


Ang Disertasyon na kalakip nito na pinamagatang


"THE AMERICAN FRIAR LANDS POLICY: ITS FRAMERS, CONTEXT  
AND BENEFICIARIES, 1898-1916" sa panulat ni Rene R.

Escalante ay tinanggap bilang bahagi ng pagtupad para sa mga  
kinakailangan sa paggawad ng titulong DOKTORADO SA PILOSOPIYA  
Dalubhasa sa Kasaysayan.



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Tagapayo  
Kagawaran ng Kasaysayan

Tinanggap bilang bahagi ng pagtupad para sa mga kinakailangan  
sa paggawad ng titulong DOKTORADO SA PILOSOPIYA, Dalubhasa sa  
Kasaysayan.

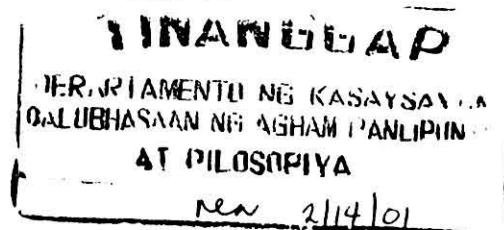


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Dekana  
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~~TINANGGAP~~  
*Angie*  
~~PETSA 2/14/01 DRAS~~

13 February 2001

Dr. Elizabeth Ventura  
Dean  
College of Social Sciences and Philosophy



Through Dr. Evelyn A. Miranda, Chair, History Department

Dear Dean Ventura,

May I recommend the appointment of the following as readers and members of the panel to examine the dissertation of Mr. Rene Escalante entitled "The American Friar Lands Policy: Its Framers, Context and Beneficiaries"?

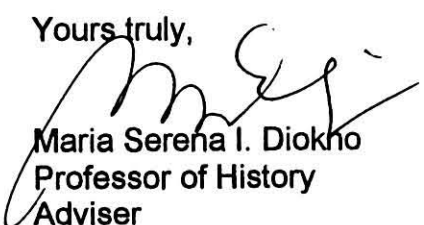
Dr. Leslie Bauzon, reader  
Dr. Bernardita Churchill, reader  
Dr. Olivia Caoili, member  
Dean's representative - Dr. Dora Zoleta-Nantes

I have read the dissertation and have suggested further, though less major, revisions. In all, I find the present version a vast improvement from the earlier one. I recommend that the readers review the manuscript and add their own comments prior to the defense.


As Dr. Churchill will leave the country before mid-March, I suggest the defense be held on 6 March 2001 at 2:00 p.m. at Palma Hall. (I do not know which room. It used to be PH 109.)

Thank you.

Yours truly,


  
Maria Serena I. Diokno  
Professor of History  
Adviser

Inirerekomendang Aprubahan.

  
Kasanang DeKano  
Programang Pang-akademik



BINIGYAN PANSIN.

  
EVELYN A. MIRANDA  
TAGAPANGULO

2/15/01 relayed to Tess

• grade - PH 501 375

March 1, 2001

Dr. ELIZABETH R. VENTURA  
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College of Social Sciences and Philosophy  
U.P. Dil. Q.C.

Through: Dr. Evelyn A. Miranda, Chair  
Department of History

Dear Dr. Conaco:

I have had the opportunity of reading the draft of the Ph.D. dissertation of Mr. Rene R. Escalante entitled "The American Friars Land Policy: Its Framers, Context and Beneficiaries." This work reflects Mr. Escalante's ability to do original research and to contribute to Filipino historical scholarship. I believe he is ready to make an oral defense of his dissertation.

Thank you and with all my good wishes always.

