

philippine studies

Ateneo de Manila University • Loyola Heights, Quezon City • 1108 Philippines

Two Priest Uncles of Margarita Roxas de Ayala

Luciano P.R. Santiago

Philippine Studies vol. 35, no. 1 (1987) 103–110

Copyright © Ateneo de Manila University

Philippine Studies is published by the Ateneo de Manila University. Contents may not be copied or sent via email or other means to multiple sites and posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's written permission. Users may download and print articles for individual, noncommercial use only. However, unless prior permission has been obtained, you may not download an entire issue of a journal, or download multiple copies of articles.

Please contact the publisher for any further use of this work at philstudies@admu.edu.ph.

<http://www.philippinestudies.net>
Fri June 27 13:30:20 2008

Two Priest Uncles of Margarita Roxas de Ayala

LUCIANO P.R. SANTIAGO

All the biographies of Margarita Roxas Ubaldo de Ayala, the foremost woman philanthropist in the Philippines in the nineteenth century affirm that she was a wealthy Spanish lady who crossed the rigid racial lines of her era to devote a good part of her life to help deprived Filipino natives. That her charity was boundless, there is no question whatsoever. Recent research, however, shows that she was not really a full-blooded Spaniard but rather a Spanish-Indio-Chinese mestiza. This probably explains more fully her profound concern for the welfare of her countrymen. It further explains her oriental features and those of her two brothers in extant portraits as well as their maternal surname Ubaldo which was typical of those used by early Filipinos but which was usually used as a first or second name by Spaniards.

Margarita's father, Don Domingo Roxas was a criollo of unknown ancestry from San Miguel, Manila. Consistent with his stand as a fierce advocate of the rights of natives, he married one himself: Maria Saturnina Ubaldo.¹ She was the daughter of an Indio-Chinese mestizo couple of Sta. Cruz Manila, Eustacio Vicente Ubaldo and Maria Vita Vicenta. The inter-racial marriage of Domingo and Saturnina was solemnized on 8 June 1813 at the Sta. Cruz Church by the groom's uncle, Bachiller Don Raymundo Roxas, one of the most eminent members of the Manila clergy at the time, serving concurrently as the proprietary parish priest of Sta. Cruz as well as the secretary of the archdiocese. On the

1. Archives of the Parish of Sta. Cruz, Manila (APSC), *Libros canónicos de Matrimonios* (1810-27) M-1 f. 38.

other hand, the native bride also had a paternal uncle who was a distinguished priest of Manila, Bachiller Don Buenaventura Joseph de Ubaldo, ex-president and director of San Carlos Seminary.²

Saturnina's father had died an impoverished man on 14 December 1791. He had been granted the next day an *entierro de pobre* and buried at the Cemetery of San Juan de Dios.³ Thus, Margarita's background was not completely shielded from poverty and this must have been one of the basic factors which deepened the future philanthropist's sympathy for the poor. It was most probably Padre Buenaventura who supported his niece, Saturnina, and sister-in-law, Maria Vita after this early tragedy which made them quite devoted to the priest.⁴

The couple's first child, Margarita was born in Sta. Cruz in 1815. She was followed by Jose Bonifacio three years later and by Mariano in 1820, as a consequence of whose difficult birth, Saturnina died. Saturnina was survived a few more years by her own mother, Maria Vita, and her two priest-uncles who must have joined hands with Domingo Roxas to assist the three orphans. In fact, Padre Buenaventura, for one, was living with them at the time because of a serious illness.⁵

Since Margarita's life and works have been covered several times before by biographers, there is no need to repeat them here except perhaps to correct certain inaccuracies and add new data such as those presented above. But her two priest-great-uncles who were very well known during their time are almost totally forgotten now. Their brief biographies will also help clarify a vague period in Philippine Church history at the turn of the eighteenth to the nineteenth century.

BACHILLER DON RAYMUNDO ROXAS

The older of the two priests, Padre Raymundo was born in 1759, most probably in Taguig (now part of Metro Manila) where his parents had settled and where his elder brother Dr. Mariano

2. Archives of the Archdiocese of Manila (AAM), *Plan General de almas* (1818).

3. APSC, *Libros Canonicos de entierros*, (1791-1802) D-3. f. 7v.

4. AAM, *Libro del gobierno eclesiástico* (1815-24) f. 319v.

5. *Ibid.*

Maximo Roxas had been born a year earlier.⁶ He had two other brothers named Marcelino and Cayetano and a sister Ignacia.

