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The Bishops of Nueva Segobia

DOMINGO ABELLA

IN the previous articles in this quarterly¹ I presented the correct chronological lists of prelates endowed with apostolic succession for the See of Manila and the See of Cebu (*Nominis Iesu*). Therein I pointed out that historical accuracy cannot be achieved in this field if we are to make use only of the materials whether printed or manuscript, available in the Philippines today. The confusion among past and present historians and their errors of commission and omission are beyond solution locally.

Much more confused than the episcopal succession of the said sees is that of the See of Nueva Segobia.² If one were to rely solely on the data supplied by the chronicles published through the centuries in this country, in Spain, and even in Rome, he is doomed to wasted effort and will arrive at no definite and certain conclusions. As with the other sixteenth-century dioceses in this country, the published and manuscript episcopal lists for the See of Nueva Segobia differ substantially from each other. Not only on the matter of dates and spelling of names do they disagree, but in many instances one chronicler

¹ VII/4 (October 1959) 435-447; VIII/3 (July 1960) 535-543.

² Although the Spanish name *Segovia* of the city from which this ecclesiastical province got its own is now spelled with a "v", it has been known in official Vatican documents since its erection as "Ecclesia Novae Segobie" (with a "b"). The documents show that when Philip II recommended to the pope its establishment as a bishopric he called its capital city in the Philippines "Nueva Segobia" (old spelling) which the Vatican followed.

would include one or more names which another would either utterly ignore or, in lieu of them, declare the see to be vacant. Then there are the contradictory claims. One author will say that a certain prelate was Bishop of Nueva Segobia, another will list him among the Bishops of Nueva Cáceres.

There are four names which will most likely cause trouble to a researcher attempting to construct an episcopal list for the See of Nueva Segobia. Without going into details, let us take a brief glance at them and put the record straight.

RODRIGO DE LA CUEVA GIRÓN

The confusion of historians regarding this ecclesiastic is amazing indeed. While there are some who allege that he was Bishop of Nueva Segobia,³ others, the majority, register him as bishop of (Nueva) Cáceres.⁴ The confusion is worse confounded by an eminent author, Father Pablo Pastells, who while describing De la Cueva Girón in one part of his work as Bishop of Nueva Segobia, in another part of the same work quotes a document wherein he is said to be "bishop-elect of Camarines [Cáceres]".⁵ In the face of these contrary claims we may ask: Of which diocese was this man bishop? Moreover, another factor, a negative one, must be taken into consideration. A third group of authors does not include De la Cueva Girón in their episcopal lists either for the See of Nueva Segobia or for that of Cáceres.⁶ This gives rise to a further question: Was he bishop at all?

³ Mariano Ponce, *Efemérides Filipinas* (Manila, 1914), p. 238; Zoilo Galang, *Encyclopedia of the Philippines* (Manila, 1935), Vol. II, part III, p. 336.

⁴ Martín F. Venago, *Ang Mga Paring Pilipino* (Manila, 1929), p. 90; W. C. Repetti, *The College of San Jose* (Manila, 1947), p. 247; Salvador Pons y Torres, *El Clero Secular Filipino* (Manila, 1900), p. 125, who claims with assurance that "he was elected and consecrated bishop of Nueva Cáceres"; J. C. de Veyra, *La Hispanidad en Filipinas* (Madrid, 1961), p. 18.

⁵ Colin Pastells, *Labor Evangélica* (Barcelona, 1904), vol. II, p. 261, footnote 1, and p. 485.

⁶ Delgado, *Historia* (Manila, 1892), pp. 177-180 and pp. 181-183; Buceta and Bravo, *Diccionario* (Madrid, 1851), II. 365 and 367-368; Alcázar, *Historia* (Manila, 1895), pp. 195-196.

