

The “Colegio de Santo Tomas”, Forerunner of the UST Central Seminary

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The Interdiocesan Seminary of the University of Santo Tomas has just started the one-year long celebrations of its Diamond Jubilee, for it was established in 1927. The celebration has given occasion for many people to ask questions about the date of its foundation, whether it started in said year or whether a seminary existed before and in what sense. This article intends to provide some answers to those questions.

We might well begin by underlying that in the proper and strict sense of the term, as used by the Church, a *seminary* is a kind of college conceived and ordered by the Council of Trent (1545-1562) to be established in *every diocese* for the training of candidates for the parochial clergy. Such college, the Council explained, “will become a permanently fruitful seed-bed (*seminarium*, in Latin) of ministers of God”. Technically, therefore, a seminary is intended to be a diocesan institution for the formation of clerics and not of lay professionals.

There is no doubt that in the four hundred years of existence of the University of Santo Tomas many clerics were trained by it in the ecclesiastical sciences, and that a certain number of them actually lived as interns in the “Colegio de Santo Tomas”, which, since 1645, co-existed with the University. One clear example of this is the nationalist priest Fr. Jose Burgos who was *colegial* of that Colegio for several years, received the sacred orders in those years and graduated nine times from the university. The aim of this study is to examine the nature and mission of that “colegio” before it was

converted into a "seminary". And the roots of this history will take us to the very beginnings.

1. The Founder's Idea

The *Foundation Act* of the Colegio de Santo Tomas was signed on April 28, 1611 by the executors of the last will of the Dominican Archbishop of Manila Miguel de Benavides. It is well known that, one year before his death, which occurred in 1605, Benavides left 2.000 pesos and his personal library for the foundation of a college or a seminary. To be accurate, he did that, not by way of testament, but as a donation "inter vivos". He died before the foundation of the college or seminary was carried to effect, and by the time it was done, other donors had contributed substantial sums of money for that purpose. However, it has been a constant and uncontested tradition to consider the Archbishop as the university's founder.

In the Foundation Act of 1611, one of the two Dominican executors of the archbishop's last will, Fr. Bernardo de Santa Catalina (the other, Fr. Domingo de Nieva, having died) "declared that what His Excellency committed to us was that the residue of his goods should be spent in aid for the foundation and endowment of a *seminary-college*, in which the religious of said convent [of Santo Domingo] will teach the sciences of Arts [i.e. Philosophy] and Theology to the religious novices and to all those willing to take advantage of them, and to the sons of this City and Islands."¹

It may be interesting to note here that the original document of the Foundation Act carries, at the back of the first page, in the handwriting of the notary public who drafted the text, Juan Illan, the equivalent of a title that reads: "1611 años. Fundación del *Colegio-Seminario* de la advocación de Nuestra Señora del Rosario" (Year 1611. Foundation of the *Seminary-College* under the advocacy of Our Lady of the Rosary). Curiously enough, the word *seminario* is seen crossed out, obviously done in a later date, perhaps in 1619, when classes actually started in the Colegio, or perhaps even later during a litigation between Dominicans and Jesuits over the right

¹ *Escritura de Fundación*, dated April 28, 1611. Original ms. in AUST, Libros 48, fols. 10-19; published in JUAN SANCHEZ, O.P., *Sinopsis Histórica Documentada de la Universidad de Santo Tomás de Manila*, Manila 1928, Appendix A, (see p. 176).

of precedence claimed between their respective Colegio de Santo Tomas and Colegio de San Jose. In that litigation the Dominicans argued that San Jose was a *colegio-seminario* while the Colegio de Santo Tomas was a *colegio formal*.

Be that as it may, a careful reading of the Foundation Act gives out these particular and meaningful facts: Throughout the whole document the word *colegio* occurs 32 times, while the words *seminario* or *colegio-seminario* only 3 times.² This induces to think that even though the signers of the Act intended to accept some students who aspired to the priesthood, the institution was not considered a seminary in the strict Tridentine meaning of the term.

One year later, 1612, the Dominican provincial chapter accepted the foundation as a religious house of the Holy Rosary Province. The paragraph of acceptance reads: "We accept in this city of Manila the *College* of Our Lady of the Rosary which is being constructed by our religious with various alms of the faithful for the education of *secular clerics* in the sciences and in religion".³ In the following Chapters of 1616 and 1617, Fr. Lorenzo Porras and Fr. Antonio Gutierrez respectively are assigned to the *College* of Santo Tomas (and of Our Lady of the Rosary) as rectors, even though the building had not been completed. And when it was completed and classes started in 1619, Fr. Baltasar Fort was appointed by the chapter of that year as Rector of the College of Santo Tomas. And from that year on, all subsequent appointees are called *Rectors* of the *College* of *Santo Tomas*, with no reference to its being a seminary.⁴

So classes started in that year 1619 with the Rector granting scholarships to twelve *colegiales*, sons of Spaniards. Statutes were written for the college, the text of which unfortunately are not extant today. But speaking about those statutes in a letter to the King, dated in 1649, the then college Rector Fr. Martin Real de Santa Cruz says that "they are the same statutes currently followed

² *Ibid.*

³ Proceedings of the Provincial Chapter held in Manila in 1612 (*Acta Capitulum Provincialium Provinciae Sanctissimi Rosarii Philippinarum*, (ACP), Manila 1878, vol. I, p. 76).

