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Scholarly Publishing in the Philippines: A Review and Assessment

FELIXBERTO C. STA. MARIA

Scholarly publishing in the Philippines has obscure beginnings. According to historical records, the first printing press was introduced into the country in 1606 by Spanish missionaries. Five years later another press was brought over to Manila from Japan by the Augustinian Order. With such equipment, the religious scholars presumably undertook the earliest form of publishing in the colony.

Historians are agreed, nevertheless, that the first book ever published in the Philippines, *Doctrina Christiana*, antedated the arrival of the first printing press.¹ This book came out in 1593, more than 70 years after the Spaniards first stumbled into the archipelago in their search for new trade routes to the East. The *Doctrina* was printed through the xylographic method, a process involving the hand-carving of woodblocks for every page of text and illustration.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Since then the Philippines, like any developing nation, has undergone a complex transformation, subsequently coming under the colonial rule of the United States and, for a brief period, Japan. Political independence was established in 1946 after the Second World War. The country has since been a sovereign republic.

There is no intention in this paper to make a comprehensive and detailed review of publishing in the Philippines. What will be

1. Teodoro Agoncillo and Oscar Alfonso, *History of the Filipino People* (Quezon City: Malaya Books, Inc., 1971), p. 116.

attempted is a discussion of the process through which the present state of scholarly publishing in the country has evolved. Related problems and prospects will also be discussed.

The Augustinians, who brought over the printing press from Japan in 1611, sold the equipment to the Jesuits in 1622. By then, however, the crude press of the College of Our Lady of the Rosary (later to become the University of Santo Tomas) had been in continuous operation for 29 years. In 1898 a Spanish historian was quoted as saying: "Thanks to the friars, printing came to exist in Manila ahead of Philadelphia (1668), Calcutta (1780), Bombay (1792), Sidney (1795), and other cities of great importance."²

The earliest books printed in Manila dealt on the subjects of religion, linguistics, history, biography, and philosophy, later on including such topics as literature, education, economics, and science. By 1800 about 500 titles of books had been printed in the Philippines.³

Spain's rule was overthrown by a revolution in 1898, only to be supplanted immediately after by the American regime. Before relinquishing sovereignty over the Filipinos, Spain was able to implant firmly the Christian religion in the Philippines. She also established the rudiments of an educational system which, although elitist in concept, was responsible for giving rise to a small intelligentsia. This tiny group of intellectuals, who pursued their higher studies in Europe, manned the propaganda war against Spain toward the end of the nineteenth century.

Inevitably, the writings that poured out of the pens of the learned Filipinos at this time were in the service of nationalism. Little, if any, augmented the existing body of scientific knowledge. Even Jose Rizal, a medical doctor by profession and the greatest of the expatriates, devoted his prodigious literary talent to the furtherance of the propaganda movement.

Technically speaking, higher education started in the Philip-

2. Gregorio Zaide, *History of the Philippines* (Manila: Philippine Education Co., 1939), p. 195.

3. Conrado Benitez, *History of the Philippines* (Revised edition; Boston: Ginn and Company, 1954), p. 167.

pires with the founding of the University of Santo Tomas in 1611, several years ahead of Harvard. Its press, as already mentioned, began operation even earlier — in 1593 — and has been in existence ever since. This fact prompted the historian Retana to say that the Santo Tomas press has been in continuous operation under the same ownership and management for a longer time than any other in the world.⁴ It must be added, however, that the press today is not organized as a university press in the accepted sense of the word, and probably never had been.⁵

For many centuries the first book published, *Doctrina Christiana*, was missing, along with other early succeeding publications. In 1946 a copy of the book was found by chance in Paris. The United States Library of Congress, which acquired the rare volume, issued a facsimile reprint in 1947.⁶

Unlike the *Doctrina* which was the product of primitive methods of printing, subsequent books were printed from movable types. One of these was a book published in 1610 entitled *Librong Pag-aaralan ng Mga Tagalog ng Uicang Castila*,⁷ by Tomas Pinpin, the first Filipino printer. Pinpin is said to have learned his trade from the Chinese, and he apprenticed in the printing shops of Bataan and Manila, including the press of Santo Tomas University.

