
This thorough study by the present Rector of the University of Santo Tomas of the admission of native Filipinos to the Dominican order was originally his doctoral dissertation at the Katolieke Universiteit Leuven. It is an important book not only for the history of the Dominican order, but for the history of the Philippine church as a whole. There is general agreement among Philippine church historians that the key reason for most of the disasters that befell the Philippine church and for the weaknesses it still experiences is to be found in the gross failure of the otherwise magnificent Spanish missionary enterprise to form, or permit the formation of, an adequate native clergy.

But, as Fr. de la Rosa notes, the historians who have documented this fact — particularly Horacio de la Costa, Luciano Santiago, and this reviewer — have all primarily studied the Filipino secular clergy. Little has been done on the even more notorious failure to admit Filipinos into the religious orders, except for a brief sketch by myself.

Wisely, the author begins with a detailed survey of the policy and practice in Mexico of each of the orders which later sent missionaries to the Philippines. Though there were substantial differences in the Mexican and Philippine churches, one cannot
ignore the ongoing influence that the Mexican experience had on the Spanish missionaries in the Philippines. This chapter synthesizes a large amount of literature on the subject to an extent that has not previously been done, at least in English.

The second chapter, after surveying the policy and practice of the other orders in the Philippines, along the lines of my article "Early Filipino Jesuits: 1593-1930" (Philippine Studies 29 [1981]: 271-308), concentrates on the Santísimo Rosario province of the Dominicans. Two major points deserve attention here. One is the multinational character of the Philippine provinces of the friar orders, especially the Dominicans. The other is the difficulty frequently encountered in identifying the ethnic origin of particular individuals, given the fact that many native Filipinos (indios) adopted or were given Spanish surnames.

Though rooted in the Philippines, this Dominican province of Santísimo Rosario, like those of the other friar orders (not the Jesuits, whose administrative structure was different) was multinational in character. Its provincial superior and its educational institutions were in the Philippines, as were the great majority of its members. But from very early the Spanish Philippine Dominicans, like the other friar orders, also sent missionaries to Japan, China, and in the Dominican case, Tonkin (modern Vietnam). The irony of this situation was that Japanese, Chinese, and Vietnamese were not only admitted to the Dominican province, though Filipinos were not, but in many cases the non-Filipino Asians were sent to Manila for their studies for the priesthood. Most notable of these was Bishop Gregory Lo, O.P. (called Lopez by the Spaniards), the first native Chinese bishop and the only one until the twentieth century. Though, as De la Rosa notes, it is difficult to be sure in all cases which of these non-Filipino Asians were priests and which were cooperator brothers, at times the native Chinese or Vietnamese Dominicans in those countries exceeded the Spanish missionaries. This makes the contrast with the Philippines all the more glaring.

One factor in this disparity, which De la Rosa does not fail to note, but which does not excuse fully the failure of the Spanish Philippine missionaries, was the fact that the Dominicans in the Philippines were working under the Patronato Real, while those in Vietnam and China were under the jurisdiction of the Con-
gregation "de Propaganda Fide" [today, the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples]. Whereas the Patronato Real every-
where tended to let political considerations prevail over the Church policy of forming a native clergy as soon as possible, the policy of Propaganda was from the beginning favorable to a native clergy. The fact that missionaries in Vietnam and China were not in any sense agents of a colonial government certainly was a helpful factor toward an enlightened policy.

In the rest of the chapter, Fr. de la Rosa examines individually the possible native Filipinos admitted to the orders, with par-
ticular attention to the Dominicans. He is very aware of the problem concerning the term natural — at times accompanied by a more determinate ethnic qualification, but sometimes not. In itself the term simply indicated that the person was a native of a particular place, without necessarily indicating whether born of Spanish, mestizo, or Indio blood. Moreover, there were a certain number of terceros and donados admitted to the Do-
minicans, as well as to other orders, but whatever the precise status these terms implied in a particular order, none were priests, and none were full-fledged members of the orders in the sense that lay brothers (legos) were. Nor is it often possible to determine with certainty their ethnic identity. De la Rosa's conclusion is that only three or possibly four Chinese mestizos can be shown to have been admitted to the Dominican order as priests in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. One of these, originally a secular priest admitted to the order in 1846, may possibly have been an Indio. The author believes the preponderance of evidence shows him to have been a Chinese mestizo; this reviewer would incline to accept the judgment of Fr. Pablo Fernández that he was a pure Indio, and the only Indio priest ever admitted in Spanish times, but all of us agree that full certainty is not possible.

Summing up, these two chapters, which form more than half the text of the book, are thorough and well-argued. In the absence of similar studies for the other orders, they form as definitive a picture of Filipino membership in the religious orders during the Spanish period as we are likely to see in the near future.

The subsequent chapters on the twentieth century, though no
less important, are more calculated to arouse controversy. After treating summarily the rise of nationalism and the Revolution, the author makes a somewhat harsh, but in my opinion accurate, explanation of the antifriar character of the Revolution, quite different from that of the Spanish Dominican provincial of the time. (It may be noted that in this summary of the nationalist context are the few errors of fact found in the book, generally taken from secondary sources. They are in practically all cases minor and do not affect the thesis of the book.)