Very truly yours,

*Leslie E. Bauzon*  
LESLIE E. BAUZON  
critic

InilrereKomendang Aprubahan

*mg Tard - cnao*

Kasanang DeKano  
Gagamang Pang-akaDemika

*Approved*  
*M. Ventura*

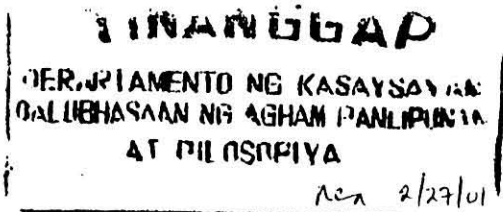
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February 26, 2001

Dr. Elizabeth Ventura  
Dean  
College of Social Sciences and Philosophy



Through Dr. Evelyn A. Miranda  
Chair, Department of History

Dear Dean Ventura,

Please be informed that I have read the dissertation of Mr. Rene Escalante entitled "The American Friar Lands Policy: Its Framers, Context and Beneficiaries," and have found, to my satisfaction, that the dissertation is ready for oral defense. I will bring up my comments for suggestions and clarifications at the oral defense scheduled on March 6, 2001, so they can be incorporated in the final draft of the dissertation.

Thank you for your attention.

Yours truly,

*Bernardita R. Churchill*

Bernardita R. Churchill  
Professorial Lecturer  
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*Approved*  
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THE AMERICAN FRIAR LANDS  
POLICY: ITS FRAMERS, CONTEXT  
AND BENEFICIARIES, 1898-1916

A Dissertation  
Presented to the Faculty  
of the Department of History  
University of the Philippines

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements of the  
Degree Doctor of Philosophy  
Major in History

by

Rene R. Escalante  
April 2001

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## **ABSTRACT**

To appreciate the friar lands policy, one has to study it within the context of the events that took place during the Philippine Revolution and the Filipino-American War. Basically, the policy was the response of the American government to the agrarian unrest in the provinces where the friars owned haciendas. It can be considered a colonial tool that the American government used to pacify the Filipinos. The policy became complicated and controversial, because at the time the American government was formulating the policy, many interest groups joined the negotiations. All of them were expecting that their participation would give them certain benefits.

The American government considered the friar lands policy a solution to the growing anti-friar sentiment among the Filipinos. At the time the Americans arrived in the Philippines, many of the friar lands were already under the control of the revolutionaries. After the establishment of the civil government, the friars sought the help of the government to help them recover their haciendas and collect the overdue rents. This move of the friars provoked several Filipinos. Many of them got restless and threatened that they would take arms again just to prevent the return of the friars.

The American government had to address the problem in the friar lands because they did not want the unrest to deteriorate into an open war. The insular officials did not want the issue to affect their pacification program. Consequently, President William McKinley sent the Taft Commission to study the matter thoroughly and come up with some recommendations. Taft's investigation revealed that the friars were the legitimate owners of the haciendas. But, he advised the government not to allow the friars to retake their landholdings. Instead, he asked McKinley to purchase the friar lands and redistribute them to the tenants. For him, this was a fair settlement of the issue. On the one hand, the friars would be given the chance to liquidate their landholdings and leave the country with dignity. The revolutionaries and tenants, on the other hand, would be given the opportunity to own the land that they tilled.

The American government accepted Taft's recommendation and provided the necessary legal requirements to facilitate the purchase of the friar lands. The purchase lands was a tedious and long process and Taft had to go to Rome just to expedite the negotiation. Two of the issues that delayed the negotiation were the issue concerning the price and the lands to be included in the sale. The friars wanted to sell their lands at the highest price possible. Taft, on his part, wanted to peg the price according to the land's productivity. After a series of

negotiations and coupled with some developments which were not favorable to the friars, the two parties agreed to sell the friar lands for 7,237,195.00 U.S. dollars.

The purchase of the friar lands constitutes only the first part of the solution to the agrarian problem. As far as the Filipinos were concerned, what matters most is the distribution of these lands to the tenants. After the purchase, the Bureau of Lands divided the haciendas into small parcels and offered them for sale to the tenants. To ensure the smooth implementation of the policy, the Philippine Commission passed the Friar Lands Act of 1904. It provided the guidelines on how to manage the disposal of the friar lands. It stipulated that in the disposal of the friar lands, actual tenants must be given priority. It also imposed a ceiling on the number of acres that buyers could take. For individual buyers, the maximum is 16 hectares; for corporation the ceiling is 1,025 hectares.

