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## Jose Rizal and the University of Santo Tomas

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can match the spontaneity and the moving power of the eyewitness, writing at the very moment of happening" (p. 134). Except for some of the chapters from *The Aquinos of Tarlac*, all the articles in the first two sections were written after Ninoy's death. Undeniably, any article written after this would be colored by the assassination. And evidently, almost all the writers in this collection see Ninoy as a martyr. In fact, most of them don't hide the fact that they love Ninoy. And as Cory Aquino, upon seeing her husband's corpse, says in Neni Sta. Romana Cruz' essay, "Life with Ninoy," "He looked much better than I expected. I guess when you love someone, you only see the beautiful" (p. 60).

Furthermore, the book derives its articles from a very limited source—mainly from Joaquin's *The Aquinos of Tarlac, Malaya, Mr. and Ms. Justice and National Reconciliation Series*, and *Veritas*. In Section 2, three of the five prayers come from Cardinal Sin (the other two being from Cory and Paul Aquino); all three poems come from a single collection (*In Memoriam: A Poetic Tribute by Five Filipino Poets*). While Maramba, in her preface claims:

The selections For Ninoy will show the effect and impact of his life and especially of his death upon others, particularly the meaning that his death is assuming for his countrymen. For one thing, the identity between him and the youth has been swift and unsolicited. (p. 22)

there is not a single article from a vernacular newspaper or magazine (after all, the majority of Filipinos obviously do not think in English) nor from any student publication (the U.P.'s *Philippine Collegian* and the Ateneo's *Guidon*, for instance, have devoted much space to Ninoy's life and death).

One therefore gets the feeling that Maramba came out with a collection as limited as this either because she wants to ensure Ninoy's place among the Philippine's greatest heroes as early as possible, or because it would have been too much trouble to read through old copies of *The Philippines Free Press*, the *Weekly Graphic*, *Asia-Philippines Leader*, *Liwayway*, and all the other publications that captured Ninoy alive when Ninoy was alive. Either way, it is not doing Ninoy Aquino the justice his life and death deserve.

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JOSE RIZAL AND THE UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS. By Fidel Villaroel, O.P. Manila: University of Santo Tomás, 1984. xx, 314 pages.

It is about time that this book was written. For too long Filipinos have been misreading the works of Rizal and perhaps even honoring him for the wrong reason. Mistaking his propaganda writings for history, they have naively

accepted the black legend about the friars in the Philippines in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and the decadence of the University of Santo Tomás where Filipino students were neither educated nor respected.

Father Villaroel's *Rizal and the University of Santo Tomás* should serve as a corrective to all that. Simply, without much ado — as is usual among scholars — he presents documentary evidence that shows that Rizal both enjoyed and profited from his years at the university, following his graduation from the Ateneo in 1877. There he obtained good academic grades and became personally friendly with several of the professors, including Dominicans. For their part, the latter reciprocated, with an affection and esteem that years later led the Dominican Archbishop of Manila, Bernardino Nozaleda (1889-1904), to do all he could to win Rizal back to the Church before his execution.

Father Villaroel has not written a biography, but a more limited study of Rizal's student years at the University of Santo Tomás. He divides the subject into twelve chapters, of which the first discusses the period immediately preceding, when Paciano, the national hero's brother, was still there. Contrary to accepted writing, Paciano never failed a subject. He did not finish his studies, most probably because his professor, the liberal Joaquin Pardo de Tavera, was exiled to Guam after the Cavite mutiny. Neither is it true that Father Burgos was Paciano's teacher. Rather they were close associates in the campaign for liberal reforms in the Philippines. Finally, this chapter shows that the two brothers never dropped Mercado as their family name, despite a later disclaimer in a letter to Blumentritt from José. This is a point which is unfortunately left unexplained.

As its title indicates, the book describes the University of Santo Tomás in Rizal's time. Of course, compared with the European centers of learning, the lone Philippine university does not fare too well, just as the entire colony was always a step behind the mother country. One may ask, however, what makes a good school? The author is at pains to show that the University of Santo Tomás was at the vanguard of the neo-thomistic revival in the Philippines, during which two outstanding metaphysicians emerged, the Dominican friars Zeferino Gonzales and Norberto del Prado. Still young when they began their careers at the university in Manila, they were later assigned to teach in Europe where they won world-wide recognition as outstanding Thomists. If this is the norm by which to judge the University of Santo Tomás, it does not convince. Although exaggerated and extreme, the complaint by Rizal and the other propagandists that the physical sciences and modern (to them) technology had not been legitimized as a branch of study at the university, was not without basis. Father Villaroel himself admits that the Philippine schools:

including the University of Santo Tomas, partly as a measure of protection against the dangers of liberalism and partly in strict adherence to the

letter of the Encyclical *Aeterni Patris* and other Papal directives, were so obsessed with keeping their students safe from unChristian principles that they failed to instil in the students proper incentives for positively facing the challenges presented by liberalism, to update their teaching methods and to meet the new currents with more modern weapons. (p. 187)

