

Paring Dilao: The Last Two Japanese Mestizo Priests in the Archdiocese of Manila

Due to amazing reports regarding countless Japanese martyrs in the seventeenth century — some of whom had resided in Manila — the spiritual fame of Japanese Christians and their descendants in the Philippines appeared to have deepened with the passage of time. The native Filipinos respectfully called them “Dilao” (yellow). The Spanish historian of the Philippines Don Antonio de Morga in his *Sucesos de las Islas Philipinas* (1609) described the early Japanese exiles, in general, as “noble, brave, honest and good-natured.”¹ This positive impression apparently endured in the Islands for the next three centuries up to the turn of the last century.

The Japanese who migrated to the Philippines up to 1638 — when Tokugawa Iemitsu closed the doors of the empire from all foreign influence — carefully lived up to the high expectations of them by the Spanish colonialists and the natives alike. Most impressive among them were probably the Catholic exiles of 1614 led by Takayama Ukon (Don Justo Ucondono) and Tokuan Nayto

¹ Josefa M. Saniel. “The Chrysanthemum Colony” *Filipino Heritage* (Manila: Lahing Pilipino, 1977) 4:912-915; Antonio de Morga. *Sucesos de las Islas Philipinas* (con anotaciones de José Rizal). Manila: Comisión Nacional del Centenario de José Rizal, 1961.

(Dr. Juan Nayto) and which included a religious congregation of noblewomen. They were housed in San Miguel Outside the Walls of Old Manila under the spiritual administration of the Society of Jesus. Their colleagues and descendants were admitted as priests to the Spanish religious orders even as the natives were not accorded the same status.² They were also granted the doctorate degree and ordained as secular priests long before the natives achieved these privileges in the church. Priests of Japanese blood were called *paring dilao*.

Dr. Lucas Nayto (circa 1650-1711), most probably a descendant of the above-mentioned Dr. Juan Nayto, took the Holy Orders in about 1675 and graduated as a Doctor of Sacred Theology from the University of Santo Tomas (founded in 1611) in about 1682. Most of his life, he served as the pastor of San Roque, Cavite and vicar forane (archbishop's representative) in the ecclesiastical province of Cavite where thrived a lesser known Japanese community.³ Moreover, there was the generous example of Don Pedro de la Cruz y Rosario, a devout Japanese layman from San Fernando de Dilao (the other Japanese settlement in Manila later called Paco) who in 1701 bequeathed the munificent sum of ₱2,000 to form a pious grant called *capellanía de misas* for the training and support of diocesan priests.⁴

By the eighteenth century, with Japanese emigration from their realm having been proscribed, the number of original settlers in the Philippines had evidently dwindled and they had now been replaced by the so-called *mestizo Japonés* which literally means "Japanese half-breed." Thus, the extant clergy lists of the archdiocese of Manila in the later half of the eighteenth century no longer included Japanese priests but did include two Japanese *mestizo* priests: Bachilleres Don Raphael Ochoa (circa 1723-1785) and

² Fidel Villarroel, O.P. Lorenzo Ruiz, *the Protomartyr of the Philippines and his Companions* (Pasay City: St. Paul Publications, 1979); Saníel "The Chrysanthemum Colony."

³ Archives of the Archdiocese of Manila (AAM). *Libro de Gobierno Eclesiástico (LGE)* (1653-1673) folio 864; "Carta de Don Diego de Herrera (2 Febrero 1711)." *Cartas escritas al Dr. Don Francisco de la Cuesta, Abpo. de Manila.* (1707-23); UST Alumni Association. *University of Santo Tomás Graduate Listing* (1611-1971). (Manila: UST, 1972); Blair and Robertson. *The Philippine Islands* (1493-1898) (Cleveland: Clark, 1903-9). 39:292.

⁴ AAM. *LGE* (1697-1706) f. 236v.; (1707-23) f. 220v.

Don Joseph Rodríguez (1736-1808).^{*} After their death, priests of Japanese blood disappeared completely in the archdiocese of Manila in the nineteenth century.⁵ Therefore, these two clergymen were probably the last of the line of pious Japanese Christians in the Philippines from the seventeenth century. Reviewing their lives should provide us further affirmation of the depth of the Faith which had taken root in this remarkable community of souls.

