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The Succession of Bishops of Cebu

DOMINGO ABELLA

IN my article on "Episcopal Succession in the Philippines", published earlier in this quarterly,¹ I remarked that the See of Manila "has the least confused episcopal series." Only in one case were the old chroniclers in error; namely, in the case of Bishop Ignacio de Salamanca of Cebu (1792-1802), whom they invariably included in the series of Archbishops of Manila. As I pointed out in my article, such inclusion is erroneous if we are to follow, as we should, the norms established by Vatican authorities. For although Bishop Salamanca had been "elected" by the King of Spain to succeed Archbishop Orbigo, and a decree to that effect was actually issued and was received by the nominee, the See of Manila was never conferred on him by consistorial action. But royal elections under the *patronato* have no canonical validity unless ratified by Rome.

Much more confused than that of Manila is the episcopal succession of the See of Cebu, or of the Name of Jesus (*Nominis Iesu*). This confusion arises from the numerous discrepancies among ecclesiastical chroniclers and annalists. Not only do our standard authors differ as to dates but also as to names; thus, we read "Augusto" for Agurto, "Aras" for Arce, "Dayot" for Bayot, "Saenz" for Sanz, "Osio" for Ocio, "Jornada" for Foronda, "Ezpeleta" for Espeleta, etc. A far more serious error,

¹ VII/4 (October 1959), 435-447.

however, is the inclusion of names in the episcopal succession list which have no right to be there.

Two cases in point are those of Pedro Matías de Andrade and Jaime Gil de Orduña. The first, who was Bishop of (Nueva) Cáceres,² was never canonically appointed to the See of Cebu. The second was never raised to the episcopal dignity at all, as the Vatican records show.³ However, both administered the Diocese of Cebu for some years by royal decree, and this must have been the source of confusion.

But more interesting than these is the curious case of Bishops Pedro Sanz de la Vega Landaverde Perulero, a Mercedarian, and Sebastián de Foronda, an Augustinian. Most chroniclers list them as Bishops of Cebu, the latter succeeding the former.⁴ In the course of checking our episcopal succession lists against the documentary sources, I discovered a veritable pile of documents concerning these two prelates in the Vatican, Seville and Mexico City. In Seville alone it took me the better part of a month to acquaint myself thoroughly, from primary sources, with the problems created by their appointment. This research, however, now enables us properly to ascertain their position in the episcopal succession of the See of Cebu.

I cannot sufficiently stress the fact that on a number of topics we cannot place entire reliance on the chroniclers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and even on histories of later date which merely restate the data provided by the chronicles. Even in such a relatively simple matter as the succession

² See my *BIKOL ANNALS I* (Manila, 1954), 44-45, 159.

³ Venago (*ANG MGA PARING PILIPINO*, Manila, 1929) and Pons y Torres (*EL CLERO SECULAR FILIPINO*, Manila, 1900) add one more name to their list of bishops of Cebu — that of Dr. Mariano García. He was never a bishop.

⁴ Delgado, *HISTORIA*; Buzeta & Bravo, *DICCIONARIO*; Gams, *SERIES EPISCOPORUM*; Alcázar, *HISTORIA*; *LA ESTRELLA DE ANTIPOLLO*, Manila, 1909; *OFFICIAL CATHOLIC DIRECTORY*, New York, 1931; etc. Not even a later bishop of Cebu, Romero de Madridejos, escaped the mistake of including Foronda among his predecessors when he published in 1883-84 his work entitled *PASTORALES... DE ESTA DIOCESIS DE CEBU* in two volumes.

of a given bishopric certitude is not assured without reference to the original documents preserved in official archives. This is true anywhere, but particularly in our country, where the authors of so-called history books, in their eagerness to publish, place complete and exclusive reliance on secondary materials of dubious value.

