

“The State of Salesian Historiography and of the Conservation and Development of the Salesian Historical Patrimony in the East Asia-Oceania Region”

Don Bosco Retreat House, November 4-8, 2013

Problems and Perspectives in the Conservation of Documents for the Writing of History: The Case of the Archives of the University of Santo Tomas

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When I was a student at the University of the Philippines, the impression I got in my history classes was that the friars were the bad guys. At the very least, they made life for the Filipinos very difficult. Among the most conservative (read: backward) were the Dominicans who were entrenched in their University of Santo Tomas. Another impression I got, not in UP but somewhere along the way, was that archives are mysterious, color-less and boring. What's more, the documents here are mostly in Spanish, which made a visit to an archive even more unthinkable or forgettable.

In the case of the Archives of the University of Santo Tomas, however, the opposite impressions are slowly evolving. In the course of the University's celebration of its 400th year in 2011, the UST Archives was almost overnight “discovered” to contain original information about the institution's past. One by one, the UST's departments and colleges began to approach the Archives for assistance in writing their own histories or locating vintage photographs. Students, alumni, priests and fellow archivists wanted to take a peek at the age-old documents which included the Foundation Act of 1611, the 17th century *baybayin* scripts, and Rizal's grades. University guests and the media followed suit; the latest celebrity to visit the UST Archives was the Queen of Spain. With its embarrassment of riches, the UST Archives has shyly become one of the University's top tourist attractions.

This development has turned up certain challenges to the maintenance of the UST's archives and to their accessibility for scholarly use. This paper will thus tackle this development in three parts. First, a brief history of the repositories of the UST Archives. Second, a brief run-through of some of the UST Archives' treasures. And third, the challenges posed to this reluctant tourist spot.

I. A brief history of the repositories of the UST Archives

The University of Santo Tomas or UST had its beginnings when Miguel de Benavides, Dominican and archbishop of Manila, willed his small library and some seed money for a school for boys in Manila in 1605. His confreres formally enacted his bequest on April 28, 1611. As such it is the oldest university in the Philippines, and is believed to be the oldest in Asia. For three hundred years the campus was in Intramuros, the walled city of Manila.

The building at Intramuros seems to have been constructed in the last third of the seventeenth century. A plan of the 1680s represents much of the edifice that stood for more than 250 years. The historic documents of the University including royal decrees, papal bulls, and student grades were guarded in a room next to the principal stairway. The precious collection left the Walled City when it was transferred to the ground floor of the Central Seminary in the new campus in Sampaloc in 1933¹. By this time, the collection had grown to reflect not just the history of the UST but that of the Philippines and the surrounding region as well. Its location in the ground floor, like that of the Library in the Main Building, did not prove to be a felicitous one. Sampaloc, then as now, was prone to floods, and the precious documents and books bear ample evidence of water stress such as stains, worm-holes, brittle pages, and the like. In 1941, Japanese bombs over the Dominican church in Intramuros forced the evacuation of the rest of archives and other valuables to the Sampaloc site. This was just in the nick of time, because the ancient Intramuros campus was destroyed when the Japanese military put Intramuros to the torch on the 7th and 8th of February, 1945.

After the War, the Archives were raised to the third floor of the Seminary building in 1966. In 1993, appropriately marking 400 years of the printing press in the Philippines, the Archives were relocated to the fourth floor of the newly built Miguel de Benavides Library. Finally, the Archives made another momentous move just in July of this year to the fifth floor of the same building. The UST Archives are now on the same floor as the Rare Book Section, which makes the entire space an incomparable haven for researchers.

II. A peek into the contents of the UST Archives

The UST Archives or “AUST” (after its original Spanish name: *Archivo de la Universidad de Santo Tomás*) is the official repository of the original documents and records relevant to the University of Santo Tomas since its foundation in 1611. Though the records were assembled by the University they remain relevant to places and cultures way beyond the the streets of España and Dapitan. Student records for example include transcripts from late 19th century secondary schools all over the country. Manuscript accounts take us to battles in Vietnam, while parchment scrolls make tangible the concerns of Rome and Madrid.

The AUST resources have been central in the various projects of the UST Quadricentennial, such as the writing of the UST history, the *Lumina Pandit* exhibit of book treasures; the 150th birth anniversary of Jose Rizal, and the exhibit at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. But beyond this, the AUST has an untold wealth of material that can enrich the study of the histories of the Philippines, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. It is truly the silent yet potent link of the University with the world. For today, I would like to introduce you to the Archives by

¹ The Central Seminary came to house the University Church and the Fathers’ Residence. The Seminary and the gym formerly across it were designed by Architect Fernando Ocampo, a graduate of Civil Engineering at UST and one of the founders of the University’s School of Architecture and Fine Arts. Although his designs had to be approved by Fr. Ruaño, Ocampo was able to imbue his creations with original interpretations of the Art Deco style then in vogue. On the 12th of October, 1933, as the climax of that year’s University Day, the Archbishop of Manila, Monsignor Michael O’ Dogherty, solemnly blessed and dedicated the new Central Seminary building.

presenting certain documents and photographs kept in the UST Archives that give identity to the University of Santo Tomas.

