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The University of Santo Tomas in the Twentieth Century

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Book Reviews

THE UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY (*Acta Manilana*, Series B, Number 3 [16], January 1973). By Josefina Lim Pe. Manila: University of Santo Tomas Research Center, 1973. xi, 221, (36) pages.

Among the badly neglected areas of Philippine historiography is that of institutional history, designed to trace the evolution and influence of institutions which have played a major role in the development of Filipino society and culture. Apart from the Catholic Church itself and the older religious orders, no contemporary Philippine institution has a longer continuous existence, and surely few have played a more significant role in Philippine history than the University of Santo Tomas. Unfortunately, until now the nearest approach to such a history of the University in English has been the *Sinopsis histórica documentada de la Universidad de Santo Tomás* (1928) by Father Juan Sánchez y García, O.P., translated into English in 1929 by James H. Bass. The volume under review, although overlapping in part with that of Sánchez, is principally devoted to the subsequent period, one which has seen an extraordinary expansion not only in enrollment but in variety of schools, colleges, departments, and activities of the University.

The study of Professor Lim Pe is divided into four major sections: historical development, cultural development, administration and faculty, and activities and facilities. A series of appendices provides important documents concerning the University, as well as a chronology of main events of the twentieth century and various lists of officials and certain categories of outstanding alumni during this period. This organizational format leads to a considerable amount of repetition in different sections as the same subject is treated under different categories, though a detailed table of contents partially facilitates the location of major subjects.

The study of Professor Lim Pe gives evidence of extensive research and great diligence in treating every aspect of the University, even to such details in part IV as contemporary conditions of employment, benefits, and rights of the University faculty. Unfortunately, however, this wealth of detail, most especially on the very recent period, prevents the adequate treatment of the institution as a whole and its influence on twentieth

century Philippine society. The more properly historical section, especially part II, tends to overwhelm the reader with names and dates, which though undoubtedly useful information, could perhaps have better been presented in schematic tables among the appendices, so as to concentrate on the major lines of development, and to relate this development to Philippine society as a whole, or at least to Philippine educational developments in the period.

Moreover, the historical treatment of the period prior to 1930, largely based on Sánchez-Bass and some manuscript histories from the UST archives, is both uncritical and so synoptic as not infrequently to distort or obscure by its oversimplification. Such controversial matters as the Colegio de San José case, and the government suspension of the newspaper *Libertas*, are examples of complicated events with considerable ramifications in the wider history of the Philippines and the Philippine Church, which receive here a greatly oversimplified and one-sided treatment. Similarly the generalized statements concerning the period 1610—1898 are often so broad as to be incorrect when applied to specific periods within that era. An example would be the statement concerning the admission of native Filipinos to the University (p. 11) which gives no indication that this took place only at the end of the eighteenth century. Similarly there is a failure to understand or properly distinguish the *Colegio de Santo Tomás* from the *University*, an important factor in understanding the problem of the seemingly late admission of Filipinos to the University.

Finally, the weakness of the sections dealing with the earlier period shows itself in such errors as citing as author Father Ferrando Fonseca for Father Juan Ferrando and Father Joaquín Fonseca (p. 210); similarly *Mr. Francisco de Paula Sánchez* for *Father Francisco de Paula Sánchez, S.J.* (p. 215).

This criticism of the book from the point of view of an institutional history should not obscure its value as a useful compilation of a great deal of otherwise difficult to locate information on the University of Santo Tomas in the twentieth century. The various statutes by which the University has been governed, the dates of foundation of the various schools, institutes, publications, activities, etc. of the University, together with the names of the individuals who have participated in or directed these institutions or activities — all these represent considerable diligent research and will be useful to the historian of the twentieth century or the researcher in Philippine education. Though it is to be regretted in the light of the very extensive amount of material assembled here that an index, at least of names, was not included, the detailed table of contents will in part supply for this lack. Just as the chronicles of the religious orders for earlier centuries provide major sources for the critical writing of Philippine history today, it is to be hoped that the diligent effort at assembling the facts of the recent past of the University of Santo Tomas may lead to a critical history of that institution and its important role in the past and present development of Filipino society.

✓ John N. Schumacher