Aside from the religious books and pamphlets dealing with the Holy Mass, the lives of saints, and the catechism, only a few publications of a secular character were produced during the Spanish regime. These were grammar books, histories, and dictionaries of the native languages. In the modern sense of the word, these works were the first scholarly publications since they

4. *Ibid.*

5. Technically a commercial printing press, the University of Santo Tomas Press became a corporation in 1958. Its line of business includes publishing, printing, binding, offset, and letterpress. As a "university press" it prints the official publications of the University and publishes on a selective basis scholarly manuscripts recommended by the University Publications Office or the Office of Public Affairs.

6. Benitez, *op. cit.*, p. 168.

7. Freely translated as "A Guidebook on the Spanish Language for Filipinos."

were printed in the interest of scholarship and for a limited audience.

JOURNALISM AND SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING

At this point a word should be said about journalism in the Philippines, for its growth closely paralleled that of scholarly publishing in the country. The first newspaper, *Succesos Felices*, published by Tomas Pinpin in 1667, "antedated by half a century Benjamin Harris' *Publick Occurrences Both Foreign and Domestick*, which the English refugee from London put out on September 25, 1690 in Boston."⁸ The latter was the first newspaper to be published in the American colonies, and like the *Succesos*, was an irregularly published paper.

In the Philippines, as in many other countries, the popularization of newspapers and magazines contributed greatly to the emancipation of the people from illiteracy and ignorance. Thus was journalism a handmaiden of scholarly achievement. In later years, the daily newspapers and their magazine supplements would become an extensive vehicle of expression of Filipino intellectuals. It was not unusual to find — as indeed it is common today — an occasional scholarly work rewritten in the popular style in such periodicals.

During the American regime, newspapers and magazines again marked the beginnings of Filipino effort in the field of publication. The first civilian government under the Americans was established in 1902, following the cessation of armed hostilities between the native population and the new colonizers. English, the new language, had to be taught in earnest and accepted by the people. It was obviously a difficult task for both American and Filipino, but one that had to be done. By 1905 the first Filipino periodical in English, *The Filipino Students' Magazine*, appeared in Manila, followed closely by *The Filipino* in 1906. Later, in quick succession, the following also made their bow on the literary scene: *The College Folio* (1910), the *Filipino People* (1912), *The Philippine Law Journal* (1914), *The Independent*

8. Jose Luna Castro, *The Manila Times Handbook of Journalism* (Quezon City: Ken, Inc., 1966), p. 2.

(1915), the *Philippine Columbian Notes* (1915), and the *Philippine Journal of Education*.⁹

Although strictly speaking many of such magazines were popular reading material, they carried a considerable amount of scholarly thinking. A number of them, no doubt, were transparently propaganda in orientation. Toward the decade of the thirties, some journals which reflected the new culture were launched into the scene. Among such publications were the *Philippine Collegian* (1922) and the *Philippine Review*, which was published both in English and Spanish. The latter publication was an organ of opinion for the intellectual elite of the country. Also published during this period were the *Philippine Forum* (1935), the *National Review* (1936), and the *Vanguard* (1938).

It was about this time in the country's history that literature began to be published in more permanent book or pamphlet form. Included prominently in the list of early books were Harriot E. Fansler's *Types of Prose Narrative* (1911), Dean S. Fansler's *Metrical Romances in the Philippines* (1916), and Mable Cook Cole's *Philippine Folk Tales* (1916). All of these books were authored by Americans; Filipino writers would come out with their own books after 1920.¹⁰

The Second World War interrupted the American era in the Philippines between 1941 and 1945. Japan occupied the Philippines for more than three years. During this period there was hardly any publishing done in the country, since wartime conditions made it impossible for any scholarly activity to flourish. The few publications that appeared at this time, mainly in the nature of periodicals, were under the control of the military. Nevertheless, such publications as *Philippine Review* (1943), *Pillars* (1944), and *The Republic* (1944), circulated in Manila. None of them could properly be considered "scholarly."

A FLOWERING OF LEARNED JOURNALS

After the liberation, upon reestablishment of the Philippine

9. See Leopoldo Y. Yabes, "Philippine Literature in English, 1898—1957, A Bibliographical Survey," *Social Sciences and Humanities Review* xxii (December, 1957), pp. 344—351.

