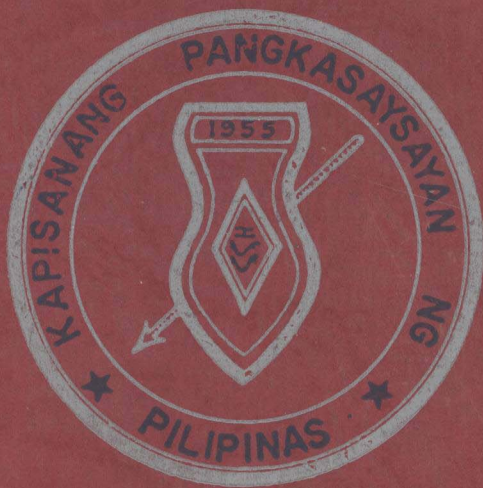


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*Marcelo H. del Pilar*

MONASTIC SUPREMACY  
IN THE  
PHILIPPINES



PHILIPPINE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION  
PHILIPPINES



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*Translated from the Spanish by*

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The PHILIPPINE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION offers the students of our national history a reprint of *La Soberanía Monacal en Filipinas*, one of the notable writings of Marcelo H. del Pilar (Plaridel) who was an ardent and courageous defender of Filipino rights at the time when it was extremely perilous to be one. First published in Barcelona, Spain, in 1889, it is now a rare Filipiniana item.

Very modestly he describes his work as merely *Notes*, but in reality it is a masterly discussion of one of the burning questions of his time. A brilliant thinker, he sets forth compelling arguments in support of his thesis that the monastic orders must be expelled bag and baggage from these Islands for the sake of the tranquility, happiness, and progress of their inhabitants.

Upon publication of this work, he was warmly congratulated by Miguel Morayta, distinguished Spanish Liberal and one-time member of the Cortes, who, after having read it, pronounced it interesting and informative. General Emilio Terrero, former governor general of the Philippines (1885-1888), Ferdinand Blumentritt, German scholar and a consistent defender of the Philippine cause, Benigno Quiroga, former director general of civil administration in the Philippines, and other friends of the Filipinos abroad welcomed it and felicitated its author. Our own Rizal gave it his enthusiastic approval, saying that "it has no chaff; it is all grain," as the writings of all the Filipinos should be.

Because of the prevailing political climate in the Philippines, it was introduced into this country surreptitiously and at great risk. It endangered the very life of its author, and had he chosen to return then to the Philippines, he might have met the same tragic fate as Rizal did.

The publisher has deemed it convenient to include in this edition an English translation under the title of *Monastic Supremacy*



*in the Philippines*, designed for those who prefer to read it in this language.

We are indebted to Professor Gabriel F. Fabella for the use of his copy which was printed in Manila in 1898; to Professor Teodoro A. Agoncillo for contributing a short biography of Marcelo H. del Pilar; and lastly to Dr. Encarnación Alzona for the annotated English translation.

PHILIPPINE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Philippines, December 1957



## CONTENTS

Publisher's Note .....	iii
Marcelo H. del Pilar .....	<i>Teodoro A. Agoncillo</i> 1
Monastic Supremacy in the Philippines ..	<i>Marcelo H. del Pilar</i> 9
Political Aspect .....	11
Economic Aspect .....	21
Religious Aspect .....	40
Appendices .....	53
La Soberanía Monacal en Filipinas ..	<i>Marcelo H. del Pilar</i> 93
Su Aspecto Político .....	99
Su Aspecto Económico .....	109
Su Aspecto Religioso .....	128
Apéndice .....	141



## MARCELO H. DEL PILAR

MARCELO HILARIO DEL PILAR was born in Kupang, Bulakan, Bulakan, on August 30, 1850, the ninth child of Julian H. del Pilar and Blasa Gatmaitan. Thrice town mayor, his father was also a versifier. Young Marcelo was himself a man of artistic talents. He wrote poetry, and played the violin and the piano. Marcelo began his early studies under the tutorship of one Mr. Flores. Like other ambitious youngsters of the period he enrolled at the College of San José and later at the University of Sto. Tomás, where he finished his law course in 1880. His unerring instinct for justice led him early in life to start his campaign against the abuses of the friars, with the result that while in Manila he had a tiff with a parish priest, for which he drew a month's imprisonment. In February, 1878, he married his cousin in Tondo, Marciana del Pilar. Several children were born of this marriage but only two—Sofía and Anita—survived.

