The Bishops of Nueva Segobia

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The Bishops of Nueva Segobia

DOMINGO ABELLA

In the previous articles in this quarterly\(^1\) I presented the correct chronological lists of prelates endowed with apostolic succession for the See of Manila and the See of Cebu (Nominitis 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, others, the majority, register him as bishop of (Nueva) Cáceres. 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]”. 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. This gives rise to a further question: Was he bishop at all?

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.
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 Bonifacius 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.

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. 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

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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”.

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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 informa-
tion, for it likewise eliminated the said names from its list of
bishops of Nueva Segobia.

Faced with these contradictions among the reference ma-
terials available here in the Philippines, one must seek abroad
the primary sources from which to construct a correct episco-
pal 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 Robles 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, there-
fore, upon their consistorial promotion, the canonical succes-
sors 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

11 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 promo-
tion (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.\textsuperscript{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 erroneous. 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.

\textbf{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 1959 — is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prelate</th>
<th>Date of Consistorial Promotion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Miguel de Benavides, Dominican\textsuperscript{14}</td>
<td>30 August 1595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Diego de Soria, Dominican</td>
<td>15 November 1602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Miguel García Serrano, Augustinian\textsuperscript{15}</td>
<td>3 August 1616</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Juan de Rentería, of the secular clergy\textsuperscript{16}</td>
<td>5 March 1618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Hernando Guerrero, Augustinian\textsuperscript{17}</td>
<td>17 May 1627</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{13} For his activities as Bishop of Puerto Rico, see AGI \textit{Legados Santo Domingo}, 173 and 2517.
\textsuperscript{14} Transferred to the see of Manila in 1602.
\textsuperscript{15} Transferred to the see of Manila in 1618.
\textsuperscript{16} His name is recorded by some authors as “Juan de Retten”.
\textsuperscript{17} Transferred to the see of Manila in 1634.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Appointed Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Juan Diego Aduarte</strong>, Dominican</td>
<td>23 January 1634</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td><strong>Fernando Montero de Espinosa</strong>, of the secular clergy&lt;sup&gt;15&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>16 July 1640</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Rodrigo de Cárdenas</strong>, Dominican</td>
<td>20 May 1650</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td><strong>José Millán de Poblete</strong>, of the clergy&lt;sup&gt;19&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>27 May 1675</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td><strong>Francisco Pizarro de Orellana</strong>, of the secular clergy</td>
<td>27 May 1680</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td><strong>Diego Gorope Yrala</strong>, Dominican</td>
<td>1 June 1699</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td><strong>Pedro Mejorada</strong>, Dominican</td>
<td>1 October 1717</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td><strong>Gerónimo de Herrera y López</strong>, of the secular clergy</td>
<td>20 November 1724</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td><strong>Manuel del Río y Flores</strong>, Dominican</td>
<td>16 March 1744</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td><strong>Juan de Arechederra</strong>, Dominican</td>
<td>19 January 1750</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td><strong>Juan de la Fuente Yepez</strong>, of the secular clergy</td>
<td>28 May 1753</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td><strong>Berardo Ustariz</strong>, Dominican</td>
<td>19 December 1763</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td><strong>Miguel García de San Esteban</strong>, Dominican</td>
<td>19 September 1768</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td><strong>Juan Ruiz de San Agustín</strong>, Augustinian Recollect</td>
<td>25 June 1784</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td><strong>Agustín Pedro Blaquier</strong>, Augustinian</td>
<td>20 July 1801</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td><strong>Cayetano Pallás</strong>, Dominican</td>
<td>6 October 1806</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td><strong>Francisco Albán</strong>, Dominican</td>
<td>14 April 1817</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td><strong>Rafael Masoliver</strong>, Dominican</td>
<td>19 January 1846</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td><strong>Vicente Barreiro</strong>, Augustinian&lt;sup&gt;20&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>14 April 1848</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td><strong>Juan José Aragonés</strong>, Augustinian</td>
<td>27 March 1865</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<sup>15</sup> Transferred to the see of Manila in 1646.

<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> Transferred from the see of (Nueva) Cáceres of which he was bishop since 1846.
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, Renteria, 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.

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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 Metellopolis.

24 Formerly bishop of Dacca (in East Bengal, India) from 1894; resigned, made titular bishop of Metellopolis. 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.


Conrad Eubel and others, Hierarchia catholica medii et recentoris aevi, vols. 4 and 5 (1592-1730).


Acta Apostolicae Sedis, Commentarium Officiale, Romae, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1909—