



Fr. Fidel Villarroel, O.P. and the History of the University of Santo Tomas: A Life Dedicated to Historical Writing

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As the foremost historian in the University of Santo Tomas, Fr. Fidel Villarroel is known for his works of great scholarly value. Fr. Villarroel wrote 23 major books on Church history and biographies which included men of the Church such as Fr. Miguel de Benavides, the founder and Bishop of Manila and saints and martyrs like St. Lorenzo Ruiz and St. Liem de la Paz. His work about these saints and martyrs formed the basis of their beatification and eventual canonization. Fr. Villarroel's writings extended to stories about heroes like Marcelo H. del Pilar, Jose Rizal and Apolinario Mabini. The common denominator about the personages that Fr. Villarroel wrote about was that at some point in time they were connected to the Dominicans and the University of Santo Tomas. Fr. Benavides was a Dominican; San Lorenzo was a resident of Binondo, then under Dominican supervision; St. Liem de la Paz, Marcelo H. del Pilar, Jose Rizal and Apolinario Mabini were students in the University of Santo Tomas. Fr. Villarroel's treatment of the history of the Order in the Philippines and that of the University was that these were told within the context of Philippine history which gave added significance. While serving as the Archivist of the University Fr. Villarroel had access to important documents from which he based his work. It allowed him to give a more factual presentation of history and in many cases debunked the biases of the so-called nationalist historians while at the same time correcting historical information. As chief historian of the University, he was able to write its history on several occasions, the latest of whom was a two-volume work entitled *A History of Santo Tomas: Four Centuries of Higher Education in the Philippines (1611-2011)*. It was a monumental work in which Fr. Villarroel made skillful use of the documents he had at his disposal. The work told the story of the University from a humble school for men aspiring for the priesthood to a University at the end of the Second World War. It withstood upheavals, both natural and man-made including attempts for its suppression in the course of centuries. Fr. Villarroel has interwoven the story of with its narration with the events of the country's history which made the history of the University of Santo Tomas a part of the history of the Philippines.

Key words: *history, historical events, historical writing, historians, Dominicans, university, University of Santo Tomas, education, Church, martyrs, saints, education, documents*

Introduction

“**T**o all the generations of Thomasian educators and students who through four centuries have been enlightened by “this fountain of purest light.” – these words adorn the dedication of the two-volume work by the acknowledged foremost historian of the University of Santo Tomas, Fr. Fidel Villarroel, O.P. Some people would describe it as a masterpiece, an epic work, a work of a lifetime. University Rector Fr. Rolando V. de la Rosa, O.P., called it as a work of love. Fr. Villarroel painstakingly collected documents, even very old ones, often in archaic languages as well as rare photographs which have never been before made public. From its comprehensiveness and thickness, the making of the book goes beyond scholarship. Quoting St. Thomas, one cannot love what you do not know. “To love an institution like UST one must know it first” according to Fr. de la Rosa in his foreword.

The book was published during school year 2011-2012, the second part of the Quadricentennial celebration of the University of Santo Tomas. The first part of the celebration took place during school year 2010-2011. Fr. Villarroel’s book was intended to be a three-volume work spanning the history of the University from its foundation to the present, unfortunately sickness prevented him from doing so, that the work, according to Fr. de la Rosa covered only up to July 4, 1946, resulting only in two volumes. Fr. Villarroel hoped that another historian would finish what he had started. Certainly that historian will write the history of the University under the Philippine Republic from 1946 to the present.

About the Author, The Very Reverend Fidel Villarroel, O.P.

About the author, Fidel Villarroel, O.P. a noted historian, writer, Filipinologist, archivist, historical researcher and theologian. He is the acknowledged historian of the University of Santo Tomas. Fr. Villarroel was born on March 18, 1929 in the town of Tejerina in the province of Leon, Spain. While studying at the Dominican schools of La Mejorada and Santa Maria de Nieva, he was inspired to become a priest. He took up Philosophy and Theology at the House of Studies in the Convent of Avila where he began his Dominican vocation. He was ordained in 1952 and continued postgraduate studies in History at the University of London. After obtaining his Masters degree he went to the Philippines to serve at the Pontifical and Royal University of Santo Tomas. Aside from serving as a Professor of Church History in the Faculty of Sacred Theology in the University, Fr. Villarroel became the head of the Spanish Department and served in this capacity for 25 years. He also served as Prefect of Libraries of the University. His longest service was his leadership of the

UST Archives which he headed for almost half a century. He continued studying and earned his Doctorate in Sacred Theology from the University of Santo Tomas.

Aside from his duties in the University, Fr. Villarroel served as the secretary to the Apostolic Nunciature from 1959 to 1991. He was the academic director of the Academia Filipina de la Lengua Española which was the local affiliate of the prestigious Real Academia Española based in Madrid, Spain. It was also a member of the Asosacion de Academias de la Lengua Española. A prolific writer, Fr. Villarroel wrote 23 books on Church history and biographies among which were *Cruzada española en Vietnam: Compañía de Cochinchina. Introducción y edición de Fidel Villarroel, O.P.* (1972); *Contribución de la Universidad de Santa Tomás al desarrollo de la literatura hispanofilipina: Discurso* (1974); *Fray Jerónimo Román: Historia del Siglo de Oro* (1974); *El Padre Antonio Gonzalez, Martir* (1981); *Christian Witnessing: Martyrdom and Martyrs* (1981); *Un siglo de apostolado (1887-1987)*; *Lorenzo De Manila: The Protomartyr of the Philippines and His Companions* (1987); *Miguel De Benavides, O.P., 1550-1605: Friar, Bishop, and University Founder* (2005) and; *Philip II and the "Philippine Referendum" of 1599* (2009).

Fr. Villarroel also wrote about Filipino heroes who were once students of the University of Santo Tomas. These were *Apolinario Mabini, his birth date and student years* (1964); *Father Jose Burgos, University Student* (1971); *Jose Rizal and the University of Santo Tomas* (1984); *Marcelo H. Del Pilar, His Religious Conversions* (1997); and *Marcelo H. Del Pilar at the University of Santo Tomas* (1997). All of these works were based on archival material obtained through thorough research. Fr. Villarroel's works about the Filipino heroes put a historical perspective to their story. His approach provided the proper historical context thereby giving a clearer picture why things happened during the lifetime of these persons.