Foundation Act (1611). On April 28, 1611, Fray Bernardo de Santa Catalina led a group of Dominicans in putting into effect what their confrere Miguel de Benavides had willed just before his death in 1605. Archbishop Benavides bequeathed the amount of 1,500 pesos and his personal library for the foundation of what would become the University of Santo Tomas. The original foundation act has survived almost miraculously for four hundred years and is still readable.

Libros de Piques. Examinations for degrees in Philosophy, Theology and Canon Law were rigorously stipulated in the earliest statutes, which were based on those of the University of Mexico and which in turn were derived from the University of Salamanca. In principle, the candidate was given two sessions in each of which he had to expound on a topic chosen from one of three selected at random in the designated examination book, as follows:

Philosophy: Works by Aristotle (manuscript dated 1636)

Theology: Sentences of Peter Lombard (printed in Paris, 1564)

Canon Law: *Institutiones Iustiniani* (printed in Madrid, 1791)

These books were collectively known as the *Libros de Piques*, from the manner a page was “picked”. The books for Philosophy and Theology are wonderfully garnished in silver.

Baybayin texts. The AUST keeps the only known manuscripts written fully in the old Tagalog script called *baybayin*. A pair of documents dated 1613 and 1625 respectively deal with the sale of land by matrons in Manila. Signatures in *baybayin*, ranging from the years 1603 to about 1660,² appear in a handful of carefully compiled testimonies of acquisition of lands from native Manila residents for the support of the University.

Fr. Juan de Paz’s Consultas. The University professors acquired a reputation for the solution of tricky moral and spiritual questions, such as the legitimacy of certain marriages or the orthodoxy of certain rites of the *sangleys* in the Parian. The Archives is replete with the *Consultas* that were minutely prepared to answer the questions that reached the UST from different places such as Lubang Island, Vigan, or Mindanao. Fr. Juan de Paz’s thoughts were so sought after in the 17th century that they were passed on in notebooks and even published in Seville.

Petition of Francisco Borja de los Santos, mestizo sangley, to take the exam for the licentiate in philosophy in 1773. We are always curious about those native Filipinos who were admitted into the University in its first two centuries of existence, but our archival record is not complete. Thanks to a litigation that took the better part of the 1770s, we have a series of documents that

² Fr. Alberto Santamaria made a minute study of the AUST *baybayin* examples, commenting on earlier studies especially that presented by Ignacio Villamor at the University of the Philippines in 1918. His article in turn has been revisited by recent scholars like Damon Woods and Christopher Miller.

provides a rare glimpse of the names and racial classification of students of that time. In 1773 Francisco Borja de los Santos, a *mestizo sangley* or son of a Chinese father and a Filipina, applied for a licentiate in philosophy. The university council or *claustro* was split in its decision. His Dominican professors were in favor of granting it. However the *graduados*, mostly Spanish secular priests who were based in the Manila cathedral and who ironically were trained by the Dominicans, were against it. Borja filed a suit against the *graduados* with the Audiencia and won his case two years later. Borja earned another bachelor's degree in Canon Law in 1775, and belatedly received his licentiate in Philosophy in 1776. He and another *mestizo sangley*, Dionisio Vicente de los Reyes, earned their master's degree in 1777. In the words of church historian Luciano Santiago, "...in 1778 [the two] became not only the first Chinese mestizo doctors but also the first Filipinos to receive Ph.D. degrees. Touched by the continued support they received from their Dominican professors, they entered the Order of Preachers the same year, becoming as well the first two Filipino Dominican priests."³

Royal cedula signed by the King, granting the title "Loyal" and "Royal" to the University of Santo Tomas, 1785. In order to prepare for a second threat of British invasion, the University of Santo Tomas clothed and fed 200 student soldiers (not 500, as some later histories put down) and trained them in special 15-day sessions from 1781 until 1783. Thankfully, British artillery never again bombarded our shores and all the soldiers were made to go home without seeing military action. The Dominicans in Manila prevailed upon their procurator in Madrid to put in a good word about the University's remaining loyal to the Crown and its contribution to the war effort. The King obliged with the bestowal of the title "Royal" to his "loyal" University in a cedula dated March 7, 1785, Feast of the death of St. Thomas Aquinas.