The year 1880 is significant because it signalises Marcelo's entrance into the political and social arena. He could have lived in peace with his wife and children, assured of a brilliant and prosperous law practice. But the reformer and leader in him vowed to fight the forces that stifled the intellectual and economic growth of his native land. Unlike Rizal, he had a prodigious command of his native tongue. Once, in a baptismal party at a town fiesta, in the cockpit of a secluded barrio, Del Pilar took the opportunity to harangue the people with his anti-clerical speeches. He made them realise the conditions under which they live, and take cognizance of their duties and responsibilities... Thus Del Pilar, unlike Rizal, worked from below—he approached his countrymen through the language that he knew they would understand. Indeed, Del Pilar may be truly said to be the spokesman of the masses. Rizal spoke from the pulpit; Del Pilar spoke in the cockpit.



The story is told that Del Pilar himself honestly believed that the cockpit was the "Altar of Freedom." For the cockpit had always been the trysting place of discontented elements, of those who secretly nursed grudges against the Spanish authorities, both lay and clerical. The cockpit, moreover, was the last place the Spanish authorities held suspect, and consequently it had great usefulness to the agitators and to the reformers. Del Pilar, therefore, frequented the cockpits in order to disseminate his radical ideas. It was in the cockpit of Paombong, Bulakan, that, while conducting a whispering campaign, he had a brush with the civil guards who almost succeeded in landing him in jail.

In 1882, he founded a newspaper in Tagalog, the *Diariang Tagalog*, where he wrote his articles on the abuses of the friars. Passionate and sincere in his feelings and convictions, he was never given to compromise. On one occasion, while attending a barrio fiesta, he found the parish priest holding forth on the miracles of saints. Del Pilar asked: "How many miraculous saints do we have in the Philippines?" "*Todos*," was the answer. "Ah!" blurted Del Pilar, "In that case Spain ought to envy the Philippines, for here all saints are miraculous!" Not to be outwitted, the friar explained, "Even there in Spain, my son." "But there in Spain," Del Pilar countered, "the priests are not so miraculous as the priests here in our country!" This last statement drew the laughter of the crowd and the friar, embarrassed and humiliated, fled and called out the civil guards.

The years 1887-1888 were busy years for Del Pilar. He toured the towns like an evangelist, preaching the gospel of patriotism, self-respect, industry and sacrifice. He wrote pamphlet after pamphlet vigorously denouncing the friar misrule in the Philippines. With bitter sarcasm, he denounced what Rizal called "the hypocrisy which, under the cloak of religion, has come among us to impoverish us and to brutalise us... the superstition that trafficks with the holy word to get money and to make us believe in absurdities for which Catholicism would blush..." One of his pamphlets, "Long Live Spain, Long Live the King, Long Live the Army and Down with the Friars!", earned the hatred of the au-



thorities, on the one hand, and the sympathies of his countrymen, on the other.

Not contented with merely writing and delivering speeches, he formed an informal circle of patriotic young men whose members included Sotero Laurel, José Ner, Carlos Gatmaitan and Liberato Manuel. The group decided to launch a campaign not only for the education of the masses but also for the initiation of reforms in the administration of the government. The Church and State, which were one and the same thing, became alarmed. He was dubbed a *filibustero* and accused of being the master mind of the secret meetings in Bulakan, Malolos, Paombong, Baliwag, San Rafael and Sta. Isabel. He was, moreover, accused of being against the government and the Church, of being the translator and propagator of Rizal's *Noli Me Tángere*, of being the man behind such libelous pamphlets as *Dudas*, *Caiigat Cayo* and the slanderous pamphlet against the nuns of Sta. Clara. The government could no longer tolerate him. He was sentenced to be deported, but before the order for his seizure came, he had already escaped.

In the afternoon of his departure for Spain, he met his friends, Rafael Enriquez and Pedro Serrano Laktaw, and made an agreement with the two that they write several pamphlets in the nature of the Passion and Catechism denouncing the friar sovereignty in the Islands. Turning to his relatives for moral support, Del Pilar was torn between his duty and responsibility to his family and to his country. With a supreme effort, he foresook kin and hearth and home and chose the more difficult course. "Beyond this sea," he said tearfully, "they [the authorities] will no longer be able to reach me. What pains me is the inevitable vengeance that my family will suffer in the hands of the friars. I have no doubt that they will pour out their hatred for me upon the innocent heads of my wife and children. Do look after them. God is not asleep, and those who suffer at present because of their love for righteousness will be amply recompensed by Him. Farewell!"



On October 28, 1888, he set sail for Spain, a few friends seeing him off, never to return to his native land where patiently and faithfully his wife and two daughters and relatives and friends waited in vain for the home-coming of their chosen apostle.