LUCAS ARQUERO DE ROBLES

There seems to be unanimity among the most reputable historians, religious and lay, past and present, that this churchman was Bishop of Nueva Segobia. Two ecclesiastical historians, namely, the Jesuit Juan Delgado who wrote in Manila in the middle of the eighteenth century and the Benedictine Pius Bonifacious Gams who wrote in Ratisbon in the second half of last century,⁷ include Arquero de Robles in their respective episcopal lists for Nueva Segobia as the successor of Millán de Poblete. They are joined in this by other historians, such as Buzeta and Bravo, and Alcázar. Likewise, the *Official Catholic Directory*, whose episcopal list for Nueva Segobia must have been based on Philippine material, includes Arquero de Robles in its chronology, saying that he "took possession in 1677".⁸ The same claim is made in the annual *Guía de Forasteros de las Islas Filipinas* of the last century.⁹ Finally, more recent local historians, such as Venago, Zaide and De Veyra, echo this claim and state that "Lucas Arquera [sic]" was "Obispo sa Kagayan ng taong 1677" (Venago); that he was "bishop of Nueva Segobia in 1676" (Zaide)¹⁰ and that he was "preconizado obispo de Nueva Segobia en 1677" (De Veyra). All of these writers are in error, as we shall presently see. The danger is that future historians might take this agreement among so many authorities, past and present, foreign and local as sufficient guarantee of the claim's reliability. As a matter of fact its frequent repetition in published works has already given it the semblance of truth.

FRANCISCO MIRÓ

While most historians before the present century did not include Miró in their lists of bishops of Nueva Segobia, we find him thus described by several recent writers such as Pons y

⁷ *Series Episcoporum* (Ratisbon, 1873) II, 114.

⁸ Published in New York for 1903, p. 705.

⁹ Manila, 1839, and subsequent issues.

¹⁰ *Catholicism in the Philippines* (Manila, 1937), p. 182.

Torres, Venago, Galang, and Morrow.¹¹ The *Official Catholic Directory* does the same and states that he "took possession in 1858". In view of this discrepancy, whom are we to believe, the old or the new historians?

HERNANDO LOBO DE CASTRILLO

The case of this prelate is the opposite of that of Lucas Arquero de Robles. While there is unanimity in the claim of historians that the latter was bishop of Nueva Segobia, there seems to be unanimity in ignoring the former in their episcopal lists for Nueva Segobia. However, Hernando Lobo is listed in the episcopal succession for Nueva Segobia, after Fernando Montero de Espinosa, by Pius Bonifacius Gams. Because of the prestige and authority enjoyed by this author in matters of episcopal succession, and the high regard given by ecclesiastical scholars to his work *Series Episcoporum Ecclesiae Catholicae* which, as its name indicates, is devoted exclusively to putting aright the chronological sequence of the bishops of all the Catholic dioceses the world over, one is compelled to give serious consideration to his assertion. Are we to take this writer's word against all those others who have totally ignored the name of the prelate in question?

OTHER DISCREPANCIES

The confusion just described is not all. It approaches complete chaos if we add the discrepancies among the various episcopal lists for the See of Nueva Segobia with regard to other names. For instance, Gams omits the names of Manuel del Río y Flores, Cayetano Pallás, and Rafael Masoliver, which

¹¹ Louis L. R. Morrow and Norberto Romuáldez, *History* (Manila, 1936), pp. 269-270; Pons y Torres and Venago erroneously call him "Francisco Rayo". Francisco Miró was an Augustinian who administered the diocese of Nueva Segobia *sede vacante* from 23 August 1858 to 16 August 1862; at this latter date he returned to Spain and left the administration of the diocese to his acting Provisor, the secular priest Juan Osset, according to a MS. examined by me in the Augustinian Archives at Valladolid, Spain. It adds that Fr. Miró retired to the Augustinian province of Valencia where he died "about the years 1880-1882" and admits that, regarding his supposed episcopal promotion, "his bulls were never issued".

are included by others; on the other hand, Buzeta-Bravo and Alcázar do not include in their catalogues the names of Fernando Montero de Espinosa and Manuel del Río y Flores, and this same omission occurs in all the issues of the *Guía de Forasteros*. Apparently, the *Official Catholic Directory* of the United States had these publications as its sources of information, for it likewise eliminated the said names from its list of bishops of Nueva Segobia.