⁴ See *Acta Capitulum Provincialium*, corresponding years, section of "Assignationes".

in all the *colegios formados* (formal colleges) in Spain.”⁵ Those statutes, he adds, speak about the seal of the College, the uniform of the *colegiales* (green mantle and red *beca* (sash), and about the oath to be made by the *colegiales* upon admission. All these references seem to be adaptations to the “*Colegios Mayores*” of Spain (that is, boarding centers for university students), totally different from the Tridentine seminaries.

2. In the 18th Century

Through the 18th century the changes observed in the Colegio de Santo Tomas are relatively few. New statutes for the internship were written in 1700, which were revised in 1741.⁶ Reading through the text, there never is a reference to the Colegio being a seminary as a whole or part of it, even though it is certain that some students were following careers of Theology of Canon Law for the priesthood. This contrasts with the nature of two seminaries being founded in Manila in the early decades of that century exclusively for the formation of priests. One was the Seminary of San Clemente founded in 1706 by a French priest called Abbe Sidotti with the blessing of the Archbishop of Manila Msgr. Diego Camacho. It was intended for the formation of clerics, not only from the Philippines but also from the neighboring countries of Asia. Its *Reglamento* calls it *Colegio Seminario de San Clemente*. Although students unfit for the clerical life were not totally excluded, the *Reglamento* states that its “main and only purpose” was “the conversion of the non-Christians in the mountains of these Islands and in the entire Orient, and to form ministers of God truly evangelic and apostolic.”⁷

⁵ *Memorial al Rey de España dirigido por el Rector de la Universidad, Fr. Martín Real de Santa Cruz, 1649*, printed in A. SANTAMARIA, O.P., *Documentos Históricos de la Universidad de Santo Tomás de Manila*, Manila 1937, p. 46.

⁶ Title of the 1700 Statutes: *Estatutos antiguos del Colegio de Santo Tomás de Aquino de esta Ciudad de Manila declarados en el Capítulo Provincial Inter-medio del año 1700*. – Title of the revised Statutes of 1741: *Estatutos que se deben observar para el buen gobierno de este Colegio de Santo Tomás de Manila. Año de 1741*. The originals of both are extant in the Archives of the University of Santo Tomas (AUST), *Libros 30*. – Note that in both the word Colegio is used, not that of Seminary.

⁷ *Reglamento del Colegio Seminario de San Clemente (1706)*, in PEDRO RUBIO MERINO, *Don Diego Camacho y Avila, Arzobispo de Manila y de Guadala-jara de México (1695-1712)*, Sevilla 1958, pp. 500-521.

San Clemente Seminary was suppressed and demolished by orders of the King of Spain for having been built without royal authorization, in accordance with the *Patronato de Indias*. And immediately a new seminary was built in the same site, this time with royal approval, and was called *Colegio Seminario de San Felipe* in honor of the Apostle St. Philip, patron saint of King Philip V. It had the same mission of its defunct predecessor, that is, the formation of candidates for the priesthood. The lectures on Philosophy were imparted at the seminary itself, but the students had to be enrolled in the University of Santo Tomas if they wanted to obtain the degree of Bachelor of Arts. In that way, the Seminary of San Felipe continued in existence for at least the next four decades, and through all those years the relatively few graduates coming from San Felipe were denominated in the university registry books as "colegiales del *Seminario de San Felipe*", distinguished from the "colegiales de Santo Tomas" and the "colegiales de Letran."⁸

In 1783 a new diocesan Seminary was established in Manila by Archbishop Basilio Sancho de Santas Justa y Rufina, which fulfilled all the requirements of the Council of Trent and has continued as a conciliar Seminary of San Carlos of Manila until today.

At an unknown date the Colegio de Santo Tomas opened an inscription book for all its intern students. Every collegial was entered in this official record on the day he received the *beca* or scholarship and swore to abide by the statutes of the college. The second book of the series, ("New Book for the Inscription of the Colegiales") began in 1759 and it is extant in the university archives.⁹ A patient perusal of the accepted interns during the second half of the 18th century (1759-1799) reveals several interesting facts. In the first place, the institution is never referred to as a seminary; secondly, the colegiales inscribed in those years

⁸ About the Seminary of San Felipe, see JUAN FRANCISCO DE SAN ANTONIO, O.F.M., *Crónicas de la Provincia de San Gregorio Magno*, Sampaloc, 1738 (English translation and edition by the Philippine Historical Conservation Society, Manila 1977, pp. 191-193). – About the academic degrees of the students of the Seminary of San Felipe granted by the University of Santo Tomas, see AUST, *Libro de Asientos de Grados*, years 1725 to 1759.

⁹ *Libro Nuevo de Asientos de los Colegiales de este Colegio de Santo Tomás de Manila que empieza en Mayo de 1759* (Ms. AUST, Libros 11).

amounted to 238; thirdly, the boarders are a mixture of grown-up theologians and canonists with little “párvulos” (little kids), like the brothers Jose and Pedro Ruano (inscribed in 1762), who did not swear the statutes for being “párvulos”, or like Buenaventura Reyna (1768) who did not take the same oath because he was only eight years old. His father withdrew him from the college because he was only a child, and the kid learnt only “how to read and the Christian doctrine”.¹⁰ Fourthly, some boarders surely entered the College with the idea of becoming priests or opted for that profession after entering.