Raymundo studied at the Colegio de San Juan de Letran and in 1779, he received the degree of Bachelor of Arts from its parent institution, the University of Sto. Tomas.⁷ He then decided to prepare for the priesthood in his Alma Mater. He was subsequently ordained to minor orders and the subdiaconate consecutively on 24 and 25 July 1780 by Archbishop Basilio Sancho de Santas Justa y Rufina (1767-87). The next year, the same prelate elevated him to the diaconate. In preparation for his ordination to the priesthood, the Dominican president of Letran nominated him as the chaplain of the *capellania de misas* of Don Blas de Tamalete in which he was installed on 12 July 1782. Two months later, on the September Ember Days, he was raised to the priestly dignity by Archbishop Sancho who then granted him the license on 21 October 1782, to celebrate mass for six months. This license was renewed for a year on 11 April 1783 and for a progressively longer period of time thereafter.⁸ Since he was one of the few criollo priests in Manila, he was headed for an impressive career in the Church. However, as his career unfolded, it was evident that he deserved every promotion he obtained during his lifetime.

He first rose to prominence in 1794 when he won by competitive examinations the curacy of the prosperous parish of Sta. Cruz, Manila which had been vacated by the promotion of Doctor Don Joseph Xavier de Torres to the pastorship of Binondo. The governor-general as vice-royal patron presented him for this position on 28 January 1794. Archbishop Juan Antonio de Orbigo y Gallego (1789-97) gave him the title of proprietary parish priest of Sta. Cruz two days later and he received collation on 6 February 1794. At this point began his reputation as one of the eloquent preachers of the Manila Cathedral. His moving sermons were reserved for major holydays and schedules well ahead of time at the beginning of each year.⁹

6. Salvador Escoto and John Schumacher, "Filipino Priests of the Archdiocese of Manila, 1782," *Philippine Studies* 24 (1976): 330-43.

7. U.S.T. Alumni Association (USTAA), *Graduate Listing Supplement* (1775-94), MS. (Courtesy of Fr. Fidel Villarroel, OP).

8. AAM. (1772-83) ff. 68v, 69, 107v, 129 and 134; (1789-97) ff. 36v and 144.

9. Ibid. ff. 158v, 246 and 281v.

On 6 November 1800, the cathedral chapter in *sede vacante* appointed him as the collector of the three percent tax on the stipends of the parish priests of the province of Tondo (now roughly the equivalent of Metro Manila) which was applied for the support and maintenance of the Royal Seminary of San Carlos. The long-time president of the seminary then was B.D. Buena-ventura Joseph de Ubaldo with whom he was also working as the censor of books.¹⁰ This suggests that the two priests might have been instrumental in introducing their respective nephew and niece, Domingo Roxas and Maria Saturnina Ubaldo to each other. In fact, it was not uncommon in the nineteenth century for priestly families to be united this way by marriage.

In 1805, the new Archbishop Juan Antonio de Zulaibar (1804-24) named Padre Raymundo secretary of episcopal visitations. The following year, he was promoted to pro-secretary of the archdiocese. It was in the same year that voluntary contributions were solicited among the clergy for the construction of the church of the Hacienda of Dinalupijan in Bataan which had been assigned to the San Carlos Seminary. The clergy tried to outdo one another in munificence but Padre Raymundo loomed as one of the most thoughtful donors, offering a set of sacred vessels apparently worked by master goldsmiths of his parish in Sta. Cruz. Finally in 1807, he became the full-fledged secretary of the archdiocese succeeding Don Jose Maria Uribeondo.¹¹ In that era, the archdiocesan secretary was virtually the executive administrator of the see since the provisor and vicar general concentrated on his functions as the ecclesiastical judge. In this key post, his voluminous correspondence with native priests, whether Indios, Chinese or Spanish mestizos who then constituted the majority of the clergy reveals his just and cordial dealings with them so much so that he deserves to be considered as one of them.¹² Although a fullblooded Spaniard, he was a Filipino in identity and spirit like Pelaez and Burgos who came after him.