In 1999 Fr. Villarroel published his book, *The Dominicans and the Philippine Revolution, 1896-1903* (1999). His book provided a view from the "other side" about the Philippine Revolution. It was published while the Philippines was commemorating the centenary of various events from the martyrdom of Jose Rizal in 1896, the Philippine Revolution which broke out that year, the establishment of the Malolos Republic in 1898 and the Filipino-American War in the year that followed. Readers got the impression that Fr. Villarroel's book was a response to the flood of materials on the Philippine Revolution written by Filipino authors at the time. These materials undoubtedly contained anti-Spanish and anti-Church materials. Fr. Villarroel may be perceived as a defender of Spain and the Church, being a Spaniard and a friar. Nevertheless his work is backed up by primary sources and are well-interpreted and analyzed. He even discussed problems within the Church during the Revolution such as the conflict between the Dominicans and the Jesuits- the Jesuits were accused of training and inspiring the Filipino reformists; and the conflict of the Regulars versus the Seculars with the Regulars accusing the Seculars of siding with the Filipinos wishing to end Church supremacy in the Philippines. The book was a view of the Revolution from the point of view of a Spaniard and a friar. Another

important aspect was Fr. Villarroel's depiction of the friars- they were not the evil and power hungry persons as described by their enemies. One of the friars in the University of Santo Tomas who as seen as a moderate was Fr. Evaristo Fernandez Arias who was thinly disguised in Rizal's *El Filibusterismo* merely as "Fr. Fernandez." Fr. Arias was respected by all students of the University including Rizal. He gave sound advice to Rizal and his fellow students and even counseled General Emilio Aguinaldo not to subscribe to the teachings of organizations which are incompatible with the Church referring to freemasonry and that to rebel against religious authority is to rebel against God. As for the University of Santo Tomas, the institution was depicted as a cradle of people with various persuasions, Churchmen and future freemasons, conservatives and future reformists and revolutionists.

Aside from the books Fr. Villarroel authored more than 65 articles which appeared in various journals within and outside the country. Fr. Villarroel would be better known as the most prolific saint-maker in the Philippines as he conducted the research that produced the *positio* (*Positio Super Introducione Causae*) for the beatification and canonization of San Lorenzo Ruiz and fifteen other companion martyrs in Japan during the 17th century. Fr. Villarroel also produced the research for the UST martyrs who perished during the Spanish Civil War.

For his contributions to historical research and dedicated service to the Church, Fr. Villarroel became a recipient of various awards among them was a *Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice* from Pope John Paul II in 1984 and the Cruz de la Isabella la Catolica from King Juan Carlos I of Spain in 1985. Other awards were the Catholic Authors Award by the Asian Catholic Publishers, Inc in 1991 and a National Book Award in 1999. The latter award was given for his work *The Dominicans and the Philippine Revolution*. In 2009 Fr. Villarroel was awarded the title Master of Sacred Theology of the Dominican Order. This title was once held by the founder of the Dominican Order, St. Dominic de Guzman.

Fr. Villarroel's writings on Philippine history shed light on various aspects of the country's past and greatly contributed to its better understanding. He was not an apologist for Spain, being a Spaniard or the Church as a member of the clergy but based his views on solid documentary evidence. In his work about the Manila Referendum of 1599, he explained that the *datus* and members of the noble families of Manila voluntarily opted to accept Spanish rule. He said that this referendum was repeated in other parts of the country and eventually led to its pacification. This explains that the colonization of the islands by Spain was accomplished with the acquiescence by the leading natives themselves and this colonization was achieved by means of persuasion rather than force. Perhaps his major contributions were his works which concerned Filipino heroes. He wrote that Marcelo H. del Pilar who was considered as the most dangerous of the *Filibusteros* ended his days as a Catholic by retracting Freemasonry at his deathbed in Barcelona on July 4, 1896. Fr. Villarroel corrected the controversy on the date of birth of Apolinario Mabini previously known as July 23, 1864 to July 22, 1864 by correctly interpreting his baptismal certificate

which said that Mabini was described as a child of one day (*un niño de un día*). Fr. Villarroel's correction corrected the confusion which affected the National Historical Institute in the commemoration of the hero's date of birth.

Fr. Villarroel's opus on Jose Rizal contained in his book *José Rizal and the University of Santo Tomas* (1982) aside from adding new details that concerned the hero's life, dispelled many biases and misinformation committed by many historians. One of the important details in his book was that the Rizal family was very much favored by the Dominican administrators of the Calamba estate where it was a lessee of lands totaling more than 500 hectares. The family was given the choice lands in the estate and in 1885 Rizal's brother, Paciano, was allowed to cultivate areas in Pansol and Los Baños with the understanding that the family will not pay a single centavo of rent for the next five years. Rizal's relationship with the Dominicans began long before he was born. His ancestor Domingo Lamco was baptized in the then Dominican parish of Binondo. He worked in the Hacienda of Biñan which was under the Dominicans. Later Rizal's father moved to the Hacienda of Calamba which was also another Dominican estate. As a young boy Rizal was familiar with the Dominican administrators and was said to have offered them some services which Fr. Villarroel did not specify. He was so familiar to them that they called the young boy "Pepe Mercado."

When Rizal's mother was incarcerated in Santa Cruz, Laguna after being accused of attempted murder in 1872, it was the Dominicans who found the lawyers to defend her in court. She was released only after two years of detention. Contrary to what was said by many authors Rizal was never discriminated against by the Spaniards or the University of Santo Tomas where he took up college courses. On the contrary he was favored by the University and the Dominicans when he was given the rare privilege of taking up the *Ampliacion* course or the Preparatory Course to Medicine and First Year Medicine proper at the same time. This privilege can only be obtained through the intervention of the Governor General. In his book Fr. Villarroel dispelled the myth of the abusive "Padre Millon" in the class of Physics in Rizal's *El Filibusterismo* which many authors attribute to a professor of the subject in the University. There was no friar teaching physics at that time.