The salient facts regarding the episode mentioned above are as follows. On 13 November 1703 Landaverde was recommended to the King of Spain by the Council of the Indies. His name stood at the head of a list of candidates to fill the vacancy created by the death of Bishop Bayot of Cebu. The King accepted the Council's recommendation, elected Landaverde and presented him to the Vatican, which duly gave him consistorial promotion on 26 January 1705. The new prelate embarked the following year for Mexico, presumably on his way to take possession of his Philippine diocese. It was in Mexico that he received episcopal consecration.

But Landaverde went no further. Until his death twenty-one years later, no power on earth sufficed to push or pull him from New Spain to the Philippines where his diocese was. Alleging now ill health, now the lack of funds for the journey, now the debts he had contracted in Mexico and which he had to settle before setting out, now some other excuse, Bishop Landaverde managed to postpone his departure again and again. Neither repeated royal decrees, nor the urgings of the viceroy and other high officials of New Spain, nor the threat of incarceration, nor even its actual imposition availed to make him proceed to Cebu. In 1716 Pope Clement XI, upon representations of the King of Spain, issued a Brief authorizing Archbishop Lanciego of Mexico to impose on the stubborn prelate "the canonical sanctions... including the suspension of all his episcopal prerogatives and deprivation of his see, in accordance with law."

The Archbishop of Mexico set up an ecclesiastical tribunal to try the case. Before this tribunal Bishop Landaverde defended himself vigorously with a wealth of legal technicalities

and precedents in his favor.⁵ He alleged, further, that the grounds upon which he had been haled before the court and was being compelled to reside in his diocese were not sufficient to warrant the censures proposed. He concluded that his "marriage" to his diocese remained valid and unassailable, expert opinions to the contrary notwithstanding. He was still Bishop of Cebu. But he refused to go there.

Finally, on 3 February 1718, the Archbishop of Mexico imposed on Bishop Landaverde a major excommunication reserved to the Holy See. Bishop Landaverde's reply was that he did not consider himself excommunicated since the Archbishop had overstepped his jurisdiction; and, for that matter, he, Landaverde, could if he chose excommunicate the Archbishop in turn.⁶ Meanwhile, he continued to exercise his episcopal functions.⁷

This state of affairs dragged on for years, for Bishop Landaverde appealed his case from the Archbishop of Mexico to the Holy See, and the paper work involved was considerable, as has already been pointed out. The reason for the delay seems to be that Bishop Landaverde had managed to make history; this was apparently the first case in the annals of the Spanish Empire of a colonial bishop steadfastly refusing to proceed to his post. It later became a classic of imperial jurisprudence and was frequently cited in law books and commentaries. Antonio Joaquín de Ribadeneyra referred to it in the course of his brilliant treatise on the royal patronage of the Indies, as follows:

⁵ Among the precedents cited were those of Bishop Aguilar of Cebu and Bishop Gorospe of Nueva Segovia who tarried long in Mexico before embarking for the Philippines. Also cited was the case of Bishop Pedro de Oña of Caracas, Venezuela, also a Mercedarian, who after his consecration refused to leave Madrid until he obtained a transfer to an Italian bishopric.

⁶ Earlier in the century the Church in the Philippines went through a similar crisis when Archbishop Camacho of Manila and Bishop González of (Nueva) Cáceres excommunicated each other.

⁷ A contemporary historian, Delgado, recorded that "I attended a function at which he consecrated stones for the altars of Mexico. It was there that I made his acquaintance and got to know him well" (HISTORIA, p. 174).

Many of us who are still among the living will remember a bishop who was elected for Zebu, one of the Philippine islands; it lies in the Torrid Zone and belongs to the Archipelago of San Lázaro. After having been consecrated he stoutly refused [to proceed to his diocese], saying that Zebu was a bishopric *in partibus* and hence not what he had expected to get. According to the Venerable Bishop, it was not simply a distant bishopric, it was not even an existing one. Rather, it belonged to the category of the possibles, and even so, whatever being it had depended, like that of other worlds, on the sheer omnipotence of God. This opinion he maintained until death.⁸

Meanwhile, the King, seeing that it would take years for the case to be settled, decided to give Cebu a prelate who would govern it while the case was pending.⁹ In 1721 he presented the Augustinian Sebastián de Foronda to the Vatican. On 11 March 1722 Foronda was given consistorial promotion as "Bishop of Calidonia *in partibus* and Ecclesiastical Administrator of the See of Cebu in the absence of its residential Bishop."