He died at the age of sixty-five a few days after New Year's day in 1824. Two months later, Archbishop Zulaibar whom he

10. Ibid. (1797-1803) f. 176; (1804-06) f. 85v.

11. Ibid. f. 149; *Libro de Oficios (LO)* (1804-13) ff. 71v and 106; *Expedientes sobre diferentes materias* (1800-32) A

12. AAM, *Vicarios Foraneos y Curas Párrocos: Comunicaciones* (1805-24)

had served faithfully for twenty years followed him to the next life. Margarita Roxas, his great-niece was nine years old at the time. In his two important posts he was succeeded by native priests: Bachilleres Don Arcadio Aquino as the proprietary pastor of Sta. Cruz and Don Juan Bonifacio as the archdiocesan secretary.¹³

BACHILLER DON BUENAVENTURA JOSEPH DE UBALDO

Four years younger than Padre Raymundo, BD. Buenaventura Joseph Mariano de Ubaldo was born in 1763 during the British occupation (1762-64) most probably in Ermita where his parents resided. Don Vicente Ubaldo and Doña Rosa Bartola who were affluent *mestizos de sangley*, both died in their forties. Besides his brother Eustacio, he had an unmarried sister Doña Vicente Ubaldo.¹⁴

He also studied at the Colegio de San Juan de Letran and was granted the Bachelor of Philosophy degree by the University of Sto. Tomas in 1783.¹⁵ He apparently pursued the theology course at Letran but his ordination records are not available because the last administrative book (1784-87) of Archbishop Sancho where they were entered is now missing. However, the capellania catalogues show that in 1785 he formed a chaplaincy in the name of his deceased parents out of the large tracts of lands (*algunos quiñones*) they had owned "in the barrio of Bacoor and in Las Piñas" worth ₱2,000 which was a princely sum in those days. Archbishop Sancho approved this foundation on 26 January 1785 and installed him as its first chaplain on 4 February with the obligation to celebrate forty masses a year for the eternal repose of his parents' soul. Buenaventura stipulated that after his death, the chaplaincy should devolve to his collateral male descendants, but if none of them would take the Holy Orders, it should be given to any deserving seminarian from their hometown of Ermita.¹⁶ Having thus shown a priestly source of income

13. AAM, *Libro del Gobierno*, (1815-24) ff. 458, 459, and 459v.; *Libro de Ternas* (1805-24).

14. AAM, *Plan General de almas* 1818: *Capellanias de Misas de Candaba* (1910-15) A. The particular documents of Padre Buenaventura are obviously misplaced under this heading and folder.

15. USTAA, *Graduate Listing Supplement*.

16. AAM, *Capellanias de Misas*.

(*congrua*), he was most probably ordained by Archbishop Sancho by 1787 when he turned 24, the minimum age for ordination. He might have been one of the last ordinees of the controversial prelate who died unexpectedly on 15 December 1787.

The earliest extant document that speaks of Buenaventura as a priest is dated 27 April 1790 when Archbishop Orbigo formally erected the second capellania he founded in memory of his deceased sister Vicenta. It had a bigger principal of three thousand pesos based on two houses she had owned which were occupied by Jose Medel and Jose Cañas. He also became its first chaplain with the obligation to say sixty masses a year for the soul of his sister. He again designated his male relatives in the clergy as his successors to it but in their absence, any poor Chinese mestizo seminarian of Letran could be chosen in their stead. In the same year, his license to say Masses and hear confessions were renewed for two years.¹⁷ It was in the following year 1791 that his brother Eustacio died an impoverished man for unknown reasons.