Some statistics drawn from the *Libro Nuevo* may enlighten the subject. Of the total of 238 interns inscribed between 1759 and 1799, only 24 are noted in later annotations to have received the priestly ordination during or at the end of their studies. Six *colegiales* are said to have joined the Dominican Order and were ordained priests, plus two who entered the Order of St. John of God. This makes 32 clerics in a total of 238 *colegiales* in a period of 40 years. Finally, the Colegio had no other rector than the Rector of the University.

Following the list of *colegiales* in the following century, the chronological order of inscriptions was changed for an order by careers. Thus in 1832 the 62 interns are classified as *colegiales* (scholars, becarios) and *capistas* or *famulos* who paid for their studies by doing services in the colegio as sacristans, porters, etc. Of the number of 47 *colegiales*, 14 followed courses in Theology and Canon Law; 13 were “philosophers”; and 20 were “grammarians”. Of the number of 15 *capistas*, 7 followed Theology and Canon Law, and 8 were “philosophers”. There are no annotations in the book indicating how many aspired to the priesthood.

3. The Generation of Father Burgos. The 19th century

The second half of the 19th century brought about significant changes in Philippine history, both civil and ecclesiastical, which ended in the revolutionary movement of the end of the century. The Filipino clergy may be said to have taken the lead in that change with the arrival of a generation of young clerics who, by their intellec-

¹⁰ *Libro Nuevo*, year 1768.

tual training and their vision, started the movement of the secularization of the parishes. The names of Pedro Pelaez, Jose Burgos, Mariano Sevilla and others come to mind, and some of them were *colegiales* of the Colegio de Santo Tomas and graduates of the Thomasian faculties. But this is outside of our story.

In that historical period there were five diocesan or conciliar seminaries in the Philippines, patterned after the norms of the Council of Trent. They were the seminaries of San Carlos of Manila (founded in 1773), of San Carlos of Cebu (1783), of the Holy Rosary of Caceres (Naga) (1783), of the Immaculate Conception of Nueva Segovia (Vigan) (1821), and of San Vicente Ferrer of Jaro (1866). These seminaries admitted only candidates for the priesthood. It was not until the last decades of the 19th century that they opened a department for *extern* students who pursued course of humanities leading to the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

In the city of Manila the educational centers that served as boarding houses for students preparing themselves for the priesthood were four: the diocesan Seminary of San Carlos, the Colegio de Santo Tomas, the Colegio de San Juan de Letran and the Colegio de San Jose. In the 19th century the Colegio de San Jose was a pre-university college run by the secular clergy ever since the expulsion of the Jesuits from the Philippines in 1768. San Carlos Seminary was different from the others in that it was exclusive for clerical students, while the other three accepted students for any career and profession.

For clarification of the above, let us go inside the Colegio de Santo Tomas in the years when the famous nationalist priest Fr. Jose Burgos was intern. Earlier he had been an intern in the Colegio de San Juan de Letran. Burgos entered Letran in 1847 at the age of ten and stayed there as an intern for thirteen years. The college was under the administration of a Dominican Father, who was appointed with the title of "President" by every Provincial Chapter. He was helped by a lay brother, as procurator, and, living with them was another Dominican priest who acted as Vicar of the Provincial for the neighboring Beaterio de Santa Catalina.¹¹ The

¹¹ The three were: Fr. Ramon Rodriguez, President, Bro. Julian Velazquez, Procurator, and Fr. Ceferino Gonzalez, Vicar of Santa Catalina (future Archbishop of Toledo and Cardinal) (ACP, 1863, III, p. 317).

boarders did not receive lectures in Philosophy and Theology there but at the University of Santo Tomas. As a boarding college Letran was the biggest in town in the year 1863, having more than two hundred interns. But of this number only thirty are known to be pursuing studies leading to the priesthood, namely: 3 deacons, 5 subdeacons, 8 in Minor Orders, and 12 Tonsured clerics, plus two resident ordained priests. It was as a boarder of Letran that Burgos received from the Archbishop of Manila the Minor Orders in 1858 and the subdeaconate in 1859. And in 1860 he transferred to the Colegio de Santo Tomas. Evidently Letran was only a seminary in a broad sense of the term, not in the Tridentine sense.¹²

In the Colegio de Santo Tomas, Burgos was an intern student from 1860 to 1864. Needless to say, the University was the only center of higher education in the Philippines, in which academic degrees were granted. The total student population in 1861 included extern students, students from Letran and San Jose, and of course, the interns of the Colegio de Santo Tomas. The latter were only 57 young men mixed with little boys, of whom some were *colegiales* or scholars and the others *capistas* or *famulos*; and only a fraction of them were aspirants to the priesthood, Burgos among them.