10. *Ibid.*

government, newspapers and magazines again took the lead. Repressed politically during the Japanese occupation, and starved for intellectual freedom, the Filipinos resumed publication with a vengeance. At one time there were so many newspapers and magazines in the market that the law of supply and demand killed a number of the periodicals in due time.

There was, on the other hand, a flowering of learned publications. In addition to such prewar journals as the *Philippine History Quarterly* (1919), *Studies in Social Sciences* (1927), the *Philippine Social Science Review* (1929), the *Bulletin of the Philippine Historical Society* (1914), the following publications appeared in the area of the humanities and social sciences: *The Journal of East Asiatic Studies* (1951), the *Far Eastern University Faculty Journal* (1952), the *Philippine Studies* (1953), the *Silliman Journal* (1954), the *Bulletin of the Philippine Historical Association* (1957), and others. In the category of the "less learned publications" were the following: the *National Forum* (1922), the *National Teachers College Journal* (1939), the *Diliman Review* (1953), the *Philippine Sociological Review* (1953), and *Comment* (1956). "This classification should not, of course, be taken in a very strict sense," Yabes asserts. "Even in publications classified as learned, one occasionally finds popular articles and in the less learned publications one sometimes meets with learned dissertation."¹¹

THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Today the Philippines, with its population of 39 million and a literacy of about 75%, is among the fastest-changing societies in Asia. Educationally, it ranks high among Asian nations, and its school system has a broad democratic base.

In 1970-71 there were approximately 32,635 educational institutions, both public and private, with an aggregate enrollment of 10,174,426. There were a total of 246,262 teachers in all schools at the primary and elementary levels. City and municipal libraries, barrio libraries, and reading stations under the

11. *Ibid.*

National Library numbered 425 in various parts of the country during the same year.

According to UNESCO statistics, the Philippines ranks second only to the United States in higher education enrollment per 100,000 population. In 1965–1966 the Philippines had 1,560 students of college age actually enrolled in colleges and universities, as against 2,840 of the United States, 1,488 of Israel, 1,159 of Australia, and 1,140 of Japan.¹²

In terms of actual enrollment, the Philippines in 1970–71 had 795,310 students enrolled in colleges and universities of all types, distributed in about 670 institutions.¹³ The private sector accounts for 92% of all collegiate enrollment, the remaining 8% being distributed in 20 state-supported colleges, universities, and agricultural and technical schools all over the country.

Education on the lower levels, particularly in the primary and the elementary, is largely government-run, the Philippine Constitution providing for compulsory free elementary education to all citizens. In 1970 elementary enrollment was 7,338,970; on the secondary school level, on the other hand, there were 2,163,820 students enrolled in the same year. Together, the first and second level education enrollment in 1965 in Philippine schools — again in proportion to population — represented a ratio lower than that of the advanced countries of England, Japan, Australia, Germany, and Sweden, but above such countries as Israel, Italy, Spain, and Mexico.¹⁴

The Philippine Government allots an average of one-third of its annual budget for public education — a remarkable record anywhere in the world. Furthermore, this tremendous sum does not include the huge investment of the private sector which, as already pointed out, represents 92% of the national effort in higher education.

With its massive educational system, the Philippines would

12. Most of these data were taken from the UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1968, as cited by the Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education, in its *Education Survey Report* (December, 1970).

13. The number of universities and colleges for 1967–68 was 668, according to the UNESCO Information Center in Manila.

14. Data represent the year 1965.

normally have a well developed publishing industry. Textbook requirements for public elementary and secondary schools alone were 60,000,000 in 1970-71. This, according to the Secretary of Education, was a "hopelessly large number" which the government cannot supply.¹⁵

In the field of scholarly publishing where there is no organized effort on a national scale, the situation is no better. Research and allied activities manage on the whole to proceed at a reasonable pace. Publication in this area is done either through scholarly journals or by individual initiative working through commercial printers.

THE UNIVERSITY PRESSES

University press publishing is confined to a few institutions of higher learning; in fact, except for the University of the Philippines and Ateneo de Manila University, there is no evidence that publishing of this nature exists in Greater Manila.

Formally organized in March, 1965, the University of the Philippines Press aims to provide "a concrete and deliberately conceived facility for the encouragement, publication, and dissemination of scholarly, creative and scientific volumes, monographs and tracts (which) commercial publishers would not ordinarily undertake to publish."