Padre Ochoa

The older of the two, Padre Ochoa, was born in 1723 in the town of Cavite Viejo (or Old Cavite now called Kawit) in the province of the same name where, as mentioned earlier, there was a Japanese settlement and where had served the illustrious Japanese priest Dr. Lucas Nayto. His parents were Don Francisco Ortiz de Ochoa, who was either pure or half Japanese, and a native woman, Doña Rosa de los Reyes.⁶

He probably studied at the University of Santo Tomás where he obtained the degree of Bachelor of Arts and that was why he was called *Bachiller Don* (abbreviated as B. D.) although the prevailing custom then was for the people to address him as *Padre*. He entered the seminary comparatively late in life since he was already 36 years old when he was ordained to the priesthood in 1759 by Archbishop Manuel Antonio Rojo of Manila. (The minimum and usual age for ordination is 24.) His first assignment was as assistant priest in the town and hacienda of Biñan, Laguna under the supervision of its Filipino coadjutor B.D. Guillermo Manabat. He worked here for four years (1760-64) which included the period of the British Occupation (1762-64). After the war, he was transferred to San Pedro Tunasan in the same province where he served as coadjutor for two years

^{*} We are retaining here the original spelling of their names in the 18th century.

⁵ AAM. *Catálogo del Clero Secular (CCS)* (1762, 1776, 1778 and 19th century lists); Archivo General de Indias (AGI) "Clerecia del Abpdo. de Manila" (1760) *Filipinas* leg. 304; Escoto and Schumacher. "Filipino Priests in the Archdiocese of Manila 1782" *Philippine Studies* 24 (1976): 330-43.

⁶ AAM. *LGE* (1759-64) f. 31.

(1764-1766). His third assignment was in his home province of Cavite as coadjutor of the town of Bacoor for a year (1766-67).⁷

In 1767, he was appointed coadjutor in the Jesuit parish of Indang, Cavite, by the controversial new Archbishop Basilio Sancho de Santas Justa y Rufina (1767-87). A few months later, however, in May 1768, the royal order expelling the Society of Jesus from the Philippines was received in Manila. Thus, on the brink of exile, the elderly Jesuit pastor of Indang, Padre Ignacio Monroy, had to turn over the parish on 1 June 1768 to Padre Ochoa who now became its acting pastor. Ochoa then participated in the subsequent synodal examinations to fill the vacant Jesuit parishes in Cavite. However, he was not one of the successful examinees so that he remained as the coadjutor of Indang under a new Filipino pastor, B.D. Evaristo Cabrera.⁸

Four years later, the position of priest-sacristan of the parish of St. Peter in the Port of Cavite fell vacant and the archbishop granted it to him ad interim on 24 October 1772. This Port, where the Mexican galleons embarked, was the walled enclave of the Spaniards which had been carved out of Cavite Viejo, Ochoa's native town. For him, this was indeed an important opportunity for promotion. He competed for the vacant position and, this time, won it. On 16 January 1773, the archbishop gave him the title of proprietary priest-sacristan of the Port of Cavite. Two months later, the chaplaincy of the chapel of Our Lady of Solitude of Porta Baga, where the natives worshipped (also in the Port of Cavite), fell vacant with the death of B.D. Tomás Nazario Benítez, a Filipino priest. The archbishop also endowed him with this benefice on 1 March 1773. On the same date, the archbishop further appointed him ecclesiastical notary of the Port. On 28 June 1773, he requested and was given the

⁷ Ibid. f. 36; *Exámenes para Provisión de Curatos (EPC)* (1690-1806) Año de 1768.

⁸ Ibid; "Año de 1768. Inventario de todos los bienes pertenecientes a la Iglesia y Casa de este Pueblo de Indán." *Inventarios de los Bienes de las Iglesias: Provincia de Cavite* (1810-1905) Fr. Horacio de la Costa, S.J. *The Jesuits in the Philippines 1581-1768*. (Cambridge: Harvard, 1961); Archives of the Parish of Indang. *Libros Canónicos*. Año de 1768.

license to beg for alms for his humble chapel, through a person of his confidence, in the galleon *San Joseph* before it embarked for Acapulco, México.⁹

As a sign of his maturing competence as a priest, his licenses to hear confessions and say masses were extended for three years and five years respectively, on 9 April 1774. "For better distribution of benefices," considering the increasing number of native priests, the chaplaincy of Our Lady of Solitude was transferred from him to B.D. Dionisio Vicente Esguerra de Leyva, a Chinese mestizo, on 28 June 1774. But he remained as the sacristan of the Fort of Cavite. On the other hand, on 27 September 1774, the Dominican vicar of the Convent of San Thelmo in the same Port nominated him chaplain of the private *capellanía* of Doña Petrona Garcia Fernández. Henceforth, the rent of a house the foundress had owned inside the Port augmented his priestly income.¹⁰