Another area of contention was many authors tend to compare UST with another institution, the Jesuit-run Ateneo Municipal de Manila. They said that Rizal's best years was at the Jesuit school and his years at the UST were marked by lower grades and discrimination by hostile classmates and professors. This is another myth being peddled by these authors and unfortunately believed by many Filipinos. In his work Fr. Villarroel provided explanations which dispelled all these myths. Ateneo was a high school while UST is a University. Medical education which Rizal got at UST was certainly more grueling and demanding. Rizal himself never complained about having low grades at UST. Rizal himself was biased towards the liberal arts rather than the sciences which explained his low grades in science subjects. There were distractions like the attraction by the opposite sex, peer groups like his *barkada*

which he called *El Compañerismo* and its members *Los Compañeros de Jehu*. If the Spaniards were discriminating against the Filipinos, all the Spanish students in Rizal's class would have passed. Fr. Villarroel writes that all of Rizal's Spanish classmates failed by reaching the fifth year of medical studies.

Contrary to the backward, rote memorization-based and discriminatory education peddled by Rizal biographers at UST, Fr. Villarroel painted a different picture of the University depicting it as a modernizing institution with a well-qualified and well-equipped faculty of Medicine which was the first in colonial Asia. In the Ateneo where all of Rizal's actions in the school were monitored by his professors and his works edited by his mentors, it is hard to see the real Rizal. On the other hand at UST where there were no professors to follow him around and with lots of free time, Rizal was able to reveal his true self. According to Fr. Villarroel it was while in UST Rizal was able to produce two ground breaking literary works, the poem *A la Juventud Filipina* and the play *El Consejo de los Dioses*. We can see that that we can see the real Rizal in UST rather in Ateneo. It was in UST we can see the blossoming of his nationalistic character. Rizal's leaving the Philippines to continue his medical education in Spain was a personal choice rather than caused by negative factors such as his inclusion in a supposed blacklist by Spaniards; backward and obsolete education in UST or worsening relations between his family and the Dominicans.

Fr. Villarroel also discussed in detail the *Protesta de Calamba*, an agrarian problem which caused the eviction of Rizal's family from their landholdings. Many authors connected that the removal of the family along with other tenants with Rizal's now controversial character as the author of the *Noli Me Tangere* which vilified the friars. The cause of the eviction was simply a matter of law and economics: Rizal's family and the other tenants simply refused to pay the increased land rentals owed to the Dominican administrators. More importantly Rizal questioned the legitimacy of the ownership of the estate by the Order. Rizal's *Noli* actually had no connection to the removal of his family from the estate.

Rizal's connection to the Dominicans extended even into his final days. Many authors pointed to Archbishop Bernardino Nozaleda, O.P. as one of those who were clamoring for Rizal's arrest following the outbreak of the Philippine Revolution in 1896. Before he became the archbishop of Manila, Fr. Nozaleda was the Vice Rector of the University of Santo Tomas. Rizal was then a student in the University. Fr. Nozaleda was the likely model for Fr. Sibyla in his two novels. Though Fr. Nozaleda may have desired to have Rizal account for his alleged offenses against Spain i.e. being the very spirit of the insurrection, as described by his prosecutors, Fr. Nozaleda made an effort to save Rizal's soul. According to Fr. Villarroel wrote that it was Archbishop Nozaleda who sent Jesuit priests into Rizal's detention cell to convince him to retract his Masonic beliefs and return to the Catholic Church. It was also Archbishop Nozaleda who furnished Rizal a draft of his retraction. A retraction, personally written by Rizal was secured by Fr. Vilaclara on the early morning hours of December 30, 1896, a few hours before his execution at Bagumbayan.

Fr. Villaroel's latest work was a two-volume work entitled *A History of Santo Tomas: Four Centuries of Higher Education in the Philippines (1611-2011)*. As one goes through the pages of the book, I was impressed by its sheer detail. It was as if the author was an eyewitness to the events in the history of the University. Each volume has an appendix and among its contents were a list of members in the Malolos Congress and the Philippine Assembly who were UST graduates, Thomasian bishops and archbishops, a Thomasian Who's Who in 1982, a list of Popes who had something to do with the University and statistics of graduates spanning centuries. In an interview I conducted with Fr. Villaroel last February, I asked Fr. Villaroel what impelled him to write the book. Fr. Villaroel replied that he wrote the book out of a sense of duty. He has written various works on history including those about Church history and Philippine history which appeared in publications like the *Philippiniana Sacra* and *UNITAS*. He already has voluminous materials at the UST Archives and the materials obtained through decades of research at the Archivo General de Indias in Seville as well as the archives in Avila, Spain. New materials were likewise obtained from these foreign archives.

There were other works on the history of the University of Santo Tomas. Among these were written by Spanish bibliographer and historian Manuel Artigas y Cuerva. His work covered until the 300th anniversary of the University in 1911. In 1928 Fr. Pablo Fernandez wrote the second history of UST. Fr. Villaroel himself wrote several histories of the University in 1961, 1965 and 1987. UST Prof. Josefina Lim-Pe wrote the history of the University in 1971 as her doctoral dissertation. What was lacking with the other works was these narrate only the growth of the institution. There was a need to write the history of the University in the context of the history of the country. Thus with a wealth of historical material around him Fr. Villaroel endeavored to write a more comprehensive history of UST.

I managed to ask Fr. Villaroel some questions to clarify some controversial aspects in the history of the University. Following the execution of Fathers Mariano Gomes, Jose Burgos and Jacinto Zamora in 1872 the University did not award any doctoral degrees to Filipinos. Fr. Villaroel said that this also happened not only in the Philippines but even in Spain. The non-issuance of the degrees was a matter of policy by the Spanish government at that time. It did awarded however honorary degrees during that time. I also managed to touch on the issue how was Rizal able to study the *Ampliacion* course or the Preparatory Course to Medicine and First Year Medicine at the same time. Fr. Villaroel said that Rizal managed to achieve this feat because he requested for it from the authorities. This was indicative of how the Spaniards in general and the Dominicans in particular favored Rizal instead of discriminating against him. This was a rare privilege given to very few students.

As for how Rizal, who was a devout Catholic after graduating from the Ateneo Municipal in 1877, became a mason and a believer of anti-Church teachings, Fr. Villaroel attributed the change in Rizal's character to exposure to liberal elements especially Professor Miguel Morayta who had a profound influence on his religious

beliefs and outlook of life. Morayta was a professor at the Universidad Central de Madrid who was later removed for encouraging people described as anarchists. Students especially those from the Philippines and South America however admired him.