Faced with these contradictions among the reference materials available here in the Philippines, one must seek abroad the primary sources from which to construct a correct episcopal list. Only after such laborious research is it possible to settle all doubts and verify all conjectures. This I have done; and on the basis of the documents I have consulted I can now state with finality that the four ecclesiastics whose names are listed above must be eliminated from the episcopal list of the See of Nueva Segobia. The first three, namely, Rodrigo de la Cueva Girón, Lucas Arquero de Robles and Francisco Miró, were never bishops. They were never promoted to the episcopal dignity by consistorial action at the Vatican. The fact is that De la Cueva Girón was *presented* by the King to succeed Bishop Cárdenas; Lucas Arquero de Robles¹² was likewise *presented* to succeed Bishop Poblete; and the Augustinian Francisco Miró to succeed Bishop Barreiro. But all three died before the royal presentations were acted upon by the Holy See. Upon their deaths, other ecclesiastics were presented. These became, therefore, upon their consistorial promotion, the canonical successors of Cardenas, Poblete, and Barreiro, and this is made clear in their bulls of their promotion.

With respect to the case of Hernando Lobo (sometimes called Fermín de Lobo or Fernando Lobo) the royal documents show that this Carmelite was at first *presented* to the See of Nueva Segobia in 1649 to succeed Bishop Montero upon the

¹² The above (note 11) is also true of Lucas Arquero de Robles. According to the royal documents, he administered the diocese of Nueva Segobia *sede vacante* from 6 November 1677 until his death on 9 August 1678 "without having received his bulls" for his episcopal promotion (AGI, Seville, Legajo *Filipinas*, 1029).

latter's promotion to the archbishopric of Manila; hence the inclusion of his name by Gams. But it is clear from the documents that soon thereafter his papers were withdrawn and he was presented instead for the See of Puerto Rico in the same year — a detail missed by Gams. When the Vatican acted upon the royal presentation it was his second designation that was confirmed in consistory.¹³ He was therefore never given canonical promotion as bishop of Nueva Segobia.

Thus, it is clear from the foregoing that any description of any of the above five churchmen as "bishops of Nueva Segobia" must be considered erroneos. Their names should therefore be eliminated outright from any episcopal list of the See of Nueva Segobia. On the other hand, as the Vatican sources certify, the omission from such a list of the names of Manuel del Río y Flores, Cayetano Pallás, Rafael Masoliver, and Fernando Montero is a mistake, for they were rightful bishops of Nueva Segobia.

CORRECTED LIST

Thus, the correct chronological list of prelates of the See of Nueva Segobia — erected as a diocese on 14 August 1595, and raised to the rank of an archdiocese on 29 June 1599 — is as follows:

Prelate	Date of Consistorial Promotion
1. MIGUEL DE BENAVIDES, Dominican ¹⁴	30 August 1595
2. DIEGO DE SORIA, Dominican	15 November 1602
3. MIGUEL GARCÍA SERRANO, Augustinian ¹⁵	3 August 1616
4. JUAN DE RENTERÍA, of the secular clergy ¹⁶	5 March 1618
5. HERNANDO GUERRERO, Augustian ¹⁷	17 May 1627

¹³ For his activities as Bishop of Puerto Rico, see AGI *Legajos Santo Domingo*, 173 and 2517.

¹⁴ Transferred to the see of Manila in 1602.

¹⁵ Transferred to the see of Manila in 1618.

¹⁶ His name is recorded by some authors as "Juan de Retten".

¹⁷ Transferred to the see of Manila in 1634.