The black legend of corrupt friars in the Philippines in the latter half of the nineteenth century is traceable to the novels of Rizal. They allegedly had fallen from their high calling as parish priests and academicians and used religion to cloak their malice and to keep themselves in power, mercilessly stepping on the hapless Filipinos. Father Villaroel puts things in their proper perspective. Rizal's *Noli* and *Fili* are propaganda, containing exaggerations and half-truths. And being fiction, they are to be read with understanding, for they do not offer a historical picture. This does not deny that Rizal, like every novelist, used historical situations and *embellished* them to suit his purpose.

One of the most famous incidents in Rizal's literary creations is chapter 13 of the *Fili*, which describes the long-suffering Placido Penitente being crucified by his professor in Physics, Fray Millón (the very names of the characters are symbolic!). Uncritical readers have considered this an autobiographical reminiscence, but Father Villaroel quietly disposes of this interpretation by pointing out that the national hero "did not take *Physics* at the University of Santo Tomás. He had taken that course at the Ateneo de Manila in 1876-1877" (p. 233).

It has been said that in the *Noli*, Rizal wrote like a skillful physician who uses the scalpel with finesse and does not cut flesh unnecessarily to expose the rotten tissue, whereas in the *Fili*, he was like an angry man who has lost control of himself and swings wildly at his opponent. He is extremely agitated in the second novel, bitter, and almost in despair about the future. Much of this was due to his family's problems with the Dominican land owners who had leased them farms in Calamba. The event took place years after the national hero had left the university, and so it is not fully discussed in this book. In my opinion, it was a crucial factor in Rizal's mental attitudes and for a proper evaluation of the second novel, at least, should have been treated in much greater detail. Until now the Filipino reading public is not fully informed about the case.

The above animadversions should in no way diminish or detract from the value of this book. I would even add that it should be made obligatory reading for teachers and students of Rizal.

There are a number of printing errors which ought to be corrected in a second edition. Father Villaroel uses the English "high school" for the Spanish *escuela secundaria*. I wonder if the term "secondary school" would not have been better. Note 18, page 31, mentions a few bibliographical items, to which I would add my article, "The Return of the Jesuits to Min-

danao," published in *Philippine Studies* 26 (1978): 16-34. Likewise, I would add to note 30, page 37, the article by Raul J. Bonoan, S.J., "Rizal's Record at the Ateneo," *Philippine Studies* 27 (1979): 53-73.

Aside from an occasional hispanicism, the book is well written. Father Villaroel deserves our congratulations. This could have been an obnoxious apologia for the Dominicans and the University of Santo Tomás, but he is too much of a historian for that!

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THE STATE OF THE CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES 1850-1875. THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN THE BISHOPS IN THE PHILIPPINES AND THE NUNCIO IN MADRID. By Antolin V. Uy, S. V. D. Tagaytay Studies, 3. Tagaytay City: Divine Word Seminary, 1984. 266 pages, 3 un-numbered leaves.

This study covers a critical quarter-century in the history of Spain and the Philippines. In Spain, the period opens with the 1851 Concordat which somewhat eased relations between the Holy See and Madrid. In 1868, seventeen years later, Queen Isabella II was deposed, ushering in a period of anarchy. Finally, in 1875, when Alfonso XII was proclaimed king, peace returned and monarchy was reestablished.

The Philippines did not remain unaffected by these political upheavals in the peninsula. In quick succession, twenty-five governors-general (eleven, if we discount the *interregna* between the departure of the old and the arrival of the new appointee) were shipped in and out of the country. The longest term lasted only about three years, the shortest a year, perhaps less. And because Philippine appointments depended on the party in power in the capital, it was taken for granted that the succeeding colonial official would undo his predecessor's policies. This constant change and rapid turn-over hardly promoted continuity of policy or good government.

Nor was the Catholic Church spared. "Toleration" does not describe the entire picture, for evidence is strong that in Spain, both liberal and conservative ministries suffered the Church to exist only because it was the priest and the missionary, not the soldier or the bureaucrat, who could best keep the Philippines loyal to Spain. And in the nineteenth century, when the extensive Spanish domains over which "the sun never set," had shrunk to only Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines, regalist interpretation of the *Patronato real* had hardened and the Church, more and more a convenient political tool, was at the mercy of the Crown.