Let us cast a closer look into that group of 57 boarders. As students, they were grouped in the *Libro Nuevo* by the courses they pursued at the University. Those following the careers of Theology, Canon Law, Civil Law and Spanish (or Patriotic) Law were *Facultativos Mayores*, and the register book calls them *Teólogos*, *Canonistas*, *Legistas*, *Moralistas* and *Patrióticos*. Philosophy students were referred to as *Facultativos Menores* and they were subdivided into *Físicos*, *Lógicos* and *Metafísicos*. And there was a third group: the *Gramáticos*, listed as *Quintistas*, *Cuartistas* and *Minimistas*, that is, those taking courses in the fifth, fourth or lower years of the career of humanities or secondary education. The predominance of the university students proper over the grammarians can be seen from the breakdown of these general groups during the years of Fr. Burgos:

¹² For further information on Burgos in Letran, see FIDEL VILLARROEL, O.P., *Fr. Jose Burgos, University Student*, Manila 1971, chapter 3, "Letranite", pp. 4-9.

	<u>1860</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1862</u>	<u>1863</u>	<u>1864</u>
<i>Facultativos Mayores</i>	20	21	29	27	26
<i>Facultativos Menores</i>	19	22	13	11	10
<i>Gramaticos</i>	<u>18</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>10</u>
	57	55	56	51	46

A more interesting clarification for our study may be obtained from the distinction between clerics and lay interns. The *Libro Nuevo* does not classify them in that way, but precisely during the period of Burgos' stay there, the register offers enough marginal notes to enable us to establish a fairly accurate number of resident clerics. Included among those boarders qualified as clerics in marginal notes are Burgos himself, Ambrosio and Faustino Villafranca, Mariano Sevilla, Cosme Abaya, Pedro Ventura and other outstanding priest of the Philippine revolutionary period. Here are the approximate figures:

	<u>1860</u>	<u>1861</u>	<u>1862</u>	<u>1863</u>	<u>1864</u>
<i>Deacons</i>	4	2	2	1	3
<i>Subdeacons</i>	3	—	1	2	—
<i>Minorists</i>	—	2	1	3	3
<i>Tonsured</i>	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
	13	10	9	7	8

Comparing this list with the previous one, the proportion of the clerics to the non-clerics is one cleric for six non-clerics. This proportion and the fact that deacons in their twenty years of age were living together with eight-year-old kids, sufficiently show that the college could not be considered a true conciliar seminary by the Church.¹³

4. Archbishop Nozaleda's Plan for a Seminary in UST

By the end of the nineteenth century there was a noticeable decline in the number of students of the Colegio de Santo Tomas

¹³ More on Fr. Burgos and other contemporaries in the Colegio de Santo Tomas, in F. VILLARROEL, *op. cit.*, ch. 9, "Collegian of Santo Tomas", pp. 34-45.

aspiring to the priestly profession. Whereto did the successors of Burgos, Sevilla, Villafranca, Abaya go? Did they go perhaps to the diocesan Seminary of San Carlos? The fact is that in the school year 1884-1885, the Colegio had 48 interns (*colegiales* and *capistas*), and only one of them is listed as taking up Theology, among four who were taking Civil Law and 43 boys following courses of Humanities or Secondary Education. And the lone theologian is not described as a cleric.¹⁴ Such unexplained disappearance of clerical students is reflected also in another fact, which is that in 1892 a new *Reglamento del Colegio de Santo Tomas* was written, in which there is not the slightest reference to intern students aspiring to the priesthood.¹⁵

Whatever the explanation of this fact may be, in 1894 the Dominican Archbishop of Manila, Bernardino Nozaleda, last archbishop of the Spanish period, who once had been Vice-Rector of the University, started discussing with the Santo Tomas authorities possible ways for his seminarians of San Carlos Seminary to receive academic degrees, and even to enjoy the privileges of scholarship for which the Colegio de Santo Tomas had been founded. Consequently, in the same year he proposed two plans for the establishment of some kind of relationship between San Carlos and the University. The first plan dealt with the studies of the seminarians in the faculties of Theology, Canon Law and Philosophy at the university toward obtaining degrees; the second had to do with the priestly formation some seminarians should receive as interns in the Colegio de Santo Tomas, more or less gratuitously.¹⁶

Apparently, it was in response to the proposals of the Archbishop that the Council of the Colegio, in a session held on August 22, 1894, approved some *Bases* intended to maintain and foment the studies of Theology in the University. Here are the bases:

¹⁴ *Libro Nuevo*, School Year 1884-1885. That was the last year of entries in the registration book of interns.

¹⁵ A copy of this *Reglamento* is in AUST, *Libros* 233, n. fols. 321-328.

¹⁶ The two plans in Nozaleda's handwriting are in AUST, *Libros* 233, nos. 18-20.

"1. Those seminarians of the [San Carlos] Seminary will be accepted who, with the permission of the Archbishop, will pursue the careers of Theology and Canon Law.

2. In order to facilitate such courses to the students of the Conciliar Seminary, the Rector of Santo Tomas, authorized by the [Dominican] Corporation, binds himself to the following:

a) To take (he and the Council Fathers, after hearing the opinion of the Archbishop) all necessary means to avoid the contact of the seminarians with the other students (of the internship), so that the religious education of the seminarians may not be impaired.

b) To exempt the seminarians, as far as the Dominican Order is concerned, from the imposition of any matriculation fees for those studies.

c) To exempt them also from personal dues for the final examinations, as far as the Order is concerned, and as long as the economic situation of the College will not deteriorate.

d) To give priority to the seminarians, all other things being equal, and with the previous judgment of the Archbishop, in enjoying the *becas* of the interns which the Order may prescribe now or in the future for the promotion of vocations to the ecclesiastical state.