After working for eight years with the Spanish pastor of the Port, Dr. Vicente Mauleón Peralta, he succeeded the latter in his post upon his demise. He topped the synodal examination for it and was presented by the governor general as vice royal patron on 19 June 1781. The archbishop gave him its title on 22 June. Then as a sign of the prelate's complete confidence in him, he was made the vicar forane of the entire province of Cavite on 11 March 1782, also succeeding Dr. Mauleón who, in turn, had been preceded in this high office by the distinguished Japanese Dr. Lucas Nayto. He died after only a few years in his early 60s between 1784 and 1788, when most of the archdiocesan records are missing. As proprietary pastor of the Port of Cavite, he was succeeded by a Filipino priest B.D. Juan Gregorio de la Peña.¹¹

Padre Rodríguez

He had an even more distinguished career than Padre Ochoa because his administrative talents were recognized earlier in his priestly work. His family and academic backgrounds are not

⁹ AAM. *LGE* (1772-83) ff. 50, 56, 59 and 84.

¹⁰ Ibid. ff. 110, 113v. and 123.

¹¹ Ibid. ff. 91v and 99v-100; *LGE* (1789-97) f. 21.

definitely known but it appears that he was born in either one of the two Japanese settlements in the old province of Manila, that is, San Miguel or San Fernando de Dilao. He was probably also a graduate of the University of Santo Tomás with a Bachelor of Arts degree since he was called a *Bachiller*. He started his priestly training during the term of Archbishop Rojo of Manila (1750-64) who endowed him with a capellanía founded by a Spanish priest Don Pedro Cabral, Pastor of Ermita. This prelate also elevated him to the diaconate in early 1762 at the age of 26. Unfortunately, in September of the same year, the British invaded Manila. The archbishop served as the acting governor-general of the Philippines during this catastrophic period (1762-64). However, it appears that the same prelate managed to ordain him to the priesthood before he died in January 1764 in the midst of the conflict.¹²

He was first appointed as an assistant to the two pastors of the walled city of Manila. Later, he was promoted as chief chaplain of the Royal Hospital. He was in this position when the Jesuits were expelled from the Philippines in 1768 leaving their choice parishes vacant. Specifically, he applied for the curacies of Marikina or Taytay in the province of Manila and easily won the former curacy in the competitive examinations. Thus, on 31 August 1768, Archbishop Sancho gave him the title of proprietary parish priest of Marikina and installed him as such three days later. The archbishop was apparently also impressed by his previous record such that on 4 September, he further appointed him vicar forane of the ecclesiastical district of Marikina with jurisdiction over the adjacent former Jesuit parishes. He took his oath of office the following day "with complete power and authority" as the prelate's representative. In these dual positions, he served faithfully and competently till his death forty years later.¹³

He was an indefatigable pastor whose sphere of influence was not confined to his district. On 23 September 1772, he started

¹² AGI. "Clerecía (1760)" AAM. *Prebendas* (1804-55) A; EPC, 1768.

¹³ Ibid; AAM LGE (1767-71) docs. 275, 282 and 283; LGE (1789-97) f. 20v; CCS ca. 1806.

important repairs in his parish church. On the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in 1782, it was he who was invited by the archbishop to preach the sermon at the Manila Cathedral. In 1806, when the church of the Hacienda of Dinalupihan in Bataan Province, which was assigned to the Manila Seminary of San Carlos, was constructed, he donated twenty pesos which was a generous sum in those days.¹⁴

At the age of 63, just before the turn of the eighteenth century, he started making spiritual preparations for his death. On 22 April 1799, he wrote his last will naming his own soul as his primary heir and his relatives and servants as his secondary heirs. He appointed as executors of his will his friends in the following order:

1. B.D. Matías Polumbarit, Filipino pastor of nearby Taytay;
2. B.D. Juan Bautista, also the Filipino pastor of nearby Antipolo; and

3. Don Leonardo Guevarra, a trusted resident of his parish in Marikina. Still living four years later, he bought some ricelands in the suburban town of Pasig and set them aside in order to form a *capellanía* on 27 November 1803. He asked its chaplains to say regular masses *in perpetuum* for the eternal repose of his soul. He chose his third executor Don Leonardo Guevarra and his sons as the patrons of his capellanía who were to nominate its future chaplains.¹⁵

A hardy man, Padre Rodríguez did not die until 1808, nine years after he had drawn up his last will. He was succeeded by B.D. Vicente Mariano de las Nieves, a Chinese mestizo, as pastor of the industrious parish of Marikina.¹⁶

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¹⁴ AAM. LGE (177283) ff. 36 and 97v; *Expedientes Sobre Diferentes Materias* (1800-32) A.

¹⁵ AAM. "Capellanía del Presbítero Don José Rodríguez." *Capellánías de Misas* (1873-86) B and (1891-92) A.

¹⁶ Ibid; *Libro de Ternas* (1806-23). Año de 1808.