Fr. Villarroel also touched on the effect of the Philippine Revolution on UST. He said that the Malolos Congress suppressed the University in 1898 until it was revived in the following year. It was replaced by the Literary and Scientific University which was established in Malolos. There were actually previous attempts to suppress the University as the wave of secularism swept Europe from the 18th century onwards. I also asked the rationale for separating the female students from male students after the doors of the University were reopened to women in the 1920s. The reason for the segregation was to protect the morality of the women.

The Historiography of the Book

Before even beginning the body of the book, there was the discussion of the historiography of the University of Santo Tomas. This involved the discussion of earlier works on the history of the University. Fr. Villarroel mentioned the work of a layman, Manuel Artigas y Cuerva, an alumnus of the University, a noted bibliographer, historian and journalist. He served as the Secretary of the Publicity Committee of the tricentennial anniversary celebration of UST and wrote the history of UST in a work entitled *Reseña Historica de la Universidad de Santo Tomas* which came out in 1911. The book did not receive the popularity it deserved because it was written in Spanish when the entire country had adapted English as its dominant language and because the book was written in poor quality paper.

In 1928 a Dominican professor, Fr. Juan Sanchez, O.P. published the second comprehensive history of the University in his book entitled *Sinopsis Historica Documentada de la Universidad de Santo Tomas de Manila*. Sanchez's work was described as a reliable compendium of the University's history but had the shortcoming of lacking to situate the development of the University in the context of national and world history. Other works on the University were miniature histories such as the ones done by Fr. Pablo Fernandez in 1958, those made by Fr. Villarroel in 1961, 1965 and 1987 and the one made by Manuel Gonzalez Pola in 1969.

There were also monographic studies such as the one done by Prof. Josefina Lim-Pe which was her dissertation in 1971 and the one made by Jose Victor Torres. Lim-Pe's work covered from the beginning of the University to 1971 while Torres did his work covering the American period. Both dissertations were published as books by the University of Santo Tomas. Another important work mentioned by Fr. Villarroel was the work of Fr. Alberto Santa Maria who wrote a comprehensive history of the University in the 1930s. Being the archivist of UST he had access to archival documents. Inputs from his writings found their way into the books such as *Documentos Historicos* and *Estudios Historicos* as well as various articles which were

serially published in the *UNITAS* journal of the University of Santo Tomas. There were also inputs to the university's Golden Book and various articles and essays including those on controversial topics. Fr. Santamaria left many notes and clippings some of which are not anymore extant.

Other sources used by Fr. Villarroel were documents such those from the Archivo General de Indias (AGI) in Spain, Dominican Documents such as the Foundation Act of 1611, records and proceedings of meetings among the Dominican officials, papal papers including those declaring UST as the Catholic University of the Philippines. There was also a wealth of printed materials such as those made by historian Wenceslao Retana and Artigas y Cuerva.

The Book: Volume I

The body of the first volume consists of two parts. Part One which is entitled In the Century of Evangelization in the Seventeenth Century discusses two periods: The Colegio de Santo Tomas (1611-1645) which consists of ten chapters discusses the arrival of the Dominicans, the need to establish a college and the first decades of its existence. This part also contains a biography of the founder of the University, Archbishop Miguel de Benavides, O.P. and the early martyrs and saints who died in Japan.

The Second period entitled *Universitas* covers the years from 1645 to 1649. This period includes the time when the Colegio de Santo Tomas became a university, consists of eight chapters. Included here are the discussion of troubles with the strong-willed Governor General Sebastian Hurtado de Corcuera, the rivalry of the Dominicans and the Jesuits, the administrators, the great Thomasian theologians and cultural events of the period.

Part Two of the book which comprises twelve chapters places the University in the Age of Enlightenment. At this stage there was an attempt to establish a lay university which would have spelled the end of Santo Tomas. From this time on (the 18th century) the University would be fighting attempts to suppress it and replace it with a lay institution. Important events during this period include the British invasion of Manila, the expulsion of the Jesuits in 1768 and the end of the *limpieza de sangre* where only native Spaniards can enroll in the University. Filipinos and natives can now enter as students. There were also foreign students from China, Japan and Vietnam. In Chapter X the University was almost secularized during the term of Governor Simon de Anda y Salazar who was an advocate of secularization.

Events in what was described as the century of evangelization – the 16th century which was the century when Spanish missionaries began a significant part of their evangelical work. This part consists of ten chapters. This include the idea of the establishing a university and the original group of Dominicans who came to the Philippines. Foremost among them was Fr. Domingo de Salazar who became

the first bishop of Manila. The Dominicans were not alone in the quest to educate the natives or to establish an institution for priests as the Jesuits also came to the Philippines as part of the missionary work. The Jesuits became partners and at times competitors of the Dominicans for the souls of the natives and in the establishment of educational institutions. Their colleges the Colegio de San Ignacio, which was once called the Colegio de Manila and the Colegio de San Jose, actually antedated the University of Santo Tomas.

Though by papal decree the college was empowered to bestow degrees, there was competition from the Jesuit-run institutions such as the Colegio de San Ildefonso, the Colegio de San Ignacio and the Colegio de San Jose. There were disputes that the College cannot be a university but a school of general studies. This was solved when Pope Innocent X conferred the title “University in 1645. The University became a bastion of theological study centering on Aristotelian and Thomistic Philosophy. When the Jesuits were expelled from the Philippine in 1768 and UST became the oldest university in the Philippines.

Elaborate Rituals

Perhaps the memorable aspect was the *Noche Triste* or the Sad Night in which the candidate for a licentiate or doctorate had to endure before defending his thesis or dissertation. After passing a series of tests the candidate then undergoes a ritual in which he orally defends his work before the Rector and the professors of the University. Lasting for about four hours, the candidate does two lectures on randomly chosen topics. (In the *Lumina Pandit* exhibit in 2011, a small child is given the task to pick the topic). The degree is conferred in an elaborate ceremony in the Cathedral and the candidate delivers a discourse in a flowery and oratorical discourse. He recites the creed and the pledge and expresses his gratitude. The event is capped by a parade in his honor.

Volume II of the Book

Volume II begins with Part Three of the book which covers the age of reforms and revolutions in the 19th century. It is divided into two periods: the First Period entitled Crises and Plans of Reforms covers the years from 1800 to 1865 and the Second Period which is entitled Modernization and the Philippine Revolution, covers from the years 1865 to the Philippine Revolution. The first period contains twelve chapters while the second period contains eleven chapters.