e) To educate those students favored with the scholarship with the care accustomed in all seminaries, and in the way the Colegio de Santo Tomas has educated from the beginning, with so much praise from the Manila archbishops, and with great advancement of the clergy, and adopting the interior rules and regulations the Dominican Order may consider to be the best.

f) To see to it that the Colegio de Santo Tomas, saving the nature of its foundation, fulfills the role (*haga las veces*) of a Major Seminary for all seminarians who desire to follow the so-called long career at the university, be they interns of Santo Tomas or seminarians of San Carlos, and to prefer them, all other things being equal, for the gratuitous titles and other benefices the university may grant in the future".¹⁷

¹⁷ Cf. A. SANTAMARIA, *Estudios Históricos*, Manila 1938, pp. 64-65, quoting *Libro de Consejos del Colegio*, fol. 74, which cannot be located in the UST Archives today.

These *Bases* seemed to have remained in the realm of a proposal. The next thing we know regarding this matter is that at a meeting of the Council of the Colegio, held on June 21, 1900, the council approved the admission of seminarians of San Carlos provisionally as boarders, paying a boarding fee of 25 pesos monthly each seminarian.¹⁸ But again we are not sure whether this offer was carried to effect.

5. 1905. Proposal for a Central Seminary – Archbishop Harty and Rector R. Velazquez

Five years later, Nozaleda's successor, Archbishop Jeremias J. Harty, the first American Prelate of Manila, initiated contacts with the other Philippine bishops about the possible foundation of a grand *Central Seminary* in Manila. And even before the bishops came to take action on the proposal, Msgr. Harty wrote a beautiful letter to the Rector of the University of Santo Tomas, Fr. Raimundo Velazquez, encouraging him to open an *internado* for young aspirants to the priesthood coming *from all the dioceses* of the Philippines.

In reaction to this letter, the Santo Tomas College Council, holding a meeting on July 4, 1905, approved a draft of *Bases* for the plan to be presented to the Philippine Hierarchy. And the Rector himself undertook to send them to the bishops with an accompanying letter, in which, after quoting the pertinent words of Archbishop Harty, he wrote:

"Encouraged by such beautiful words, I have the honor and satisfaction of conveying to the knowledge of your Excellency that the Dominican Corporation, in its desire to be useful today, as in the past, in whatever it may in the field of education, even at the cost of sacrifices, has decided to transform the old *Colegiatura* of the Colegio de Santo Tomas into an *Internado* for those young aspirants to the *priesthood* who would like to follow the courses of Theology and Canon Law at the University and to obtain degrees in any of them.

The *Bases* under which this internship will be opened are the following:

¹⁸ Cf. A. SANTAMARIA, *op. cit.*, p. 66, quoting *Libro de Consejos*, fol. 100.

1. The young aspirants who will enter in it must have finished their studies of Secondary Education, so that, on entering, they may be matriculated at least in the Preparatory Courses of said faculties.
2. They will live in the college as true seminarians, under the immediate inspection and direction of a [Dominican] Director and a Vice-Director and to live in conformity with the Norms and Regulations that will be issued in agreement with the Archbishop, and they will be submitted to his approval.
3. Preferential and essential aims of these Rules will be, by all means emanating from the Church and as Christian prudence dictates, to attend with exquisite and constant care to the formation of the moral character of the priests, to the development and perfection of their intellectual capacity by means of an orderly and progressive study of the ecclesiastical sciences according to the teachings of His Holiness Leo XIII, and to provide for the reasonable demands of a perfect and balanced physical organization, so that they (the candidates) may work fruitfully in the vineyard of the Lord.
4. The intern students of Santo Tomas will not go out on vacations without the explicit authorization given in writing by the bishops of their respective dioceses; and in that case, the latter will designate the person who will be responsible for them, who will respond about their conduct during all the time they will be away from the college.
5. The interns of Santo Tomas will wear the clerical garb proper of a Seminary, unless the bishops, for special reasons, will determine otherwise. The privileged interns who enjoy scholarship will wear the *beca* of the colegio over the clerical garb.
6. The boarding fee of the interns will be 200 Pesos annually (this is by indication of the Archbishop) for their residence and food. All other expenses in dress, shoes, laundry, entrance fee, examination fees, etc., will be defrayed by the student.
7. Some students will be accepted gratuitously. In order to foster vocations to the priesthood and to give easy access to study and to high ecclesiastical degrees to the young of good disposition who are unable to pay for their career, the Dominican Order grants to the Lord Bishops or Diocesan Prelates one free scholarship for every five interns [of their respective diocese].