New text books. A Royal Decree in 1865 entrusted the supervision of secondary education in the country to the University of Santo Tomas.⁴ A new impulse was given to the printing of textbooks for all sorts of courses. This granted "the studentry of the Islands an advantage *vis á vis* the books imported from Europe."⁵ There were textbooks for, among others, drawing, arithmetic (in Tagalog and Spanish), algebra, geometry, trigonometry, geography and history (with emphasis on Spain and the Philippines), natural history, physics, chemistry, pharmacy, literature, Latin, Greek, French, rhetoric, and canon law.

Libros de Matriculas. From 1866 to the end of the Spanish period all secondary schools in the country had to submit transcripts of the grades they had given to their students to be confirmed by the UST. Thus this section of the Archives is of particular relevance to almost all parts of the country. One can trace the rise of secondary schools in the Philippines, as well as of the Ateneo Municipal, the Real Colegio de San Jose, and the Real Colegio de San Juan de Letran. The UST also classified its students according to province, and so these lists are invaluable sources for local history as well.

³ Santiago also quotes the Jesuit historian John Schumacher who thought that they were "the first Filipinos to receive a doctorate from the U.S.T." Luciano P.R. Santiago, "The First Filipino Doctors of Ecclesiastical Sciences (1772-1796)", *Philippine Quarterly of Culture and Society* 12 (1984), pp. 260-262, 269.

⁴ Villarroel 1988, p.93.

⁵ Miller 1908, p. 268. Fray Jose Miller, was then the Press' director.

Matronas. The School of Midwifery (Escuela de Matronas) was opened in 1879, in which women were accepted for the first time within the institution. It was closed after the schoolyear of 1914-1915.

Rizal's grades. Most biographers of Rizal paint a bleak picture of his stay at UST. An examination of the records at the Archives however presents a more balanced view. All of this has been presented by Fr. Fidel Villarroel, O.P., in his book, *Jose Rizal and the University of Santo Tomas*. In the grades of the 3rd Year of Medicine, 1880-1881, for the subjects of General Pathology and Its Clinic, and Pathologic Histology, Jose Rizal appears in the fifth line as "Jose Rizal M. y Alonso", listed alphabetically by first name. Rizal obtained the grade *Aprobado* (Passed), equivalent to 3.0. This was his lowest grade; however all his other classmates received the same grade, with the notable exception of Juan Luna's brother who obtained a *Sobresaliente* (Excellent, 1.0), and another who received a *Notable* (Very Good, 1.5). In the grades of the 3rd Year of Medicine 1880-1881, for the class of Therapeutics, Medical Matter, and Art of Prescribing, Rizal is on the 7th line. Here he obtained one of his six *Sobresalientes* (Excellent, 1.0). Summing up, in the twenty-one subjects taken in the University, Rizal obtained six *Sobresaliente* or "Excellent", six *Notable* or *Aprovechado* or "Very Good", eight *Bueno* or "Good", and only one *Aprobado* or "Passing Grade". He also finished second in his class.

Letters of the Internees. At the beginning of 1942 a number of university buildings in the Sampaloc campus was converted into an internment camp for Allied civilians. From 3,000 to 3,800 Americans, British, Dutch, Canadian, French and internees of other nationalities were detained in the Santo Tomas Internment Camp. In the Archives are sheaves of letters written by these internees pleading with the Japanese authorities to let their Filipino families into the camp, because living conditions had drastically deteriorated elsewhere in the city.

Student unrest. A special box contains news clippings that detail the student unrest of the late 1960s.

First Filipino Rector. Fr. Leonardo Legaspi, O.P., became the first Filipino rector of the University of Santo Tomas in 1971. He served until 1977.

Papal Visits. Paul VI was the first pope ever to visit the Pontifical University in 1970. Blessed Pope John Paul II visited the UST twice, on February 18, 1981 and then on January 13, 1995.

The UST Archives is also the proud possessor of the following items of interest, which may be classified according to country of origin or relevance:

The Holy See:

Papel bulls, documents

Spain:

Royal decrees

Book of Hours. The University is the proud possessor of an extremely rare book known as a Book of Hours. A book such as this was used by laymen of the Middle Ages who read prayers according to the hours followed in monasteries. By the style of the writing it may have been produced in the early sixteenth century Netherlands. The illuminations and intricate miniatures are truly amazing. We do not know if there are any books of this type in the region, or how it reached UST, but this book and the three others that follow have been introduced in a recent article in *Philippiniana Sacra*.⁶

La Solidaridad. Some 30-plus issues of this iconic publication of the Propaganda Movement lie on the shelves of the UST Archives. They date from 15 July 1891 to 30 April 1895 (Vols. III:59 to VII:150), and were printed in Madrid.

Martyrs' memorabilia

The Order of Preachers
Correspondence

Mexico

Japan

Fr. Juan de los Angeles' *Luzonni voite arufito...*, printed in 1623 for the Japanese community in Manila by the "Prince of Filipino Printers" Tomas Pinpin. The book is testimony to the early development of printing in the Philippines and is in fact the oldest Philippine-printed book in the UST. The only other known copy was in the Franciscan convent in Intramuros, but that was before the bombing of 1945. The book also contains the earliest known copperplate prints engraved in the Philippines.