Its brochure lists the following major objectives: (1) through its publishing program, to provide an effective means of making readily available the results of completed research; (2) to provide technical assistance in book design, copy-reading, art work and manage printing facilities in order to ensure top quality printing of press publications; (4) through its Promotions and Distribution Section, to carry out a sales promotion program of press publications; and (5) within its capacity and available resources, to service the printing needs of the University.

The U.P. Press operates its own printery, unlike many university presses which look with disfavor upon the acquisition of

15. Juan L. Manuel, "Philippine Education in the '70's: A Chance for Reordering and Redirection," *Fookien Times Yearbook* (Manila: Fookien Times Publishing Co., Inc., 1971), pp. 217-218.

printing equipment, for economic reasons. Its printing plant was largely donated by the Rockefeller Foundation, and augmented by government reparations equipment from Japan.

There is no dearth of material for publication, since the U.P. Press receives a large number of manuscripts for consideration. The lack of resources makes impossible, however, the publication of most of such manuscripts. In the past few years, the Press has averaged about seven or eight books a year. Subjects ranged from fiction and poetry to economics and physics. In addition, the Press also published scholarly journals, monographs, and newsletters.

The only other university press in operation is that of Ateneo de Manila University. Formerly a simple publications office, the A.U.P. was formally organized in June 1972, although it has a long list of published scholarly works to its credit. It seems that a few years ago, a representative of the American Association of University Presses made a visit of scholarly publishing houses in the Philippines as part of a general survey of Asia. The representative was apparently impressed by the work being done by the Ateneo de Manila press, because it was on the basis of his report that the A.U.P. was honored with an invitation to represent scholarly publishing in the Philippines in the Conference of University Presses in Asia and the Pacific Area.

As the publishing arm of the University, the A.U.P. aims to encourage and stimulate research as well as other forms of scholarly activity in the humanities, social sciences, and the physical and natural sciences, by making its facilities of publication available to scholars. It also aims to promote and to put within the reach of the general public books, journals, and periodicals which would otherwise be unavailable to them, by means of systematic marketing and distribution. Finally, the A.U.P. intends to help solve the pressing problem of textbook production on all levels of the Philippine school system.

Three formerly separate units of the Ateneo de Manila University were formally merged into the present University Press. These were the Publications Office, the *Philippine Studies*, and the publishing section of the Institute of Philippine Culture. The

press has departments of editing, production, and sales headed by experienced people.

Manuscripts submitted for publication are referred to "readers" in or outside the University faculty for their comment. On the basis of such written comment by recognized authorities in their respective disciplines, the Board decides to accept or reject a work. The Board may also on its own review manuscripts for publication.

TEXTBOOK WRITING AND PRODUCTION

In the past six or seven years of its operation, the Ateneo press has turned out some of the most significant scholarly works in the Philippines. A few of such works, including a history of Communism in the Philippines by a former ranking member of the Communist Party, became best sellers; some scholarly papers from the Institute of Philippine Culture are still in great demand locally and abroad. More recently, a grade school series on social studies and a textbook in physics have been selling like proverbial hot cakes.

Perhaps the phenomenal success of some textbooks illuminates a rather unique aspect of the A.U.P.'s role. Recognizing the peculiar needs of the burgeoning educational system, the A.U.P. has boldly assumed as one of its objectives the alleviation of the critical textbook shortage in the country today. Textbook writing and production is undoubtedly a not too "scholarly" endeavor; it is a task generally relegated by the university presses of advanced countries to commercial publishers. In the Philippines, most textbooks are printed and published by such commercial printers, either on their own or through contract with the government. There is never enough of the commodity, however, and A.U.P.'s decision to go into textbook production is calculated in a small way to help the developing Philippine society in this area.

PROBLEMS OF SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING

What are the pressing problems of scholarly publishing in the Philippines?

First and probably foremost is the inadequacy of economic resources. This means that whereas there is an abundance of scholarly material, there is not enough money for publishing. The experience of the Ateneo de Manila University Press is that three or four manuscripts are turned down for every one accepted for publication, and not necessarily because of poor quality of scholarship or writing. And even manuscripts accepted sometimes have to wait for months and even years before they can be scheduled for production because of the limited funding of the press. This same problem plagues the University of the Philippines Press.