⁸ "Muchos de los que vivimos concimos un Obispo, que electo para Zebú, una de las Islas Philipinas, que baxo la Torrida Zona baña el Archipelago de San Lazaro; despues de Confagrado, fe armo a no querer ir, diciendo, que Zebú era un Obispado *in partibus*, y no como quiera; pero el Venerable Obispo no lo contaba entre las partes existentes, aunque remotas, fino entre las posibles; y que folo cabía en la Omnipotencia Divina, al modo de la creacion de otros Mundos: y en verdad, que en este concepto fe mantuvo hafta que murió"—MANUAL COMPENDIO (Madrid, 1755), p. 243. Henceforth strict observance was insisted upon of the Bull of Pope Paul V (7 December 1601) forbidding the consecration of bishops assigned to overseas dioceses outside of their assigned sees.

⁹ The original documents show that on 23 January 1717 the Council of the Indies recommended three names for the position. In accordance with royal policy at the time the King issued the corresponding decrees in favor of each of the three, to be communicated to the nominees in the order named so that if the preceding candidate declined the position or died in the meantime, the next in the list would get the appointment. The first named, Juan López, the superior of the Augustinian convent in Manila, declined the honor. The second in line, Sebastián de Foronda, also an Augustinian, accepted on 23 July 1718. The bishop-elect forthwith took possession of his diocese even before consistorial promotion.

Such then was the status of these two prelates until they died, Bishop Landaverde in 1727 and Bishop Foronda in 1728. The records show that no further consistorial action was taken regarding them. It appears that the Vatican allowed the case to die a natural death by awaiting the demise of Landaverde. However, Foronda died too soon thereafter for him to be promoted in consistory to the See of Cebu. In other words, although Bishop Landaverde never saw his diocese, he remained its proprietary bishop until his death. On the other hand, Bishop Foronda who governed the diocese for years was never canonically designated Bishop of Cebu even after Landaverde's death when the see technically became vacant. Thus it would appear that as far as the Vatican was concerned the Bishop of Calidonia was simply the ecclesiastical administrator of the Cebu diocese until his death. This is consistent with the phrasing of the royal decree nominating the next bishop of Cebu, dated 7 May 1734, which reads in part as follows:

Don Felipe, [etc.]... The Cathedral Church of the Name of Jesus of Zebu having become vacant with the death of Don Fray Pedro de la Vega Landaverde (who did not govern it) and that of Don Fray Sebastian de Foronda who held its government, I presented to His Holiness for the said church Doctor Don Manuel de Ocio y Ocampo... I THE KING."¹⁰

In view of the foregoing I submit that the name of the Bishop of Calidonia, Sebastián de Foronda, has no place in the episcopal succession list of the See of Cebu. I would say that, at most, historians might take cognizance of him as ecclesiastical administrator *sede plena* until 1727 and *sede vacante* thereafter until his death in 1728; for this, canonically speaking, was all he was. In this connection, it is significant that the Jesuit historian Delgado, who lived in the Philippines contemporaneously with the event, includes Foronda in his epis-

¹⁰ "Don Felipe... Haviendo quedado vaco el obispado dela Yga. Cathedral del Sto. nombre de Jesus de Zebú, por muerte de Dn fray Pedro de la Vega Landaverde (que no pasó a servirle) y de Dn fr. Sevastian de Foronda, que le egerzia en gobierno, presenté a su Santidad pare él al Dr Dn Manuel de Ocio y Ocampo... YO EL REY."—Arch. Gen. de Indias: *Legajo Filipinas* 1026.

copal list, but calls him *obispo de anillo*, a consecrated bishop—presumably as distinct from a proprietary bishop.