The first chapter of the first period gives us a background of the wave of liberalism in Spain and how it affected the Philippines. Putting the University in this context, it became a bastion of conservatism while slowly treading the way towards modernization. It saw the rise of “Two Spains” one- a modernizing and liberalizing Spain and the other a conservative and strictly Catholic Spain. The University was more into the Second Spain as the period saw a revival in Thomism as seen in

the works of Cardinal Zeferino Gonzales. With the explosion of knowledge the University adopted a code of press censorship. The period also saw the rise of the Filipino clergy such as Fr. Pedro Pablo Pelaez and Fr. Jose Burgos who earned eight degrees from the University. These priests agitated for the secularization of the Philippine church. This part of the book was a prequel to the momentous events to come such as the Reform Movement and the Philippine Revolution. On the other hand, the University through its Rector reached its preeminence as it was given the authority to supervise all secondary and higher education in the Philippines through a decree of Queen Isabella II in 1865. All diplomas and academic titles were to be issued by the University of Santo Tomas regardless of the educational institution.

The Second Period saw the University in the forefront of Philippine history. Its graduates such as Fr. Valerio Malabanan established schools in the countryside which educated the likes of Apolinario Mabini and the other reformists. Its graduates such as Fr. Burgos and Jacinto Zamora were executed for being *filibusteros* and others including laymen such as Jose Basa and Balvino Mauricio were sent into exile. The liberal episode in Spain in 1868-1870 almost resulted in the suppression of the University and combining it with the Ateneo de Manila, San Juan de Letran, the Escuela de Dibujo and the Escuela Nautical into a single institution called Instituto Filipino which will be handled by a layman. The Dominicans naturally protested this arrangement which did not push through because of the change of government in Spain.

The liberal episode in Spain nonetheless led to the establishment of two new faculties, the Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, the School of Medical and Pharmaceutical Practitioners, the School of Notaries and the Escuela de Matronas. The last school showed that women were actually allowed to enroll in the University during the Spanish period and it was not true that women were allowed to enroll as student only during the American regime.

An important aspect of the Second Period was the chapter on Jose Rizal (Chapter VI). The University became a marketplace of ideas as this was where future reformists, revolutionists and conservatives mingled. The Dominican professors fought for its retention while the critics called for its suppression. The University in fact became in miniature the "Two Spains" mentioned earlier. If one remembers the lecture of Fr. Noel Abalajon, O.P in his lecture at the Velada Tomasina on January 25, 2012, he mentioned that there were "Bad Thomasians" who advocated the expulsion of the friars and the secularization of not only the parishes but all aspects of society. He mentioned individuals like Rizal, del Pilar and Fr. Gregorio Aglipay who were students of the University. They became the propagandists who portrayed that the Philippines as a frailocracy and that the friars were evil. One exemption to these "bad" friars was Fr. Evaristo Fernandez Arias, O.P. who was portrayed in a favorable light by Rizal as Fr. Fernandez in *El Filibusterismo*. Fr. Fernandez gave sane advice to the Filipino students to be moderate in their demands and to shun Masonic propaganda.

It should be noted that these “Bad Thomasians” later advocated Philippine independence and majority of them comprised the delegates of the Malolos Congress. With the exception of Pedro Paterno, two Thomasians, Felipe Calderon and Apolinario Mabini proposed the drafts of the Philippine Constitution. It also appeared that the “Bad Thomasians” succeeded in their goal that the University of Santo Tomas was suppressed by decrees coming from Malolos with the establishment of the entirely secular Universidad Cientifico Literaria in 1898 and there were no classes in the University from August 1898 to July 1899.

In discussing UST in the context of the Philippine Revolution, Fr. Villarroel made use of one of his related work *The Dominicans and the Philippine Revolution* (1998). Chief among these was his description of the role of Fr. Evaristo Fernandez Arias who wrote to General Emilio Aguinaldo cautioning him against adopting ideas of organizations banned by the Church – Freemasonry. Fr. Fernandez said that the propagandists made it appear that the friars had established a “theocracy” and that the propagandists had magnified the so-called abuses of the friars by their irreverent treatment of the clergy. It was Fr. Fernandez who was the basis of the character in Rizal’s *El Filibusterismo* and compared to the other friars, he was portrayed as a moderate and gave fatherly advice to the students.

The University as well as other Spanish institutions and personalities, was affected but in a negative way. The 1896 Philippine Revolution was actually avoidable, only if Spain had read the signs of the times. Writers like Sinibaldo de Mas (p. 181) wrote about its possibility in 1842. Spain should have granted political and social reforms. It was short-sighted on the part of the Spaniards but the same can be true for the Filipinos as they themselves were not fully prepared to handle the challenges of independence. For the theologians in UST they blamed the Revolution on the poisonous propaganda spread by the likes of Marcelo del Pilar and Rizal. Villarroel wrote that Spanish institutions were not prepared to meet the demands of Filipino intellectuals. It would be more that Spain was unwilling or too busy to see what should be done. Many of the demands of the propagandists were actually legitimate such as representation in the Cortes and the equitable distribution of property. Majority of them desired integration with Spain, prompting writers like Nick Joaquin to call Rizal as the “Last Spaniard” in contrast to Leon Ma. Guerrero’s “First Filipino.”

Part Four of the book is entitled “Under the American Flag and the Philippine Republic in the Twentieth Century. This part is divided consists of 17 chapters. The notable events here include the resumption of classes under the new colonial masters; the hearings before the Philippine Commission; the incorporation of the University; the condition of the University with the loss of the Colegio de San Jose and the standardization of the University with other learning institutions. For the very first time a centenary of the University was gaily celebrated which took place on its 300th anniversary in December 1911. The early years under American rule was certainly very difficult with the loss of the income-generating haciendas and the Faculty of Pharmacy and Medicine almost closed down. Government recognition of

its programs was finally achieved in 1916. There was a foray into the mass media with the publication of the *Libertas*, the only Catholic newspaper in the Philippines. It was published from 1899 to 1918. The publication of this newspaper was a response to the worldwide phenomena of secularism.

A major shift in the 1920s was the adoption of English as a medium of instruction. Certainly this was made to adapt to the existing situation. The University actually availed of experts to impart knowledge in the American system. Some of the administrators of the University were Americans such as the first Dean of Commerce Dr. Stanley Prescott, a graduate of the Utah State Agricultural College who also became a Ph.D. in the University of Santo Tomas.