The second problem, which is related to the first, is the prohibitive cost of printing in the Philippines. Most printing supplies, including paper, are still imported. Only labor is fairly inexpensive in terms of Western standards, but even this commodity is fast becoming costly. The result of all this is that a fair-sized volume that comes out of the production line costs so much that it has to be priced almost beyond the reach of the ordinary buyer. In recent years the Philippines has started to produce newsprint and other papers of better quality. Within a few years, hopefully, the price of the commodity will come down and have a favorable effect on book publishing in the country.

A third problem can probably be best described as one of attitudes; that is, the Filipino is neither a book buyer nor a book reader by habit. Unfortunately, no statistics are available at the moment, although generally acceptable figures tend to support the assertion. Compared to many countries of the world with a comparable literacy rate and educational system, the Philippines seems to lag behind in the magnitude of book readership.

Why is this so? The answer is not simple. As a matter of fact, an analysis of the problem would bring out a paradoxical situation in which the well developed educational system of the Philippines, contrary to world experience, is not paralleled by a highly developed economy. Whereas literacy stands at about 75% — definitely one of the highest in Asia — the gross national product (GNP) stands at less than US\$200 per capita.¹⁶ This

16. The National Economic Council of the Philippines computed the gross national product (GNP) at 39.6 billion (Philippine pesos) in 1970,

figure is below that of many progressive Asian and Latin American countries. It is quite possible, therefore, that the failure of scholarly publishing to reach a satisfactory level in relation to higher education in the Philippines may be due in the final analysis to the weak economic position of the country. This certainly is not a problem unique to the Philippines, but it is a situation that must be recognized and remedied.

A fourth problem revolves around the issue of language as medium of scholarship. Like India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and other similar countries in Southeast Asia where there is a great number of languages and dialects used within the national society, the Philippines suffers from the lack of a common language. Attempts to develop a common national tongue in the past 30 years or so have not fared very well. At present Pilipino, the national language, is widely used in mass media and is taught as a required subject in the lower levels of the school system. English is, nevertheless, still the favored medium of communication in commerce and industry, as well as the language of deliberation in courts and in the recent Constitutional Convention. To further complicate the problem, Spanish is accepted as an official language in some cases, and is a required course in college.

Scholarly publishing in the Philippines today is carried on predominantly in English, particularly in the realm of the social and physical sciences. There seems to be no other choice. But unless the language problem is resolved, the uncertainty of the future of English, as well as the inadequacy of Pilipino as a medium of communication in the higher levels of the educational system, will continue to pose a serious threat to scholarly publishing in the Philippines. Again this is a vexing problem to which no clear solution appears to be forthcoming.

There are minor related problems. Considering the geographical fact that the Philippines is an archipelago of some 7,000 islands, one can appreciate the difficulty of distribution, even if for practical purposes only about 20 of these islands are signif-

representing a per capita rate of about US\$170 at the current exchange rate of the peso to the dollar.

icantly populated. Newspapers and magazines with a stable circulation have solved the transportation problem either by using the ordinary means of conveyance or putting up their own facilities. In the case of book publishers, however, where the volume of business is not as big, no efficient and economical way is readily available for the dissemination of the product. The usual outlets of scholarly publications, as in the case of the Ateneo de Manila University Press, are the book stores in the Greater Manila area and other cities and centers of population. For the more technical or highly specialized publications, such as for example bibliographical collections, linguistics dictionaries, and the like, sales are generally confined to university libraries and book collectors.

The A.U.P. in this connection has contracts with book dealers in the United States for the distribution and sale of its products outside the Philippines. The mechanism of exchange with scholarly publications, both at home and abroad, exists through arrangements with libraries, and in the case of the A.U.P., with the Ateneo Library itself. Presumably the other universities have similar arrangements.

In recent years another problem, largely temporary in character, has arisen. The Philippine peso was floated in 1970. As a result of this and of the subsequent devaluation or revaluation of hard international currencies, estimating costs has become difficult. Confronted with fluctuating costs of labor and materials, printers cannot hold price lines for a long time. Such uncertainty hinders long-range planning.

