

The Oldest Jesuit Book In The Philippines

By Rev. WILLIAM C. REPETTI, S. J.
Manila Observatory

THIS book bears the date 1601 and is an Index or Catalogue of the relics of saints which were preserved in the church of the Society of Jesus in Manila from 1597 to 1852 and some of which are still preserved in the church of San Ignacio, Manila. To forestall disappointment on the part of any reader the following statements about the book will be made at once. First; it is not a printed book, it is written entirely by hand. Second; it is incomplete, the portions corresponding to the months of October, November and December are missing. It is possible that they were never written, but it is more probable that they have been lost in the course of time with the deterioration of the book. Third; the merit of the book lies more in the skill of the author than in the subject matter.

The author was Father Angelo Armano who was born in Lucca in Tuscany in 1572, entered the Society of Jesus in Rome in 1590 and went to Mexico in 1593 where he completed his studies. He then taught Humanities for a time and arrived in Manila on May 19, 1601, after suffering shipwreck in southeastern Luzon. After a Tertianship of four months the new missionaries were given their assignments. Father Armano was detailed to Antipolo but was held in Manila for a month to compose the index or catalogue of the relics. His later work comprised teaching in Manila, the rectorship of the College of San José, and heroic apostolic work in establishing the missions of Maragondon and Indang in what

is now the province of Cavite, southwest of Manila. He died on Tuesday, January 12, 1612, at the age of forty years. We may quote here what Father Chirino said about Father Armano and his book. Father Diego García, the Vice-Provincial, set out to visit the Visayan missions,

"dexando señalados al Padre Gregorio López i Padre Pedro de Segura para asistir en Silang, i al Padre Angelo, en Antipolo, que le detuuvo el Padre Rector, para que limpiasse el relicario, i acomodasse mejor aquellas grandes reliquias; a que el añadió un libro mui curioso i erudito, en que las retrato todas una por una, que tenía gran gracia de dibujar, i como hombre docto i versado en historia, añadió a la pintura sus anotaciones en que sumaba la vida del Santo cuya era la reliquia; obra mui digna de imprimirse, i que pedía a mas estudio i tiempo que el de cosa de un mes que gasto en ella". (1)

The book is made up of 110 sheets of pergamin paper, 17.5 cm x 24.5 cm, thus giving 220 pages, bound with white skin, still flexible, 18 cm. x 25 cm. In the course of time newly acquired authentics were crowded between the last page and cover of the book with the result that the cover was loosened from the pages. These authentics have been removed and the book restored to good condition. Worms have attacked the paper at some time in the past but their damage was slight.

The accompanying photographs, which

(1) Pastells, S.J., Pablo. Labor Evangélica, II. 324.