8. Students admitted gratuitously will not pay for their boarding, matriculation fees, academic diplomas. Even their books will be paid for by the college. Everything will be gratis except the dress, the shoes and the laundry.
9. The same privileges will be given, in full or partially, to students for whom (without being scholars) they will be solicited by the bishops on account of their poverty.
10. The places for grantees (*agraciados*) will be filled with by the young students designated by the respective bishops. Such students will enjoy their places during the entire career as long as the balance between the grantees and the paying students is not altered.
11. A grantee intern will loose his grant and will be expelled from the college for any of the following reasons:
 - a) when, because of his misconduct, his expulsion becomes necessary or convenient for the good of the college in the judgment of the Rector of the University with his Council of Discipline;
 - b) when, because of his lack of interest, according to the reports of the professors, he is conditionally failed in two subjects in the ordinary examinations, or definitely failed in one subject in the extraordinary examinations.
 - c) When by his intellectual incapacity his grant becomes useless, when it is proved, in the judgment of the Rector with the Council of Discipline.
12. In any of the above cases, the Rector of the University will inform the Prelate of the diocese to which the expelled student belongs so that the bishop will provide for filling the grant with a worthier student.
13. At the end of every school year, the university Rector will send to the Bishops, together with the academic grades, a confidential report about the moral conduct, character, industriousness and aptitudes of every student they have in the college. Aside from this report, the Bishops may ask for further information they judge convenient, and they will be provided with such information as complete as it is possible".¹⁹

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 66-68.

With these provisions, it can be said that the old and historic *colegiatura* of Santo Tomas was, in principle if not in practice, transformed into a *seminary*, with characteristics of an interdiocesan seminary. But it still lacked the formal approval by the Hierarchy and by the Holy See.

Something, however, was actually considered by the Holy See at this early stage of the creation of a seminary. For it is known that His Holiness Pope St. Pius X, through his Secretary of State, Cardinal Merry del Val, in a communication to the Prior Provincial of the Philippine Dominicans, Fr. Santiago Paya, gave some important instructions and concessions to the University of Santo Tomas regarding the intellectual and moral training of candidates for the priesthood. These concessions are set in the following points:

- "1. In order for the students sent by the suffragan Bishops to earn academic degrees in Theology and Canon Law, not only they must frequent the scholastic courses at the University of Santo Tomas of Manila, under penalty of inability to obtain such degrees, but also they must live completely separated from lay persons as intern students of the same university, in the way and with the discipline proper to a true seminary exclusive for clerics. The students of the diocese of Manila may reside either in the University or in the diocesan seminary of Manila, as per judgment of the Archbishop, but attending classes at the university in order to be canonically eligible for obtaining academic degrees.
2. The pension to be paid by each intern cleric will be determined by the Rector in understanding with the most reverend bishops.
3. It is absolutely forbidden to intern clerics to spend the long or short vacations outside of the university. The dispensations will be rare and to be granted with sufficient cause and with previous license of the respective Ordinaries.
4. To expel intern clerics for lack of intellectual capacity or for moral reasons or for unworthiness is left to the conscience and prudence of the Rector with his council, who must inform the respective Ordinaries, indicating the reasons for the expulsion done or to be done.
5. The inscription of the intern clerics of the university and or their studies and annual examinations or at the end of the

school year and the lower degrees will be totally free of charge. Only for the degrees of Licentiate and Doctor shall the students contribute the fees established or to be established, save the faculty of the Rector and his council to dispense totally or partially the fees of Licentiate and Doctor in consideration of special motives for which the student is deemed worthy of a benign consideration".²⁰

To our knowledge, this is the first document issued by the Holy See concerning the priestly formation given at the Colegio de Santo Tomas. Which means that we are now before a transcendental change of the nature of the three centuries old college. Yet for the real transformation to take place, a formal act of the competent local and Roman authorities was needed.

6. The Provincial Council of 1907

At the local level, a Provincial Council of the Philippines was held in Manila in 1907, in which the matter of a seminary was discussed. That Council is called "Provincial" in the ecclesiastical sense, but it was national in a geographical dimension. In those times, the entire Philippine Archipelago formed *one ecclesiastical province* made up of a metropolitan or archiepiscopal See, that is Manila, and four suffragan dioceses, namely, Cebu, Nueva Segovia (Vigan), Caceres (Naga) and Jaro (Iloilo). Their five Prelates were *ex officio* Fathers of the Council. Many other ecclesiastics attended the council as theologians and advisers, among whom were three Dominicans, Fr. Raimundo Velazquez, Rector of the University of Santo Tomas, Fr. Manuel Alonso and Fr. Jose Ruiz. The Council created a commission on seminaries composed of the rectors of the five conciliar seminaries plus the UST Rector.

The Council recommended the establishment of an Interdiocesan Seminary, which was formulated both in a preliminary session and in one of the final decrees. The discussion of the preliminary session was recorded in these terms:

²⁰ This Vatican document is published in J. SANCHEZ, O.P., *Sinopsis Histórica Documentada de la Universidad de Santo Tomás de Manila*, Manila, 1928, pp. 143-145; also in A. SANTAMARIA, *Estudios Históricos*, pp. 68-69.

"In the Seventh Private Congregation of the Reverend Bishops, which took place on December 19 [1907], at eleven in the morning, it was dealt with the creation of a Provincial Seminary, and the arguments adduced for and against were seriously considered, and the following points were approved by unanimous consent of the synodal Fathers:

1. A *Provincial Seminary* should be established in the city of Manila, in which the most outstanding students of the diocesan seminaries for their piety and intellectual capacity may receive a more specialized training in the ecclesiastical disciplines.
2. A period of five years is given after the erection of such seminary for the Bishops to comply with the obligation of sending philosophy and theology students to the Provincial Seminary."²¹

In the decrees of the Council, the approved plan was mandated almost in the same terms. It is further established that

"since the Synod eagerly desires that the Provincial Seminary be erected in the City of Manila, with the consent of the Metropolitan, the rights over it pertaining to the Ordinary should take into consideration the interest of the College of Bishops."²²

There is no mention in the council's decrees about the means to establish such Provincial Seminary or about its location. Not the slightest reference to its establishment in the University of Santo Tomas. Years passed, and it looks as if the plan, so seriously conceived, was shelved, for it was not revived until 1926.