OUTSIDE THE UNIVERSITIES

Apart from the two university presses discussed, there are several institutions of higher learning in the Philippines which publish the scholarly works of their faculty on some kind of informal arrangement. Already cited is the University of Santo Tomas which uses its printing press, a commercial press affiliated with the university, for publishing selected scholarly works. Similarly, several universities in Greater Manila, the Visayas, and Mindanao — among them Araneta University Foundation, Silliman University, Mindanao State University, and Xavier Univer-

sity — undertake scholarly publishing on a limited scale outside the formal arrangements of a university press.

Beyond the university premises, is there any publishing done of a scholarly or academic character? The answer is yes. The Greater Manila area telephone directory, for instance, lists no less than 47 publishing houses; five of these are classified as "book publishers." An inquiry into the actual publishing activities of these commercial publishing houses revealed that some of them specialize in producing textbooks on all levels of the educational system, a few on law and business textbooks, and still others on any kind of books, whether scholarly or popular, which are potentially good sellers. The structure of the Philippine publishing industry is thus one wherein the scholar, even against great odds, can find some opportunity for disseminating his ideas. Of course, as pointed out, the limitations of commercial publishing, with its orientation toward profit, severely restrict such opportunity.

LEARNED SOCIETIES AND JOURNALS

The existence of numerous learned and professional journals in various fields of study is an encouraging note in the Philippine setting. The preponderance of scholarly thought and experimental findings are in fact recorded in journals and periodicals rather than in permanent book form. About 200 journals and quarterlies, in most cases representing learned societies, are published in the Philippines; 50% of these are devoted to scholarly research in such fields as philosophy, sociology, psychology, law, literature, science, business, religion, education, and economics. Among the better known periodicals are the following: *Asian Studies*, *Philippine Sociological Review*, *Philippine Studies*, *Acta Medica Philippina*, *Philippine Economics Journal*, *Philippine Journal of Science*, *Philippine Statistician*, *Diliman Review*, *Social Science and Humanities Review*, *Unitas*, *Philippine Journal of Linguistics*, *Ateneo Law Journal*, *Chemists' Quarterly*, *Philippine Journal for Language Teaching*, and *Philippine Biota*.

Most of the above-cited journals are quarterlies; a few appear bimonthly. Some, however, make a brief appearance on the scene

and stop publication after a few issues, probably because the publishers cannot meet the rising costs of printing.

There are in the Philippines some foundations, mostly privately-endowed, which encourage research. Some of them, being supported by industry, specialize in certain areas, although in general there are few restrictions. Worthy of mention are such foreign-owned organizations as Asia Foundation, Ford Foundation, and Rockefeller Foundation; local foundations, such as the J.P. Laurel Foundation, the Filipinas Foundation, Inc., the J.P. Rizal Foundation, the Eugenio Lopez Foundation, the Fund for Assistance to Private Education, and the National Science Development Board. The latter, a government agency, supports 60 science research projects and centers. In addition, there are research centers, such as the Faura Research Center, the Communication Research Center, the Family Planning Organization of the Philippines, and various other medical research institutes.

THE FUTURE OF UNIVERSITY PRESS PUBLISHING

What is the future of scholarly publishing in the country?

At present the Philippines is in a temporary state of emergency, the President of the Republic having declared martial law on September 21, 1972. The emergency presumably does not change the nature of the problems of scholarly publishing. This type of publishing is directly related to the development of institutions of higher learning, more particularly on the graduate level where most research is done. If such institutions continue to grow, as expected, scholarly publishing has a reasonably bright future. One thing is clear: as a gauge of the intellectual vitality of a nation, scholarly publishing cannot rise above its source — the community of scholars in the country's universities.

The Philippines does have an advantage in this sense, as borne out by comparative statistics of enrollment and educational facilities. The one other important factor of economics however poses a countervailing force which may well decide the issue.

The question is whether the Filipino can be molded into a regular book reader, eager and able to buy intellectual reading

materials along with his three square meals a day. This is a more complex issue not within the purview of this paper. What enables a basically agricultural country to harness its genius and its resources to move into the realm of massive industrialization and progress is the puzzle confronting many Asian nations today. Somehow, the future of scholarly publishing — or any publishing for that matter — will be determined by the answer to this question.