6. JUAN DIEGO ADUARTE, Dominican	23 January 1634
7. FERNANDO MONTERO DE ESPINOSA, of the secular clergy ¹⁸	16 July 1640
8. RODRIGO DE CÁRDENAS, Dominican	20 May 1650
9. JOSÉ MILLÁN DE POBLETE, of the clergy ¹⁹	27 May 1675
10. FRANCISCO PIZARRO DE ORELLANA, of the secular clergy	27 May 1680
11. DIEGO GOROE YRALA, Dominican	1 June 1699
12. PEDRO MEJORADA, Dominican	1 October 1717
13. GERÓNIMO DE HERRERA Y LÓPEZ, of the secular clergy	20 November 1724
14. MANUEL DEL RÍO Y FLORES, Dominican	16 March 1744
15. JUAN DE ARECHEDERRA, Dominican	19 January 1750
16. JUAN DE LA FUENTE YEPEZ, of the secular clergy	28 May 1753
17. BERARDO USTARIZ, Dominican	19 December 1763
18. MIGUEL GARCÍA DE SAN ESTEBAN, Dominican	19 September 1768
19. JUAN RUIZ DE SAN AGUSTÍN, Augustinian Recollect	25 June 1784
20. AGUSTÍN PEDRO BLAQUIER, Augustinian	20 July 1801
21. CAYETANO PALLÁS, Dominican	6 October 1806
22. FRANCISCO ALBÁN, Dominican	14 April 1817
23. RAFAEL MASOLIVER, Dominican	19 January 1846
24. VICENTE BARREIRO, Augustinian ²⁰	14 April 1848
25. JUAN JOSÉ ARAGONÉS, Augustinian	27 March 1865

¹⁸ Transferred to the see of Manila in 1646.

¹⁹ Note must be taken of the erroneous claim made by José Toribio Medina that he was "promoted to Bishop of Camarines" in the year 1671, *El Tribunal del Santo Oficio*, (Santiago de Chile, 1899), p. 94, footnote.

²⁰ Transferred from the see of (Nueva) Cáceres of which he was bishop since 1846.

26. MARIANO CUARTERO DEL PILAR, Augustinian Recollect	16 January 1874
27. JOSÉ HEVIA CAMPOMANES, Dominican ²¹	24 May 1889
28. DENIS J. DOUGHERTY, of the secular clergy ²²	25 June 1903
29. JAMES JORDAN CARROLL, of the secular clergy ²³	29 April 1909
30. PETER JOSEPH HURTH, of the Congregation of the Holy Cross ²⁴	30 December 1912
31. SANTIAGO C. SANCHO, of the secular clergy, ²⁵ as first Archbishop	22 April 1927 29 June 1951

In conclusion, it must be noted that until the end of Spanish rule in the Philippines, from Benavides to Campomanes, all the prelates who headed the diocese of Nueva Segobia were, quite naturally, full-blooded Spaniards. They were *peninsulares* except for five *criollos* from Mexico, Rentería, Poblete, Pizarro, Gorospe, and Herrera; one *criollo* from Perú, Cárdenas; and one from Venezuela, Arechederra. Let no one deceive himself, as some historians do, with the wishful thought that there were Filipinos among them.

In a future article in this review I hope to present the episcopal list of the fourth Philippine diocese, (Nueva) Cáceres, founded in the sixteenth century.

²¹ Resigned in 1903 together with all other Spanish bishops in the Philippines on the occasion of the change of regime and as a result of the Taft-Rampolla agreement of that year. He was later given the see of Badajoz in Spain.

²² Transferred to the see of Jaro in 1908.

²³ Resigned in 1912; made titular bishop of Metelopolis.

²⁴ Formerly bishop of Dacca (in East Bengal, India) from 1894; resigned, made titular bishop of Metelopolis. Resigned the see of Nueva Segobia in 1926 and made titular archbishop of Bostra.

²⁵ Transferred from the see of Tuguegarao of which he was made bishop in 1917.

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