7. Interdiocesan Seminary: 1927-1928

Meanwhile, what happened to the Colegio de Santo Tomas during those nineteen years? Strangely enough, the Dominican historians of the early 20th century fail to inform us about the on-goings in that college. There are clear signs, however, that the

²¹ *Acta et Decreta Concilii Provincialis Manilensis in Urbe Manilana celebrati anno Domini MDCCCVII*, Roma 1910, pp. LXVII-LXVIII.

²² *Ibid.*, Decrees, Tit. VII, c. II, p. 299.

internado continued to fulfill the traditional function of providing lodging for a majority of lay students and a minority of aspirants for the priesthood, and that the only novelty was that most of the clerics actually came from the various conciliar seminaries of the country.

In 1912 Bishop Juan Gorordo of Cebu, writing to the Rector of the University of Santo Tomas Fr. Jose Noval, expressed his satisfaction at the fact that his seminarians in Santo Tomas had just been ordained priests, "the fruits of the good seeds cast in their souls by the Dominican professors". At the same time, he said he was planning to send to Santo Tomas another seminarian who had already started studies of theology in the Seminary of San Carlos of Cebu."²³

For his part, Bishop Giuseppe Petrelli of Lipa wrote to the same Rector Fr. Noval soliciting the admission of Leoncio Aranda as a *lay capista* in the Colegio de Santo Tomas, even though this student was an ex-seminarian, a young man of good character and conduct and proficient in his studies, who, however, "does not feel inclined for the ecclesiastical state and would like to follow another career in that university."²⁴

As in the case of the above-mentioned seminarian from San Carlos, so also this lay student was accepted as a boarder²⁵, something that would not have been permitted in a formal seminary.

But the presence of lay students notwithstanding, the Colegio de Santo Tomas began to be referred to as a *seminary* even in important, though unofficial, documents. For instance, the Dominican who was assigned to direct the institution from 1908 to 1926, Fr. Francisco Cubeñas (+1928), is always called *Director Seminarii*

²³ Letter of Bishop Gorordo to the Rector of the University, Cebu, June 7, 1912 (AUST, Box *Miscellanea, 1900-1920*, IV) (formerly *Atados*, 130).

²⁴ Letter of Bishop Giuseppe Petrelli to Fr. Noval, Lipa, June 16, 1911 (AUST, *ibid.*).

²⁵ In fact, Leoncio Aranda pursued three careers in the University and obtained three degrees: Bachelor of Arts in 1912; Licentiate in Philosophy and Letters in 1914; and Licentiate in Civil Law in 1916 (AUST, *Diligencias de Grados*, corresponding years).

(Director of the Seminary) in the yearly *Catalogus*, the catalogue of the friars of the Province of the Holy Rosary.²⁶ Fr. Cubeñas was succeeded in his post for one year (1927) by Fr. Juan Ylla who is also referred to as *Director of the Seminary*²⁷, a title that occasionally was given to the rectors of the Seminary even after it was established as a Central Interdiocesan Seminary.²⁸

In 1925 the Papal Delegate to the Philippines, His Excellency Guglielmo Piani, started discussing with the Dominican authorities the feasibility of establishing once and for all "an interdiocesan seminary in the University of Santo Tomas." Such a proposal must have been sent to Rome because it was examined by the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries Cardinal Bisletti, who proposed the plan to the Vicar General of the Dominican Order.²⁹ For their part, the Bishops of the Philippines, in their annual assembly of January 18-20 of 1926 also recommended to have the seminarians totally separated from lay students.³⁰ And in reaction to all this exchange of correspondence between the Holy See, the Central Dominican Curia and the Bishops of the Philippines, the Council of the Dominican Holy Rosary Province, meeting in special session on January 20, 1926, approved to destine the old university building of Intramuros as a Central Seminary of the Philippines "until a new

²⁶ *Catalogus Fratrum ac Sororum Provinciae Sanctissimi Rosarii Philippinarum Ordinis Praedicatorum*, published yearly in Manila since the middle of the 19th century. See years 1910 to 1917. Also in the official *Acta* of the Dominican Provincial Chapter of 1922, Fr. Cubeñas received his appointment as "Director of the Seminary" (ACP, 1922, "Assignationes").

²⁷ See *The Thomasian Yearbook* 1927, which publishes a photograph of a group of seminarians with Fr. Juan Ylla in the center, and with this caption: "Seminario Central de Santo Tomas con su P. Director".

²⁸ Fr. Juan Ylla, Rector of the Central Seminary from 1933 to 1956, was still called "Director" in the yearly Dominican *Catalogus* of 1937 to 1940, and in the annual book of the seminary *The Benavides* of 1940 and 1941. Therefore, the word "Director" should be used with care as an argument for or against the character of the college-seminary.

²⁹ See APSR, *Actas de Consejos de Provincia*, Tomo 12, fol. 274v, session of November 16, 1925; (AUST, mf, Rollo 16).