During the American period the Sulucan campus, commonly known as the Sampaloc campus was acquired. The Main Building was constructed under the guidance of Fr. Roque Ruaño. The building which was touted as earthquake proof became the iconic symbol of the University. From the time of its inauguration in 1927 to 1945 the University operated from its original campus in Intramuros and its new Sampaloc campus. Along with a new main building a new seminary building was constructed in 1933. Beside it is a gymnasium with the country's first Olympic-sized swimming pool.

Another important event of the 1920s was the entry of women into the university since the opening of the Escuela de Matronas which closed down in 1915. The Faculty of Pharmacy began accepting female students in 1926. The book noted that "there have been no scandals, no dangers, no quarrels noticed by us during those three years" (1924-1927). there has been perfect separation between boys and girls: the girls attended classes on Monday, Wednesday and Friday or the girls come in the morning and the boys in the afternoon or when the girls are in the laboratories and while the boys attend to the lecture. Always and everywhere lady professors were present in lectures or laboratories and until today, no dangers have been noticed in the classes (Vol. 2, p. 327). There might be some danger when both sexes mix in the public streets or in the plazas but this is beyond our concern, just as it is beyond our competence that young people meet and speak and walk at the gates of the churches and in the processions. (Ibid.) With the admission of women, enrolment was bursting at the seams and it was necessary to find a new campus which was fulfilled when the new Sulucan campus was inaugurated in 1927. Soon women began to outnumber men when the College of Education was established.

Guidelines were issued to protect the women which were severe by today's standards. Among which were the provision of having classes for women on Monday and Tuesdays for men and so forth alternating. In academic feats and in the church, the men and women shall have different places. Within the University, they will have their own entry doors in the campus, their own stairways for entering and going out. There will be one priest professor of mature age and of good gifts of social manners who will act as Inspector, Priest-Professor or Dean so that he can always take care of

the convenience of the separation of sexes and avoiding all occasions of danger or scandal; The women will never be alone but always under the view whether of the professor or the instructor or at the least of the classes under severe discipline. (p. 329)

Perhaps the legacy of this severity persisted when coeducational classes were allowed. The book did not mention when this happened. One must imagine that the Dominican fathers were watching over their male and female students. Oral history up to the 1950s and 1960s revealed that meeting of both sexes in the campus was still frowned upon and gestures such as holding hands between male and female students would merit the reproach of the Dominican father who happened to pass by or an appointment to the Dean.

Meanwhile as new colleges have sprouted among them were the colleges of Education, Commerce and Science, old ones also vanished such as the School of Notaries and courses such as Dentistry and Foreign Service vanished. Thomasians continued to lead the country in secular and religious affairs. Among the famous alumni of the period were Manuel Quezon and Sergio Osmeña who became presidents of the Philippine Commonwealth and before that Osmeña was the Speaker of the First Philippine Assembly in 1907 while Quezon became the country's first Senate President in 1916. Jose P. Laurel who was a former student rose to become Secretary of the Interior under the Americans and later President of the Philippine Republic under the Japanese and Senator in the 1950s. Another notable alumni was Claro M. Recto who became President of the 1934 Constitutional Convention and later Foreign Affairs Minister during the Japanese Occupation and Senator during the postwar period. In matters religious a UST alumni Jorge Barlin became the first Filipino bishop who became the shepherd of the diocese of Nueva Caceres. Other Filipino bishops who were UST alumni were Juan Gorordo of Cebu, Fr. Pablo Singzon of Calbayog, Fr. Alfredo Verzosa of Lipa, Fr. Santiago Sancho of Tuguegarao and later Archbishop of Nueva Segovia, Fr. Sofronio Hachang of Calbayog and Fr. Alfredo Obviar of Lucena and Lipa.

The University also produced publications such as the UNITAS which became the scholarly journal of the University, the *Boletín Eclesiástico de Filipinas* which became the official organ of the Archdiocese of Manila. The *Commerce Journal* and the *Varsitarian* which became one of the best college papers published in the Philippines.

The University contributed more saints and martyrs. Earlier a Vietnamese student, Liem de la Paz was canonized. During the Spanish Civil War, some former professors of UST met their deaths as they were killed as martyrs by the Falangists under Gen. Francisco Franco.

In the 1940s the University was plunged into the Second World War. The period was described as "The Greatest Aberration." The adjoining Santo Domingo Church and Convent was destroyed by Japanese bombs on December 27, 1941.

Also destroyed was the nearby Colegio de Santa Rosa, the Colegio de San Juan de Letran and the Beaterio de Santa Catalina. The Dominicans were forced to evacuate to the Sampaloc Campus. The Intramuros campus however continued to function. The Sampaloc Campus on the other hand became an internment camp for Allied civilians from January 4, 1942 to March 1945. Before becoming an internment camp, the UST campus was used as a gathering place for ROTC graduates desiring to become part of the United States Armed Forces in the Far East (USAFPE) right after the outbreak of the war. After the Japanese forces entered Manila on January 2, 1942, the Sampaloc campus became Camp No. 1 or better known as the Santo Tomas Internment Camp (STIC). It should be noted that before the outbreak of the war representatives of the Red Cross asked the Dominican authorities to use the campus as an internment camp for Allied civilians should the Philippines fall into Japanese hands. During the war the STIC accommodated more than 3,700 internees consisting of Americans, British, and even Filipinos of mixed American or British parentage along with other internees at war with the Axis power. They occupied the first two floors of the Main Building, the Annex or Economics Building at the back of the Main Building, the Education Building (now the San Martin Wing of the UST Hospital) and the Gymnasium.

