

# philippine studies

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## **Juan Villaverde, O.P. Missionary and RoadBuilder 1841-1897**

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forts to prepare Catholic teachers for grass roots evangelization in the Archdiocese of Manila.

Part Four of *Educational Alternatives* offers possible management models and strategies. In the first of five articles, Dr. Liceria Soriano, drawing upon her experience as Director of INNOTECH, identifies alternative delivery systems for basic education. Then, Bro. Rolando Dizon, President of La Salle Greenhills and overall editor of the collection, describes alternative sources for financing private education and the experience of setting up a housing project for six private sectarian schools. Next, Fr. Miguel Varela, Director of the CEAP Planning Office, outlines a strategy for regionalization which could improve the management of the Philippine Educational system. The editor then describes the Service Contract Scheme whereby the public and private sectors collaborate to reduce the increased costs of education. Finally, Dr. Alexander Calata of the Center for Educational Measurement discusses the evaluation of alternative educational programs for the future—especially, education for values and education for economy.

As is true of most collections, not all articles are evenly written nor of equal weight. And aside from the section on teacher education, the collection is thin on higher education. The inclusion of Mahar Mangahas' paper on the Philippines in the year 2000 and some input from the Association of Private Colleges of Arts and Sciences (APCAS) would have strengthened the perspective of the tertiary sector. However, educators and students alike will find that there is much food for thought in this collection of educational alternatives for the twenty-first century.

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JUAN VILLAVERDE, O. P. MISSIONARY AND ROAD-BUILDER  
 1841-1897, A HISTORY OF THE DOMINICAN MISSIONS IN IFUGAO.  
 [ORIENTALIA DOMINICANA, No. 1]. By Guillermo Tejón, O. P. Mani-  
 la: University of Santo Tomás, 1982. xv, 379 pages. Plates, maps.

They said he had magical powers. He not only could look like a clean-shaven youth and change within the second to appear as a long-bearded old man, but could also disappear at will. By spreading a handkerchief on the ground and uttering the proper formula, he could travel anywhere, born aloft on his own flying carpet. And he was immune to danger! Unarmed, he could drive his horses through a hostile crowd of Igorot warriors, much like Jesus long ago whom the angry Nazarenes had failed to throw down their hill.

Who was this man? Fr. Juan Villaverde, O. P., a Dominican missionary for thirty years in what is now the province of Nueva Vizcaya. In 1867, less than ten months after arriving in Manila, he was assigned to that Dominican mission. He was only 26 years old, a priest for less than two years. For the next thirty years, he gave the best of himself to the non-Christian people of northern Luzon. And when he died on the way to Spain in 1897, stories about him began to spread, almost all of them exaggerated, but clear signs that he had left a deep imprint in the hearts and minds of the people he had come to love and tried to bring to Christ. Today, one of the towns in the province of Nueva Vizcaya is called Villaverde in his honor. Furthermore he has left a not insignificant list of writings and maps which now help us to understand the history and culture of the people he had lived for.

Originally written as a doctoral dissertation, the best thing about this book is that it whets the intellectual appetite of the reader and makes him want to know more about Fr. Villaverde. His missionary life is detailed in twenty-six chapters (which could be merged into fewer, though longer ones) which make it easy to follow his external career. One agrees with the author that he was an outstanding Dominican missionary, unfortunately unknown to Filipinos. But precisely because his life is clearly delineated, the reader feels he wants to know him more intimately.

Mainly because of the lack of missionaries, Nueva Vizcaya and the entire Cagayan Valley region were still an isolated enclave unchanged by Christianity in the second half of the nineteenth century. When Fr. Villaverde arrived there in 1867, he realized the immediate need for a network of roads to facilitate his own missionary task and to bring the people into contact with the rest of Philippine society, a necessary step for their socioeconomic development. Like other missionaries elsewhere, he also planned to establish permanent communities for his prospective converts. Some of these have become towns today; others disappeared, such as those in which he had tried to resettle the mountain dwellers. Unaccustomed to the lowland climate, they went back to the familiar surroundings of their central Cordillera heights. But the road-building program he initiated was a success. Had he had all the resources needed, he could have accomplished much more. (In passing, it is of interest to add that on more than one occasion funds for his roads were donated by the Dominican Order, so that the failure of the colonial treasury to provide him with money did not unduly block his plans. This should give pause to those who blithely mouth unsubstantiated generalizations about the untold wealth of the Dominicans and the other friar orders.) Still, what he did was more than enough for a single person to do. The Americans who came at the turn of the century were practically unanimous in their praise for his work, and made use of his plans and numerous maps for their own road-building projects. Today many of the roads in north-eastern Luzon are modern improvements of the original Villaverde "trails."

Reading the amazing story of this Dominican friar who had never attended an engineering school, one asks what inner power had so energized him. This is, unfortunately, one of the weaker points in this biography. Emphasis is on Villaverde's external work. Except for a few incidents that offer some kind of a glimpse into his soul (pp. 159-160, 225, 239), there is very little character portrayal. But the evidence is there: his reaction when faced with difficulties or negatively criticized by his fellow Dominicans; his correspondence (admittedly limited) with some nuns in Spain; the catechetical lessons he prepared, and the few personal prayers he wrote, etc. A fellow Dominican (as the author is) can readily empathize and understand this aspect of their life; but for the rest of us, this has to be explicated. Otherwise, the view is incomplete and one is left with the impression of a wooden character.

The author deserves congratulations for a meticulously researched book. One hopes that the series of publications to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the coming of the Dominicans to the Philippines (1587-1987), of which this is the initial volume, will continue with the same kind of scholarship as that here presented by Fr. Tejon. It will not only fill the gaps in our knowledge of Philippine mission history and the growth of our towns, but will also correct the stereotype of the friar pictured in the angry novels of Rizal.

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FR. BERNARDINO MELENDREAS, OFM (1815-1867), Y SU OBRA POETICA SOBRE LA REGION DEL BICOL (FILIPINAS). By Apolinar Pastrana Riol, OFM. Separata from *Missionalia Hispanica* 39 (1982): 85-181.

What is unfortunate about *Handiong*, the epic of Kabikolan's ancient heroes, is that the Bikol original had been apparently lost. What we have is the Spanish translation—or version—by Fray Jose Castaño, O.F.M., which is just the first part of what was probably a long epic.

This is how the editors of a mimeographed volume, entitled "Readings on Bikol Culture" (City of Naga: University of Nueva Caceres, 1972, 265 pages), introduce what has been believed to be a Spanish translation or version of a Bikol epic variously known as *Handiong*; *Ibalong*; *Ibal*, etc., with an English translation by poet Luis G. Dato, and annotations by Ignacio Meliton. The book under review says that there was no "Bikol original," nor is the Spanish a "translation" nor a "version." It was not by "Fray Jose Castaño," and was of course no "long epic."