On 13 October 1792, Archbishop Orbigo appointed Padre Buenaventura president of the Royal Seminary of San Carlos apparently in recognition of his academic as well as administrative excellence. As such, he was next in line to the director of the seminary Doctor Don Joseph Patricio de Molina and he was responsible for its financial administration. In the same month his licenses were extended for three years. Starting in 1793, he also became a well-known preacher of the Manila Cathedral like BD. Raymundo Roxas.¹⁸

In 1795, his licenses were further extended for five years and the following year, he was named *censor librorum* of the archdiocese. The day before Christmas of 1798, his superior Doctor Molina died. In order to give the cathedral chapter in sede vacante a free hand in the subsequent administration of the seminary, he tendered his resignation as its president in February 1799 after submitting his annual financial report. But the chapter, prevailed upon him to continue in his position, expressing its "deep appreciation for (his) disinterestedness, efficiency and good management of the welfare of the said seminary." Two years later, how-

17. Ibid.; *Libro del Gobierno* (1789-97) ff. 60v and 66v.

18. Ibid. ff. 119v, 120, 138, 198v and 246; (1797-1803) ff. 112v-113v.

ever, he reiterated his resignation probably for health reasons and two days before Christmas of 1800, he was replaced by Presbitero Don Romualdo Alberto Naval, another Chinese mestizo, as president of San Carlos. Earlier on 26 August 1800, his license had been renewed for eight years.¹⁹

On 21 October 1801, a relative of his, Don Juan Antonio, a mestizo de sangley resident of San Sebastian, Manila nominated him to yet a third capellania which Don Juan had founded in 1785 for his brother, BD. Juan Aniceto. However, the latter died while still a deacon in 1793. He was then succeeded by Don Juan's priest-son, BD. Juan Francisco Rexis who also died in 1800. Padre Buenaventura was the next closest relative of the founder. The principal of this foundation was ₱1,400 with the obligation to say twenty-four masses a year for the souls of the founder and his wife and relatives. Padre Buenaventura presented his nomination papers to this chaplaincy on 23 October to the cathedral chapter which approved it on 6 November and granted him collation the following day.²⁰

In the meantime, the new president of San Carlos Seminary, Padre Naval served in this capacity for only a year after which he was succeeded by Presbitero Don Alberto Rodriguez who likewise served for only a year or two. Thus Padre Buenaventura was again called upon by Archbishop Zulaibar to return to his old post in 1805 to which he magnanimously responded. To honor him, the archbishop extended his sacerdotal licenses "to an indefinite period of time at the will of His Grace." He served the seminary again for eight years until 1813 when he was finally promoted as the director of this beloved institution. He was the first Chinese mestizo priest to hold this office.²¹ It was in this year that his niece, Maria Saturnina married Domingo Roxas.

As recounted earlier, in 1820 when Maria Saturnina died of childbirth, Padre Buenaventura was living as an invalid in her house under the protection of her husband Domingo and her mother, Maria Vita. On 24 July 1820, the latter two begged the

19. Ibid. ff. 169, 174 and 184; (1789-97) ff. 219, 228 and 273.

20. AAM, *Capellanas de Misas* (1844-1901) C; *Libro del Gobierno* (1797-1803) ff. 231-3.

21. AAM. "Opocisiones al curato de Sta. Ana, Pampanga; credenciales del P.D. Romualdo Alberto." *Diligencias de varios conceptos* (1681-1894) B; CCS (1805 and 1808); *Plan General de Almas* (1818); *Libro del Gobierno* (1804-06) f. 157v.

archbishop in his behalf to allow them the privilege of having the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass celebrated by a secular or regular priest in the chapel of their house on holydays of obligation for the spiritual consolation of the priest who was apparently felled by a stroke. The archbishop graciously granted their petition. His sister-in-law, Maria Vita apparently died in the meantime but he himself survived a few more years. On 14 January 1822, he and his nephew-in-law, Domingo, further petitioned the prelate to let them increase the number of masses celebrated in their private chapel to two per holyday which the archbishop disapproved.²² Finally, later in the year, probably because of the continuing decline of his health, he retired as the director of San Carlos Seminary. He was succeeded by the youthful Indio priest, Licenciado Don Macario Gregorio Pimpin on 22 August 1822.²³ He must have died not long after, most probably the following year in the house of Don Domingo Roxas where he had spent the evening of his life in the company of the orphaned children Margarita and her brothers. Padre Raymundo Roxas survived him by barely a year.

22. Ibid. (1815-24) ff. 319v and 373v.

23. Ibid. f. 399v.