

**CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF MISSION WORK IN
THREE NOVELS BY E.J. EDWARDS, SVD**

A Thesis

**Presented to the
Faculty of the Graduate School
University of San Carlos**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Literature**

by

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This Thesis entitled, CULTURAL DYNAMICS OF MISSION WORK IN THREE NOVELS BY E.J EDWARDS, SVD, prepared and submitted by JOHN PATRICK M. McSHERRY, SVD in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree MASTER OF ARTS IN LITERATURE has been examined and is recommended for acceptance and approval for ORAL EXAMINATION.

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CHAPTER 1

THE PROBLEM AND ITS SCOPE

INTRODUCTION

Rationale of the Study

Among the SVD pioneers of priests and Brothers who came to the University of San Carlos in the 1930's was a young, dynamic SVD priest named Edward J. Edwards (AKA STUBENRAUCH, his original surname). The USC yearbooks from that period portray him as active in guiding the students in athletics and drama (Pelaez and Misa, 1936; Kintanar, 1936).

Prior to his arrival in Colegio de San Carlos, he had served in the northern Philippines, on the west coast of the island of Luzon, an area noted for pronounced rainy and dry seasons, at the diocesan seminary in the town of Vigan. From there he was sent by the SVD superiors to work for a couple of years at the Fu Jen University in Peking, China, which the SVD had recently taken over from the administration of the Benedictines.

When the SVD community took over the administration of Colegio de San Carlos, Fr. Edwards was transferred back to the Philippines to help out with those early beginnings (Catalogus Sodalium, 1936: 157).

However, towards the end of that decade, his health began to fail. He had to be sent back to the States in 1939 to try to recover, which he was never able to do. In the States, his health forced him to live in the dry climate of Arizona, mostly separated both from his SVD community and from his missionary work in the Philippines as well. So, for most of his life, he had to carry the double burden -- being an exile and the burden of physical and psychological suffering. He died just short of his 91st birthday on September 16, 1995.

Though his beloved Philippines would remain out of his physical reach, he was able to lastingly imprint in his own being his memories of personal experiences and impressions, as well as the stories that he had heard from fellow missionaries, by recounting them in the books he wrote, particularly his first three novels, all of which have a Philippine setting.

In reading Edward's first three novels, one can only be struck, and a little amazed, by how sensitive this American missionary was to things Filipino; how keen he was in observing the people's customs and ways of doing things; and how observant he was even in describing Philippine flora and fauna. More than that, one senses between the lines that, on his part, he had a very deep love and appreciation for the Philippines and the people who live here.

From the earliest days of its founding as a missionary society in 1875, the Society of the Divine Word trained its members -- especially those who would be serving overseas -- with the concepts of anthropology and ethnology, and in the practical application of these sciences in missiology. Prominent among the society

members in those years were the eminent anthropologists, Fr. Wilhelm Schmitz, SVD (Brandewie, 1986) and Fr. Martin Gusinde, SVD (Gusinde, 1958).

Though not always clearly perceived and understood, and frequently practiced very badly, SVD missionaries have always grappled with the ideas of accommodation and inculturation in their work overseas. More or less, the intellectual framework of such ideas was always present to them. Some gratification, therefore, might be felt in believing that at least the intention was always there even when the practice was lacking in the daily life of missionary work.

Interestingly, during the interviews with Fr. Edwards in Tucson, Arizona, in October 1993, he not only had a hard time remembering the word, inculturation, he had even more difficulty pronouncing it. He would laugh and smile engagingly, somewhat like a small boy caught with his hand in the cookie jar, and say, "What is that big word you've been using?"

The name of Fr. Edwards was very widely known in the United States, in the American Catholic Church in the 1940's and 1950's, because of his novels. This was especially true among that very massive force and influence then in the church, the American Catholic Sisterhood, who then numbered around 150,000. Most were engaged in teaching in parochial schools. Over the years, with their master's and doctorate degrees, they were recognized as one of the most professional groups in the American Church. These Sisters promoted the books of Fr. Edwards to their pupils, especially to boys interested in the priesthood.

This study was then undertaken with the idea and hope to document the contribution made by a lone SVD -- a member both of the U.S./SVD community and the Philippine SVD to the world of literature.

More than that, it was to realize how he helped to put the missionary effort of the Filipino Catholic Church on the map for audiences in other countries.

Thus, this study hoped to investigate where and how Edwards articulated the missiological notions of accommodation and inculturation in his books; and, if so, why he was able to do that.

Theoretical Background

In the last verses of the last chapter of his gospel, Matthew wrote:

Jesus came forward and addressed them in these words: "Full authority has been given to me both in heaven and on earth; go, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations. Baptize them in the name 'of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' Teach them to carry out everything I have commanded you. And know that I am with you always, until the end of the world" (Matthew 28, 18-20).

St. Paul the Apostle has always been viewed in the Church as the ideal follower of Jesus' words and command. He has always been considered as well by those responsible in the Church for missionary expansion to the corners of the world, the very model implementor of Jesus' command, especially in the nitty-gritty of everyday affairs involving hardships, struggles and suffering.