Though Japanese prohibited the mingling of Dominicans and the internees, the latter were allowed to attend religious ceremonies during Sundays. They were relatively well-treated by the Japanese. The greatest worry during the early days of the occupation was boredom. Having little things to do some internees helped catalogue the UST Library collection. Fr. Angel Aparicio the Librarian of the Miguel Benavides Library in his work *Catalogue of Rare Books of the University of Santo Tomas Library*. (Vol. 1. 1492-1600, p. xiv) identified these internees as Leila Maynard and Robert M. Strong catalogued the University's rare collection from April 1943 to February 1945. Contrary to various accounts, classes did continue at the University. While formal classes were suspended in the Sampaloc campus the internees themselves many of whom were academics and students held their own classes in 1942 and the Dominicans provided them with certificates printed in sheepskin. Formal classes continued at the Intramuros campus after the Japanese evacuated the building. There were 525 medical students, consisting of 61 pre-medicine students and 464 medicine proper students. There were also 46 students enrolled in the Ecclesiastical Faculties. The book mentioned the number of graduates from 1942 to 1944. Due to the exigencies of the war formal graduation exercises were held at the University chapel on August 19, 1944 a few days before American bombers began to pound Manila.

Another piece of information that will make any Thomasian proud is the birth of the Parish of the Our Lady of the Most Holy Rosary which is housed at the UST chapel. Perhaps UST is the only University in the Philippines with a parish church inside its campus. Archbishop Michael O' Doherty issued a decree creating the parish on March 28, 1942. The parochial territory covered areas of Sampaloc, Balic-Balic and Espiritu Santo.

Following the bombings of Manila by US planes in September 1944, the Dominicans invited the Archbishop of Manila to transfer to the Central Seminary in Sampaloc. Whether this was intuition or advance information received by the Dominicans, the transfer saved the office of the Archdiocese from utter destruction as Intramuros was 70% destroyed during the Battle for Manila from February to March 1945. Among the items that were saved were the documents of the Archdiocese as its entire archives were transferred to the Sampaloc site. Other items that were saved were vestments, furniture, sacred vessels, liturgical books and the front of the altar of the Archbishop's Palace.

Meanwhile a collection of shanties built by internees sprouted on the grounds of the STIC. The internees began suffering from extreme cases of malnutrition as food became scarce in 1944. A total of 352 internees died while under detention. On February 3, 1945 the internees numbering about 3,800 were liberated by the lead units of the US Army. The Intramuros campus which witnessed academic endeavors by thousands including Filipino heroes, priests and martyrs since 1619 was burned to the ground on orders of the Japanese. Damage was light in the Sampaloc Campus despite having several artillery shells landing in the area. According to Fr. Villarroel, a few internees were killed in UST in 1945. These were twelve men and six women who were killed in the shelling of the campus. If one reads Hartendorps' Santo Tomas Story 247 more internees died in the STIC after being liberated by the Americans. By March 1945 the STIC was dismantled when the last of the internees left.

Despite the difficult postwar conditions the University resumed its functions accepting a total of 1,104 students in 1945. The war resulted in the loss of the San Juan de Dios Hospital where medicine students did their studies. It gave the rise to the UST hospital which was inaugurated on March 7, 1946. With the destruction of the Intramuros campus the statue of the founder of the University, Fr. Miguel de Benavides was moved to the Sampaloc Campus and the portal of the old building was dismantled stone by stone and reinstalled as the Arch of Centuries in front of España Street. The transfer of this iconic arch was accomplished in 1954. The book ends with the inauguration of the Philippine Republic on July 4, 1946.

Outstanding Features of the Book

Fr. Villarroel's book is an excellent source of historical information not only about the University of Santo Tomas but being contextualized in the history of the Philippines, Spain, the United States and the world at large, one see the interconnectedness of these histories and how all of these affected this venerable institution.

The book is styled in a way that it is easy to be read by laymen. It is not a pure hagiography of the Dominicans but a logical narration of events with the actors of history responding to its challenges. The book is well-organized and dripping with data that does not tire the mind but actually stimulates it. The information included

in the book are simply for the purpose of having “nice to know” trivia but a layman can relate events in his time with the historical information mentioned in the book. For instance the word “*barcada*” which appears several times in the book actually referred to companions aboard the ship – from the Spanish “*barco*.” There were several *barcadas* such as those of Fr. Salazar and Fr. Benavides.

In reading about the early Dominicans, laymen like myself may learn about the strict discipline of the life in the order such as Dominican’s day starting at 4:30 in the morning, the discussion of dogmatic theology in the morning and moral theology in the evening. There were also instructions to keep away from laymen, to recite the Divine Office at midnight and complete silence after that. There was also time for siesta and self-contemplation.

Aside from reading the life of the Dominicans as a community, the reader also learns the lives of exemplary Dominicans. Among them was Fr. Miguel de Benavides, an appropriate biography can be found in the book. One can imagine the sacrifices of religious like Fr. Benavides whose order was given the task of proselytizing the Cagayan Valley area. A whole chapter was dedicated (Chapter IV) to discussing the life of Fr. Benavides. Like Fr. Bartolome de las Casas in the Americas, Fr. Benavides along with Fr. de Salazar were defenders of the natives against the abuses of the civil Spanish officials and the encomenderos. Fr. Benavides became the Archbishop of Manila in 1601 but would serve in that capacity only until 1605 because of his death on July 26 that year. Upon realizing that his end was approaching he drew up a will to serve as an endowment for a future institution of learning. He provided the amount of P1,500 which represented his worldly possessions as well as his personal library for the future college.

The book debunks information known by many people. For instance it was commonly believed that Fr. Benavides was the first to start the fund to start a *colegio* which became Santo Tomas. There were actually others who gave donations that gave birth to the college. Among them were Don Andres Hermosa who passed away a year before Archbishop Benavides’ death. He bequeathed the amount of P2,000 in his last will and testament. In 1606, another Spaniard, Don Pablo Rodriguez Araujo donated property worth P3,740 pesos. Archbishop Benavides’ companion and Bishop of Nueva Segovia, Dr. Diego de Soria, gave P3,800 and his personal library. All in all the amount for the building of the college amounted to P11,040, a small amount by today’s standards. From this amount the Dominicans were able to buy parcels of land near the Santo Domingo Convent in Intramuros. After 1613 more donations were granted and these amounted to P11,450 increasing the total donations to P23,290. The amount was spent to acquire the lots on which the college was built.