The above corrections having been made, the chronological list of prelates of the See of Cebu is as follows:

Prelate	Date of Consistorial Promotion
1. PEDRO DE AGURTO, Augustinian, first bishop	30 August 1595
2. PEDRO DE ARCE, Augustinian	17 September 1612
3. JUAN VELEZ, of the secular clergy	26 January 1660
4. JUAN LOPEZ, Dominican ¹¹	23 April 1663
5. DIEGO DE AGUILAR, Dominican	16 November 1676
6. MIGUEL BAYOT, Franciscan	13 May 1697
7. PEDRO SANZ DE LA VEGA LANDAVERDE PERULERO, Mercedarian	26 January 1705
8. MANUEL ANTONIO DE OCIO Y OCAMPO, of the secular clergy	20 January 1734
9. PROTASIO CABEZAS, of the secular clergy	29 August 1740
10. MIGUEL LINO DE ESPELETA, of the secular clergy	18 July 1757
11. MATEO JOAQUIN RUBIO DE AREVALO, of the secular clergy	13 November 1775
12. IGNACIO DE SALAMANCA, of the secular clergy	24 September 1792
13. JOAQUIN ENCABO DE LA VIRGEN DE SOPETRAN, Augustinian	20 August 1804
14. FRANCISCO GENOVES, Dominican	21 March 1825
15. SANTOS GOMEZ MARAÑON, Augustinian	28 September 1829
16. ROMUALDO GIMENO, Dominican ¹²	19 January 1846
17. BENITO ROMERO DE MADRIDEJOS Y DEL ROSARIO, Franciscan	20 September 1867
18. MARTIN GARCIA ALCOCER, Franciscan ¹³	7 June 1886
19. THOMAS AUGUSTINE HENDRICK, of the secular clergy	9 November 1903

¹¹ Transferred to Manila in 1672.

¹² Formerly titular Bishop of Ruspe, Vicar Apostolic of Tung-kin, to which he was promoted in 1829.

¹³ Retired in 1903; promoted titular Archbishop of Bostra in 1904.

20. JUAN B. GORORDO, of the secular
clergy¹⁴ 2 April 1910
21. GABRIEL M. REYES, of the secular
clergy 29 July 1932
First Archbishop of Cebu¹⁵ 28 April 1934
22. JULIO R. ROSALES, of the secular
clergy¹⁶ 16 March 1949

It may be of interest to note that all the occupants of the see of Cebu during the Spanish regime like those of the see of Manila, were full-blooded Spaniards. Two of them, Agurto and Ocio, were born in Mexico.

Some historians, past and present, have advanced the claim that four of the prelates listed above, namely, Velez, Cabezas, Espeleta and Salamanca, were Filipinos. In fact, one of them, Espeleta, who was for a time governor *ad interim* of the archdiocese of Manila during a vacancy, has been called at various times "the first Filipino archbishop of Manila." Likewise he has been called "the first and only Filipino governor and captain-general of the Philippines and president of the Manila *audiencia*."¹⁷ I beg to dissent most emphatically. These four prelates were Spaniards racially, socially, politically, and legally, in spite of the fact that they were born in the Philippines. But this is a topic more suitably discussed elsewhere. My next article in this series will attempt to establish the episcopal succession of the See of Nueva Segobia.

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¹⁴ Formerly titular Bishop of Nilopolis, auxiliary Bishop of Cebu in 1909.

¹⁵ Transferred to Manila in 1949 a titular Archbishop of Phullita, coadjutor with right of succession to the Archbishop of Manila.

¹⁶ Formerly Bishop of Tagbilaran, the first to occupy that see, to which he was promoted in 1946.

¹⁷ E.g., Pons y Torres, Borres, Ponce, De Veyra, Zaide, Morrow, Venago, Artigas, Cuenco, etc.

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