³⁰ See the editorial article "Seminario Central de Santo Tomás", in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, V, 50 (Julio 1927), p. 391.

edifice is constructed in Sulucan or in any other place of the choice of the Bishops".³¹

The final decision to create a seminary, and one of interdiocesan character, belonged to the Holy See. With letter of April 27, 1927, the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries and Universities gave instructions to the Apostolic Delegate in the Philippines, Msgr. Piani, to see to it that the Central Seminary were opened for the school year 1927-1928 and that it should be provided with Statutes (*Normae*).³²

Finally, on November 27, 1928, the same Sacred Congregation issued a Decree erecting the Interdiocesan Seminary for the entire Philippines attached to the Pontifical University of Santo Tomas, under the direction of the Dominican authorities of the same university.

"The Sacred Congregation", the Decree *Quod jam provide* reads, "declares established and by Apostolic Authority constituted in the University of Santo Tomas an *Interdiocesan Seminary* for all the dioceses of the Philippines, with all the legitimate rights of a college, to which at least six students noted for their piety and intellectual capacity must be sent from every diocese in order for them to obtain a wider and more exquisite education. The Seminary will be under the direction of the Dominican Fathers in accordance with the laws emanating from the canons of the Church, from particular statutes, and from the constitutions of this Sacred Congregation. Given at Rome, from the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries and Universities, this day, November 27, 1928. (Sgd.) Cajetan Card. Bisletti, Prefect. – Ernestus Ruffini, Secretary."³³

This decree marks the formal foundation of the seminary, although it was already functioning for one year with the blessing

³¹ APSR, *Actas de Consejos de Provincia*, Tomo 12, fol. 276V, session of January 20, 1926 (AUST, mf., *Rollo* 16).

³² See article "Seminario Central" (*supra*, footnote 30), pp. 390-391; A. SANTAMARIA, *Estudios Históricos*, pp. 69-70.

³³ Published in *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas*, VII, 71 (April 1919), pp. 236-238.

and by the mandate of the Holy See. But the materiality of the building of Intramuros seemed totally inadequate for its purpose. And so as early as April 28, 1928, the Dominican Provincial Council approved a project for the construction of a seminary building, and at the same time residence of the Dominican professors of the University, in Sulucan, by the side of the Main Building inaugurated in 1927. Meanwhile, a new Director of the Seminary was appointed in the person of Fr. Julio Vicente, who held the office for five years. On November 13, 1932, the cornerstone of the new building in Sulucan was laid down, and on December 26, 1933 the building of the Seminary and of the Fathers' Residence was solemnly inaugurated and occupied. On the same day, a new rector was appointed, Fr. Juan Ylla, who held the office for the long period of 23 years, until 1956.³⁴

The history of the Interdiocesan Seminary of the University of Santo Tomas begins here, and it has to wait for some other historian to write it.

APPENDIX

Milestones on the road from the "Colegio de Santo Tomas" to the "UST Central Seminary"

- 1611-1894 – The Colegio de Santo Tomas always admitted as interns some students who pursued the ecclesiastical courses leading to the priesthood.
- 1894 – Archbishop Bernardino Nozaleda proposes to the UST authorities the admission of some seminarians of his diocesan seminarians in San Carlos Seminary as scholars of the Colegio de Santo Tomas.
- 1894 – The Council of the Colegio de Santo Tomas approves the *Bases* for the admission of seminarians coming from the Seminary of Manila.
- 1900 – The Colegio admits some outside seminarians as boarders.

³⁴ Fr. Ylla was appointed by the Provincial Council of November 9, 1933 (APSR, *Actas de Consejos de Provincia*, Tomo 13, fol. 85v) (AUST, mf, *Rollo* 16).

- 1905 – Archbishop Jeremias J. Harty of Manila proposes to the Philippine Hierarchy the idea of a grand *Central Seminary* in Santo Tomas for seminarians from all the dioceses of the country. The University drafts the *Bases* for such seminary.
- 1907 – The *First Provincial* [national] *Council of Manila* issues a decree for the creation of a *Provincial* [national] *Seminary* for the whole ecclesiastical province (i.e. the Philippines Islands), without specifying the place.
- 1907-1925 – The Colegio de Santo Tomas admits seminarians from various dioceses as boarding students living together with the lay colegiales, under the authority of a *Director* of the Colegio.
- 1926 – The Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines Msgr. Guglielmo Piani initiates contacts with the Dominicans about the feasibility of a Central Seminary attached to the University of Santo Tomas.
- 1926 – January 18-20. Annual Meeting of the Philippine Bishops. The bishops revive the idea of a Provincial (national) Seminary. At the same time, they propose to the university authorities to have the seminary established in its premises. The Dominican Council accepts to take charge of the seminary.
- 1927 – April 26. The Sacred Congregation for Seminaries and Universities, after consulting with the Vicar General of the Dominican Order, urged the Apostolic Delegate Msgr. Piani to have the Seminary opened for the school year 1927-1928.

July 18. Classes started for the ecclesiastical faculties with some delay to give time for the Bishops to send their seminarians. Orders were issued for the writing of Statutes or Norms.
- 1928 – November 27. Decree *Quod jam provide* of the Sacred Congregation for Seminaries and Universities erecting the *Interdiocesan Seminary of Santo Tomas* for the entire Philippines.