Upon reaching Spain, Del Pilar took over the editorship of *La Solidaridad*, the organ of the Filipino propagandists in the Peninsula. Founded in 1889 by Graciano Lopez Jaena, the paper allied itself with the ubiquitous liberal movement and decided to "oppose reaction, to prevent any backward step, to approve and accept liberal ideas, and to defend progress..." The history of the seven years of *La Solidaridad* is, to a certain extent, the history of Marcelo H. del Pilar in Spain. He was the moving spirit of the Propaganda Period, dynamic, robust, and full of energy. He wrote and talked and befriended the Spanish liberals and interested himself in the affairs of Spain that had a direct or indirect bearing upon the fate of the Philippines. Speaking of the friendly attitude of Representative Calvo, Del Pilar wrote: "What he said is also what we say in order to awaken the sleeping intellect of the Spaniard to the needs of our country. Perhaps the friars will contribute towards it because their hatred will be aroused and their newspaper will begin to talk nonsense..." The term "lobbyist" may be applied to him in the sense that he never hesitated to exert his influence in the passage of laws that he thought would benefit his country.

Del Pilar's active work in Spain may be conveniently grouped under three headings, namely, as editor of *La Solidaridad*, as member of the Spanish-Filipino Association, and as the inspirer of the Masonic Lodge in the Philippines.

Del Pilar was not a separatist; he was, till a short time before his death, an assimilationist. Like Rizal, he thought that the Philippines was not prepared for independence, and as a preparatory step to statehood, he passionately advocated the education of the masses. Assimilation, on the other hand, would pave the way for the introduction of progressive reforms. Thus, in one of his editorials, he said:



There is an aspiration for better life in the Philippines; the people who pay taxes, the country that supports the Spanish flag with its farm and blood—this faithful country is aware that she is not composed of mere flock of sheep.

This country does not ask any kind of sacrifice from Spain; all she asks is that she be governed well or ill but with a full understanding of causes, that the country be heard through legitimate means...

We are asking for assimilation; we demand that those Islands be Hispanised...

The intensive campaign of the propagandists, especially Del Pilar, drew the sympathy of the Spanish liberals, but the sympathy stopped there; it never materialised into any concrete and tangible form. Del Pilar, the reformer, the man of the practical reason, the organiser, still stood for assimilation. The organ, of which he was the chief, demanded (1) the secularisation of the parishes and the removal of the friars, (2) the representation of the Philippines in the Spanish *Cortes*, (3) participation in the affairs of the government, (4) equality before the law, (5) freedom of assemblage, of the press, and of speech, (6) a wider social and individual freedom, and (7) assimilation. But Spain was too pre-occupied with her domestic problems to turn her eyes to the Philippine social and political landscape. And Del Pilar, already beginning to show signs of disillusionment and frustration, switched his vigorous mind to a more dangerous domain—that of revolution. Insurrection, he said, was the only last refuge, especially when the people "have acquired the belief that peaceful means to secure remedies for the evils prove futile." He inspired the organisation of Bonifacio's *Katipunan*, whose first *Supremo* was his brother-in-law, Deodato Arellano.

The Spanish-Filipino Association, which was founded upon the futile though not idle presumption that reforms could be effected in the Philippines, was composed of Filipinos and their Spanish sympathisers. The association was divided into three sections: the Political Section under the leadership of Del Pilar, the Literary



Section under Mariano Ponce, and the Sports Section under Tomás Aréjola. Its avowed aims were (1) to work for the reforms in the judiciary and in the penitentiary, (2) the development of Philippine agriculture, (3) the construction of roads, (4) reforms in the governmental administration, (5) the compulsory teaching of the Spanish language in all schools, and (6) the establishment of secondary schools.

Filipino Masonry was unknown in the Philippines due to the rigorous vigilance exercised by the Spanish authorities. In 1890, however, Del Pilar and Rizal agreed that Masonic lodges should be established in the Islands to carry on the campaign being waged in Spain. In 1891, Pedro Serrano Laktaw, upon instructions from the *Gran Oriente Español*, founded the lodge *Nilad*. With the spread of Masonry in the Philippines and with the founding of the *Katipunan* the ground was prepared for the final clash of arms which culminated in the establishment of the Republic of Malolos.

The years of continuous mental and physical exertion told heavily on Del Pilar's robust constitution. He was penniless, homeless and sick. He walked the streets of Barcelona hungry and emaciated. It is said that he used to pick up cigarette butts to smoke. Meals could not be had free. Some of his companions had either fallen off or had returned to the Philippines. Pangani-ban was dead, so was Jaena, and Rizal was in Dapitan as an exile. *La Solidaridad* crumbled to pieces due to lack of funds. His little daughter, Anita, who was not more than two years old when he left her, sent her only peso for his use, but love and sentiment alone could not stave off hunger and disease. Tuberculosis drained him of his vitality and abundant supply of energy. He died on July 4, 1896—on the very eve of the Revolution which he would have served had his strength not failed him.