The implementation of the policy became complicated because many interest groups joined the government during its formulation and implementation. Aside from the friars and the government officials, the other participants were the sugar interests groups in the United States, Archbishop John Ireland, Mrs. Maria Storer, the Catholic Church, the revolutionaries and the former tenants of the friar lands. Each one of them had their own agenda in mind. They were expecting that their

participation would give them certain benefits. Indeed, some of them received substantial benefits, but a few of them did not. Archbishop Ireland, Mrs. Storer and the tenants were some of the participants who did not receive that much benefits from the policy.

Like any other government programs, the friar lands policy had strengths and shortcomings. Foremost, the American government deserved commendation for addressing the root cause of the agrarian unrest in the friar lands. The government's land-to-the-tiller program could be considered a radical development in the history of the friar lands. This was the first time that the government responded affirmatively to the clamor of the tenants to own the land they tilled. Lastly, Taft's adherence to the principle of due process, transparency and just compensation also contributed to the speedy resolution of the conflict.

The friar lands policy had some shortcomings and inadequacies which affected its outcome. First, some insular officials did not implement the policy diligently and faithfully. They yielded to the pressure exerted by their colleagues and business partners. As a result, there were some non-tenants who were able to purchase lands beyond the acreage limitation. Second, the friar lands policy can be considered limited in scope. It only covered those lands owned by the

Dominicans, Augustinians and the Recollects. The government spared other estates, which were equally controversial.

Lastly, the friar lands policy from the point of view of the tenants could be considered inadequate. The American government was grossly mistaken when it assumed that land-to-the-tiller alone would improve the economic life of the tenants. It turned out that aside from the friar lands, the tenants had other needs. They needed infrastructure projects like farm to market roads, irrigation facilities and other post-harvest structures. They also needed credit facilities and technical training on better farm management. Because of the failure of the government to provide enough support measures, many of the tenants ended up indebted a few years after they received the friar lands. In the end, the friar lands policy failed to help the tenants realize their dream to enjoy a prosperous life.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This dissertation would not have been possible without the help of several persons. I am very grateful to them because they gave me much needed data, suggestions and comments. Others extended moral support particularly on those days when I was defending my status as faculty and doctoral student of the University of the Philippines. To the following individuals, I acknowledge a debt of gratitude.

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To all my friends in the field of history; Dr. Malou Camagay, Dr. Evelyn Miranda, Dr. Leslie Bauzon, Dr. Eden Gripaldo, Prof. Gil Gotiangco, Prof. Digna Apilado, Dr. Dolly Mibolos, Dr. Francis Gealogo, Dr. Tony Hila and Dr. Luis Dery.

To the members of the panel that examined this dissertation; Dr. Maris Diokno, Dr. Nita Churchill, Dr. Leslie Bauzon, Dr. Olive Caoili and Dr. Doracie Zoleta-Nantes. Their valuable comments and suggestions forced me to clarify some weak points in this dissertation.

I would like also to extend my special thanks to my contemporaries and other friends including those who are non-historians. These include Dr. Ronnie Mactal, Prof. Merce Planta,



Ms. Tess Lazaro, Ms. Grace Mateo, Ms. Tess Dreo, Ms. Azel Tiongson, Mr. Mon Barbasa, Mang Pabs and all the librarians who assisted me.

Credit is also due to Dr. Milagros Guerrero. The comments that she sent me thru the Dean of C.S.S.P. compelled me to be very careful in my work and challenged me to work harder. I would like also to express my gratitude to Dr. Maris Diokno for the time and attention that she gave me at the critical time of my career as faculty and as dissertation advisee. Without her comments and support, probably this dissertation would not have reached this stage.

The financial assistance extended by the Office of the Vice-Chancellor for Research and Development also contributed to the realization of this study. The staff of this office is very supportive and accommodating particularly on matters concerning deadline.

I would like also to thank my loving and understanding wife, Bing, my lovely daughter, Camille and my newly born son, Justin. They served as my inspiration at the time I was writing the dissertation. Lastly, I also recognize all the support the Valdecantos family extended to me, to Kuya Pablo, Ate Olive and their children Emil, Paula and Nichole.

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### E. Membership in Professional Organizations

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