He then briefly sketches the effort to train Spanish Dominicans for the Philippines in New Orleans in the United States, encouraged by the first Apostolic Delegate to the Philippines, Archbishop Placide L. Chapelle of that archdiocese. With more stringent immigration laws in the 1920s and a growing fear of the alleged secular atmosphere of America, the decision was made to open a house of formation in Hong Kong for the young Spanish Dominicans being prepared for the Asian missions. In spite of residual prejudices, pressure from the Holy See and from the generalate of the order had established a policy of admitting Filipinos by the time the Convent of St. Albert the Great was opened in 1935, with 26 Spanish Dominican students. The following year the first Asian candidates entered, two of them Filipinos. Though interrupted by the vicissitudes of the war, St. Albert’s continued to be the house of formation for Filipino Dominicans until the establishment of a house of formation in Santo Domingo Convent in Quezon City in 1959.

The final chapter, detailing the events leading to the establishment of a Philippine Dominican Province in 1971, is inevitably the most delicate and the one in need of further research and documentation before it can be called definitive. Fr. de la Rosa places the movement among the Filipino Dominicans to have their own province, independent of the Spanish-dominated Santísimo Rosario province, within the context of the growing nationalist movements of the 1950s and 1960s, particularly within the Church. The principal of these preludes was the so-called “Filipinization movement” of the late 1950s, which included the “Rizal bill,” various vindictive efforts to nationalize all Catholic schools, President Carlos Garcia’s “Filipino First” policy, and the “Memorial” of 1957, addressed by six Filipino priests from the
four friar orders, the SVDs, and the Jesuits, in which Fr. Hilario Lim, S.J., together with Fr. Ambrosio Manaligod, SVD, took the most prominent role. Though these nationalist manifestations were to a greater or less degree connected, and some were motivated by reasons other than pure nationalism, the most relevant, and, in the opinion of this reviewer, most justified in its beginnings, was the last-named. However, the whole story is not here.

Naturally, given his topic, Fr. de la Rosa treats it chiefly from the Dominican point of view and available documentation. This, however, can be deceptive to the incautious reader. As is clear from the chapter, Fr. Benito Vargas, O.P., though signing the original memorial to the Pope on the failure of some orders to encourage Filipino vocations, clearly dissociated himself from later extremisms of Fr. Hilario Lim, for which the latter was eventually dismissed from the Society of Jesus. It is significant that Fr. Vargas was the only one of the six signers who did not leave, or was not dismissed from, his order, and reading the foreword that he wrote to Fr. de la Rosa's book just before his death in 1990, one can understand the combination of concern for justice and obedience which the book shows to have won him the revered place he held among his fellow Filipino (and no doubt many Spanish) Dominicans.

The entire episode still waits for a thorough historical treatment. One may note also that the statistics for 1958 on p. 200, though accurate, need further explanation. Though the point of the small total proportion of Filipinos to foreign missionaries is rightly made, one cannot compare the numbers or proportions of Filipinos in orders which had only arrived in the Philippines a decade or two, or even a few years, before that date, with the old Spanish orders. And as a matter of fact, the proportion of Filipino Dominicans to foreign missionaries was second only to the Jesuits, and in absolute numbers, third to the SVDs. Fr. de la Rosa, of course, does not say or even imply anything different, but the uninformed reader could easily draw unwarranted conclusions from the statistical table without further explanation.

This preliminary discussion on the nationalist movements, however, is merely the context within which the Dominican Filipinization Movement beginning about 1969 is narrated. Given
the relative brevity of this section in comparison with earlier chapters of the book, the reader will perhaps look for further explanations and documentation, and be tempted to read between the lines a personal interpretation. On the other hand, given the closeness of the events to the present, and the fact that many of those involved are still living and active, it would be unreasonable to expect a full and definitive discussion and interpretation. Though the author is frank in relating the various frictions which arose over the division of the province and its financial assets, an outsider like the reviewer can only judge that matters easily open to controversy and insinuations are with a few minor exceptions handled by Fr. de la Rosa with the proper restraint and professionalism. Perhaps not all will agree, but it is inevitable that historians will differ at certain points.

Looking at the book as a whole, this reviewer can only repeat his judgment that it is an important contribution to the history of the Philippine church and not merely of the Dominicans. Though, as has been indicated at certain points in this review, further research and clarification is needed on some events of the twentieth century, the opening of the Vatican Archives for the period to 1922 calls for an intensified effort to do for the history of the Philippine church what has been done to a large extent by historians for the political history up to 1946 and, to a certain extent, beyond that. These were difficult times and there is much that needs to be narrated and explained which will not be creditable to Spanish religious orders and Filipino secular and regular clergy, to Spanish, American, Irish, and Filipino bishops, and to “Catholic,” Masonic, Aglipay, and other politicians and prominent laymen, who used religion for their own purposes. One hopes that this will be done in the spirit of sensationalism or scandal, but of understanding the roots of present Church and national problems. One hopes too that the recognition of the limitations and even the malice of some in the Church will not fail to give equal credit to what was during three centuries, in spite of all its defects, one of the great missionary enterprises in the history of the Church. Too long has Philippine church history, especially of the Spanish period, alternated between hagiography and triumphalism on the one side, and abuse and polemic on the other. Fr. de la Rosa’s book is a welcome addition to different and more fruitful trend.