The student of Del Pilar as a writer should judge him by his works in Tagalog and by some of his works in Spanish. For it was in his native tongue that he expressed his feelings more sincerely and intensely. His *Dasalan at Toksohan*, his *Kadakilaan nang Dios*, his *Dupluhan*, his *Caiigat Cayo*, his *Pasiong Dapat Ipag-Alab nang Puso nang Tauong Babasa*, and his *Sagot nang*



*España sa Hibik nang Filipinas*, are some of the works that should be studied not for their beauty, but for their ideas and concentrated power that shook the friar sovereignty in the Philippines. Add to these his *La Soberanía Monacal* and *La Frailocracia Filipina*, and one stops wondering why the friars never ceased in their efforts to persecute not only the author, but also his friends, the members of his family, and the readers of his works.

TEODORO A. AGONCILLO







# MONASTIC SUPREMACY IN THE PHILIPPINES

by

MH. PLARIDEL

or

MARCELO HILARIO DEL PILAR

*Notes on the disastrous preponderance of the friar  
in the political as well as in the economic  
and religious life in the Islands*

MANILA

IMPRENTA DE DON JUAN ATAYDE  
24 ECHAGUE STREET  
1898







## THE FRIARS IN THE PHILIPPINES

THREE centuries ago the blood of Legazpi and Sicutuna, mixed in a cup that both drained in token of eternal friendship, solemnized the oath of fusing from that time on the aspirations of Spain and the Philippines into a single ideal.

But the time that has since elapsed, instead of consolidating this fusion, has only fortified the predominance of the convents and converted the Islands into a colony for monastic exploitation.

There is no one who does not know the history of the revolts of the friars against the highest political and religious authorities of the Archipelago; there is no one who does not know the treacherous death of some, the coercion exerted on others, and the bitter sufferings of all those in the government service who dared to place above the convents the interests of the country or of the Catholic religion.

The impunity of the offenses and the preponderance of the rebellious elements lead to the very sad conclusion that Spain already has surrendered her sovereignty to the monastic orders.

It is important therefore to dispel this error. It is sad to reflect that the idea of Charles V and Philip II, the efforts of Magellan and Del Cano, the hardships of Villalobos, the prudence and valor of Legazpi, the sacrifices of Salcedo, Lavezares, Goiti, and others should serve solely as a pedestal for the enthronement of monastic communities.

At these moments the Filipino people are going through an interesting period. They have already manifested their repulsion against the friars; and we believe the time has come to focus attention on the aspirations that beat in their bosom.

Their future on one hand and on the other the attitude of China, Japan, and other nations that from Europe and Asia have their gaze fixed on the map of Oceanía present to the thinker



grave considerations that perchance ought to be availed of opportunely to forestall and exorcise future difficulties.

Luna's brush has revived the memory of the blood compact between Legazpi and Sicutuna. The Filipinos cannot look without sorrow at the powerful interference of monastic interests which impedes every fraternal current between Spain and the Philippines, making continually difficult the fusion of ideals that for both countries such a solemn oath symbolizes.

Like the Philippines, Spain aspires however to that identity of interests. On the seas of China, there far from the arsenals of Europe, the isolation of Spain will only foster the ambitions of the foreign powers surrounding the Philippine Archipelago.

We have proofs that the Filipino people shares the glories and misfortunes of Spain in her colonial ventures.

Following the blood compact, the Filipinos shed their blood to defeat Limahong. They made great sacrifices to suppress the Chinese uprisings. They exposed their breasts to English bullets for the sake of the Spanish flag. They gave their resources to avert the danger confronting the Caroline Islands. And in the present moments of Philippine history they do not spare their lives for the same flag on the battlefields of Joló.

But in the face of so many proofs of loyalty, the friars impose on the government their dominance and they impose it with the pretext of warding off the treachery of the Filipino people.

The country is getting to understand the injurious consequence of monastic preponderance; and regretting the blindness of the government, deplors the sacrifice that it makes of its interests to pay a group intent upon slandering and poisoning the national sentiment, thus winning for the Philippines the enmity of Spain.

The feeling of repulsion towards so pernicious an element which is spreading in the Philippines has its justification in the history of Spain, France, and all the nations that expelled it from their jurisdiction for the sake of their tranquility and progress.

If the mother country does not want it for herself, why should she want it for her children!