China

Taiwan

Vietnam

El Correo Sino-Anamita. This periodical was established to publicize and chronicle Dominican missionary efforts in Asia. Many articles are written in a proto-anthropological bent, and there are many photographs, so that the series is an excellent source of historical, ethnographic, and religious aspects of the peoples of the Philippine Cordillera and Batanes, Vietnam, Formosa, and Japan. The AUST has a complete set of the *Correo*, which ran from 1852 to 1916.

Other Cultures

⁶ John N. Crossley and Regalado Trota Jose, "The University of Santo Tomas Hours: Surprising Discovery of a Treasure", *Philippiniana Sacra* XLVI:138 (September-December 2011), pp. 731-758.

Arabic-Chaldaic texts. There are three small books which appear to have been written for use by Christians in the Middle East. All are in the Arabic language, although two are written in Syriac or Chaldaic letters (so-called Karshuni or Karšūnī, with the style of the letters in the Sert'ō script). Inside evidence may place their dating to the 18th century, but how they ended up in UST is a tantalizing question.⁷

III. Challenges and perspectives

Tourism and Identity

Despite all these treasures, a mystery still shrouds the Archives, such that very few know of its existence. Those who know—even the younger Dominicans—are hesitant to visit it. Ironically, it is possible that the Archives are almost better known abroad than by the very constituents of UST.

In 2010, the Archives collaborated with the Library⁸ on an important exhibit timed for the Quadricentennial celebrations. Its title, *Lumina Pandit*, was taken from the Latin inscription on the Library cornice: *Has tenebrae cingunt mentis caligine terras. Hoc Sancti Thomae Universitatis opus: lumina pandit* (“Darkness covers this land in a mental mist. This is the task of the University of Santo Tomas: to spread the light”). Precious books were exhibited along with documents from the Archives and artifacts from the Museum, many of them seen for the first time. These were written about, presented in conferences, or featured in publications. The exhibit was an eye-opener to the richness and complexity of the past. In a particular way, it contributed to a better appreciation of the art and history of the Spanish colonial period of the UST, so much overlooked despite the University’s background.

The UST community at large began to take notice. Material from the Archives was used for the UST’s audio-visual presentations. The Archives were featured in TV shows like *Travel Time*, airline magazines such as *Mabuhay Magazine*, and dailies such as *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. University guests were taken by the Office of Public Affairs to the Archives. The latest visitor was Her Majesty the Queen of Spain. Youthful student groups, with nary an idea of what archives were, curiously poked around. (Unfortunately they could not be entertained because the Archives are only open to graduate students and professionals). A bit painfully, the Archives staff have to gently turn down interviews and screen visitors because all this attention is impinging on the silent work that has to go on.

Enough interest from the *Lumina Pandit* exhibition generated a second version. Through *Lumina Pandit II*, the Union Bank is now sponsoring a conservation, cataloguing, and digitization

⁷ Ibid., pp. 750-753.

⁸ The care and cataloguing of the rare book collection received a big boost with the installation of the Antonio Vivencio del Rosario Heritage Library in 2000. At present, the collection of rare books numbers about 10,000 volumes, with over 400 dating before 1600.

program of documents and other rare material at the UST Archives and of rare books at the UST Library. Help from certain foreign embassies is now being proffered.

The dormant voices of the Archives, gently provoked by cultural tourism, are slowly helping to evolve the University's identity. It is hoped that this case study may serve as another way to drum up serious interest in archives in other institutions.

Accessibility:

Spanish
 Many uncatalogued
 Fragile material

Cataloguing and annotation: help of Union Bank

Digitization and the Internet

Conservation

Conclusion

I would like to point out the near-miraculous survival of the UST Archives, Museum, Library, and. Had these not been transferred to the Sampaloc campus, they would have disappeared in the conflagration that destroyed Intramuros during the Battle for Manila in February 1945. There is yet another threat to their survival, an insidious one. That is the loss of the understanding of the Spanish language, a development that began with the cession of the Philippines by Spain to the United States of America in 1898. The great majority of Filipinos cannot relate to the original Spanish textual sources of their history because of this. More than 300 years of Philippine history still remain to be written, and written well. The UST Archives, along with the Museum and Library therefore have the double responsibility of not just conserving their heritage but also making it accessible to a wider, younger audience. Hopefully, through the union of a tourist drive and an academic foundation, the University of Santo Tomás may continue to configure its identity along the reasons for its foundation. May the people at UST ever be inspired by the Dominican motto *Orare, Benedicere, Praedicare*—To Pray, To Bless, To Preach.