the Padres Paules starting in 1867 is continued by the Seminario Mayor de San Carlos. With more focus on the final stage of priestly training, the Major Seminary was now poised to respond to a host of new needs at the dawn of the new millennium.

Firstly, the demand for Filipinization of the Vincentians resulted into the appointment of the first Filipino rector of the Seminary in the person of Fr. Jesus Dosado in 1973. He and his successors would have the challenging task of implementing the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. Then there was the need for an integral formation of priests beyond the focus on academics, discipline and piety, and thus was started in 1985-1986 a year of intensive Spiritual and Pastoral Formation program

inserted between the second and third year of theological studies. And in response to Vatican II's call for the empowerment of lay people, the Filipino Vincentians crafted two Graduate Programs, one in Theology and another in Pastoral Ministry. In due time the government officially recognized the program in 1996 and has since then graduated a modest number of lay people and religious with Master's degrees.

On 21 March 1998, during the closing ceremonies of the school year presided over by the Archbishop of Cebu, Ricardo Cardinal Vidal, the Congregation for the Mission, represented by the last rector, Fr. Manuel Genite, formally turned over the administration of the Seminary back to the Diocesan Clergy of Cebu, the last of all the diocesan seminaries in their hands around the world. The year 1998 is significant: the Seminario Conciliar that took over the building of the defunct Jesuit Colegio in 1783 has come full circle a hundred and thirty one years after the birth of the Colegio de San Carlos.

Concluding Remarks

Now to summarize the presentation of historical evidence:

Firstly, for the Jesuits, the Colegio de San Ildefonso was primarily their central house for the huge mission territory assigned to them. It appears however that the term Colegio, as used by the people in Cebu during the era, also meant the day school attached to the Jesuit residence. In the main part of its entire existence, the school offered classes at the primary level. But there were periods of its existence that it also had *Latinidad*, which certainly ought to be qualified as secondary education. Definitely it did not have pretensions of preparing the young students for higher studies because nobody thought of such at the time. The Colegio, understood both as a central house and as a school, closed down, never to open again, when the Jesuits were expelled from Cebu in 1769.

Secondly, the Seminario Conciliar de Cebu officially took over the decaying facility of the extinct Jesuit Colegio on 23 August 1783. The Seminario is an institution completely different from the Colegio in intention, vision and mission. As an institution of the Bishop of Cebu for the training of his future priests, and in obedience to Church laws that vocations have to be nurtured in its earliest stages, it had a program of formation that started from primary to the intermediate levels for its aspirants until the higher studies for ordination. The claim that it was called a Colegio, to mean, a secondary school for those who did not aspire for the priesthood is, as we showed earlier, a serious misreading of facts and a misunderstanding of church practice.

Thirdly, the seminary that was turned over on 23 January 1867 by Bishop

Jimeno from his clergy to the Padres Paules is the same institution that was born on 1783, the same institution which began in earnest in 1825, and the same institution that received Dominican assistance for some time. In short, what happened in 1867 was simply a change of administration, and a very fruitful one, before it completely ended in March of 1998.

Fourthly, Bishop Jimeno's decree to admit lay students into the secondary level of education in the Seminary is from all indications the beginning of what would later become an entirely different institution. After having started in 1867 as a "program of studies" for those who did not aspire for priesthood in response to a petition, it gradually evolved by applying the standards required by the Spanish government in 1889 and by the Americans in 1912. In response to Church law prohibiting "mix seminaries," the said program for externs fully became a Colegio as it completely separated from the Seminary by 1924, and subsequently acquired a facility of its own and was turned over to new administrators. Such Colegio is now the renowned and respected University of San Carlos (USC).

Therefore, there is no visible and clear link – either by intention or by institutional vision – between the Jesuit Colegio de San Ildefonso and the University of San Carlos. Following Church tradition, the foundation event and date of University of San Carlos should be the decree of Bishop Jimeno on 15 May 1867 and the first day of classes in the history of what is now USC is 1 July 1867, the day P. Jose Casarramona welcomed the first lay students to attend classes at the Seminario de San Carlos.

There is no clear and visible link either between the Colegio de San Ildefonso and the Seminario de San Carlos. The latter was specifically for the training of diocesan priests, and it simply took over the facility of the former, a Jesuit central house with an attached day school. Although there was a continuity of place, there is no homogeneous evolution of one to become the other.

There is therefore no need to belabor the fact that the Seminario de San Carlos is much older than the University of San Carlos, the institution that it had mothered. Founded on 23 August 1783, the Seminary is the institution which nurtured in 1867 the earliest beginnings of what is now the University of San Carlos, and, more importantly, the direct origin of the present three seminaries of the Archdiocese of Cebu, namely: the Seminario Mayor de San Carlos, the San Carlos Seminary-College, and the Seminario Menor de San Carlos (renamed Pope John XXIII Minor Seminary).

Going back to the purpose for which this paper has taken to task, the conclusion is that the University of Santo Tomas is the oldest university in the Philippines and even in Asia, and that, unless evidence to the contrary is at hand, the institutional claim of the University of San Carlos is in serious doubt if not erroneous.