Fr. Benavides’ will was executed six years after his death on April 28, 1611 by Fr. Bernardo de Santa Catalina who was the only its surviving executor, the other executor, Fr. Nieva, died at sea on the voyage to Mexico. Though legally he can

execute the will by himself, he had the humility to ask permission from his superiors Fr. de Santa Catalina, Fr. Baltasar Fort, Provincial and Fr. Francisco Minayo. He executed the Foundation Act before the notary public Don Juan Illan. The infant college was to be called Colegio de Santo Tomas de Aquino. The college was intended to train young men for religious life and only Spaniards were allowed to enroll. These students had to show proof that they were of the *limpieza de sangre*—pure Spaniards untainted by immorality and should be in all matters licit and honest (*in licitis et honestis*). The college was first housed at the convent of Santo Domingo and began accepting students in 1619. The students must abide with the statutes approved by the Governor General. At that time the Governor General was Diego Fajardo. Aside from the rule that no one shall be accepted unless he had gone the examination of the purity of one's blood (*limpieza de sangre*), the student must take the oath of obedience to the Rector to obey the statutes.

Another aspect that might interest students of history was the part that shows how the University was supported. To support the college as well as the other Dominican institutions, the College of Santo Tomas was supported by proceeds from the products of haciendas or landholdings. The earliest ones were Navotas which were acquired in 1619, Biñan in 1626. The others were Abucay, Bataan, San Pedro Tunasan, Santa Rosa and Calamba which was acquired in 1833. The last one was significant because it would later involve Jose Rizal and the Propaganda Movement in the 19th century. Aside from rent from the land, the university was supported by proceeds of the *tiendas* in the Parian and in Binondo and investments in the Galleon Trade and the Obras Pias. There was little wonder why the University was in dire straits when these lands, known as “friar lands,” were appropriated by the American colonial government so that these could be redistributed to the farmers.

Other old historical beliefs that were debunked include the part that Jose Rizal was not discriminated by the Dominicans but was in fact, favored by them. He was given the rare opportunity to study the preparatory course to medicine or *ampliacion* and first year medicine proper at the same time. Another information is that secularization did not just mean turning over parishes under the regular orders to the seculars but it also extends to converting institutions run by the religious to ones that were ran by laymen. Since the beginning of the Age of Enlightenment there is the constant struggle to secularize institutions and relegate the religious back to the convents and churches. The attempts to secularize the University in the past centuries were proofs of that.

There were a few minor errors in the book. One such error was the mention that Fr. Toribio del Pilar was the uncle of alumnus and hero Marcelo H. del Pilar. Toribio del Pilar was actually Marcelo's brother who was exiled to Guam as a result of the events in 1872. These events saw the execution of Fathers Mariano Gomes, Jose Burgos and Jacinto Zamora. Another was that Manila was occupied by the Americans on May 13, 1898. It was actually happened on August 13 of that year. There were also some errors in the appendices like in the list of UST officials in 2011.

The error was based on an earlier list of UST officials before it was corrected. One feature that was lacking was the absence of an index which would have allowed the reader to go back to the page where he noticed a particular topic or name. Though the book has exhaustive notations through endnotes located at the back of each volume, a bibliography was absent. These shortcomings nonetheless are room for improvement and do not diminish the scholarly value of the book.

There are also questions that remained unanswered in the book. For instance it did not fully explain how Rizal was able to take up the *ampliacion* or the preparatory course to medicine and first year medicine at the same time. This practice was anomalous and could be only done through the intervention of higher authorities like the Spanish Governor General. The book was silent on whether the Governor General was involved in allowing Rizal to take the two courses at the same time. Another mystery was that why no doctoral degrees were given after the execution of Fathers Mariano Gomes, Jacinto Zamora and Jose Burgos in 1872. These questions were answered during an interview with Fr. Villarroel. He said that Rizal managed to have the privilege of taking the *Ampliacion* and the First Year of Medicine at the same time because he asked for it. On the second question regarding the suspension of the issuance of doctoral degrees he said that it was a matter of policy dictated by Spain. If one needs to go deeper in answering these questions or to confirm Fr. Villarroel's answers, one needs to undertake research in the archival documents most likely in the Spanish archives.

The Unfinished Task

Since the coverage of the book itself does not extend to the year of the Quadricentennial of the University, the writing of a third volume is in order. Fr. Villarroel said that he wanted to finish this third volume but Parkinson's disease which became evident in 2007 began to affect his writing. Fr. Villarroel mentioned some fellow Dominicans who could have continued the writing of the history of the University such as Fr. Piñon, Fr. Vargas and Fr. Martin but they have unfortunately passed away. Fr. Villarroel also mentioned some Filipino priests who will be able to finish his work. Among them was Fr. Rolando de la Rosa who wrote a book on the history of the Dominicans in the Philippines. They would be in the best position to talk about the Filipinization of the University.

The missing history comprising sixty-five years from 1946 and 2011 can be a topic for a dissertation. It will contain many topics about UST after the end of the Second World War. These may include the developments in the University after the recognition of Philippine independence from July 4, 1946 to the present. Covered here are the postwar years from 1946 to 1972; UST under the Marcos dictatorship (1972-1986) and the post EDSA years from 1986 to the present. During these times there were various developments which saw the establishment of new colleges and programs; the accession of the first Filipino Rector of the University; how the

University responded to the laws and legislations of the period; what would be the stance of the University on the various issues on those years etc. An interesting aspect would deal with how the University dealt with unionism among the faculty and the non-academic employees. This will include the discussion of collective bargaining agreements. The postwar years also saw the rise of student activism. It would be proper to discuss the role of student organizations and the role of organizations like Pax Romana and Student Catholic Action in dealing with rising secular influences. The postwar history will not be complete without discussing the three visits by two Popes (Pope Paul VI, 1970, Pope John Paul II, 1981 and 1995) and by various dignitaries will have to be narrated. All of these would have to be written in the context of history to show how the University interacted with the events and developments of history. Finally the history of the University will not be complete without discussing the achievements of its graduates and alumni who like the heroes of the past like Fr. Burgos, Rizal, Mabini Quezon and Osmeña, affected the history of the country. The continuing history of the University will narrate the continuing quest for excellence in the face of a globalized environment. It will show the students who excelled in their respective fields as well as extracurricular events. The narration of these stories will have to be supported by documents and eyewitness accounts.

Fr. Villarroel's two-volume work which spanned a total of 335 years from 1611 to 1946 is described as more than outstanding in its detail and research. His work is an outstanding contribution in understanding not only the history of Asia's oldest existing university but also the history of the Philippines as well. Even if the gap to complete the quadricentennial of the University (1946-2011) is only 65 years the historian who would continue Fr. Villarroel's work to the present should do no less. He certainly has very large shoes to fill. ■



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