

The Country's First State University: Aims, Structure, and Legacy of the Literary University of the Philippines (1898-99)

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ABSTRACT

After proclaiming the independence of the Philippines from Spanish rule on 12 June 1898, the Filipino revolutionary leaders encountered a problem: other nations did not recognize their sovereignty. Aside from their old-time adversary, the Spaniards, they were also facing threats of invasion by Germany, Japan, and the United States. Blood was still being spilled heavily on the battlefields. Yet, despite those odds, they founded in October 1898 a national institution of higher learning, the *Universidad Literaria de Filipinas* (Literary University of the Philippines), the first-ever university that Filipinos founded. It began with full support from the government, with the best available resources and with leading intellectuals as its administrators, faculty, and students. This paper uses ethnographic studies written from the 16th to the 17th centuries, propaganda writings made in the 19th century, and revolutionary records produced in 1898-1899 to answer why the First Philippine Republic established the *Universidad Literaria de Filipinas* while still carrying out the revolution against Spain and a war against the United States was looming; how the University carried out its goals, functions, and programs; and the legacy that this institution has left to the nation.

Keywords: *First Philippine Republic, Literary University of the Philippines, Literaria Universidad de Filipinas, First State University*

Introduction: The Revolutionary Landscape

hen Andres Bonifacio instigated the Philippine revolution against Spanish rule on the morning of 30 August 1896, it was already clear that it was heading in defeat. The uprising was doomed even before it started. The reasons varied. There was no professional military organization, there were not enough trained soldiers, and the necessary weapons to carry out the struggle were virtually

non-existent. On the other side, the colonial masters had all the means to rout the rebels.

A few months after Bonifacio's disastrous inaugural salvo, the revolutionists in Cavite attained some stirring victories, prompting the colonial government to alert the mother government in Spain. Reinforcements from the peninsula arrived the following year and easily claimed back from the Caviteños the territories lost. Lacking arms and men, the rebels' national leadership was left with no other choice but to settle amicably with the masters. General Emilio Aguinaldo's government signed a peace treaty with the Spaniards in December 1897, and pursuant to that treaty, Aguinaldo and the large part of the national Filipino leadership went to Hong Kong as exiles. The sporadic fighting between the Spanish forces and the remaining rebels that continued when the Aguinaldo camp was no longer in the country was not enough to shake the colonial stronghold.

In April 1898, war between the United States and Spain inflamed. Since the Philippine Islands was a Spanish colony, the United States had all the moral reasons to go there and possess it. Thus, the U.S. naval victory against the Spanish fleet at the Battle of Manila Bay on May 1 opened the door for the Americans to become the new colonial masters of the Islands.

Aguinaldo and his men returned to the Philippine Islands in the middle of May 1898 and renewed the revolution against Spain. The proclamation of Philippine independence from Spain that he led claimed that the Philippine Islands was already free and independent and had all the rights to realize all acts and things that independent nations had the right to do. The Filipinos were already savoring the concept of a motherland freed from the clutches of colonial hardship.

However, there was no other nation which recognized that proclamation; Spain had remained the colonial ruler. Subsequently, starting in June 1898, the United States began sending huge and well-equipped expeditionary forces. One of the largest contingents arrived in Manila in August 1898, carrying 6,000 soldiers and a large amount of ammunition.¹ That was a massive preparation for war. Other powers such as Germany and Japan were also spying on what was happening, thinking they could also get a piece of the archipelago or the whole of it. The continuous landings of American forces and the maneuvers of other foreign powers urged Apolinario Mabini,

¹ *The Letters of Apolinario Mabini* (Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1965), 51.
Hereinafter cited as *The Letters*.

one of Aguinaldo's political advisers, to express to Aguinaldo in an undated letter where the weakness of the new nation could be felt:

"I have determined the state of our relations with the other powers, but it changes from day to day. At first I thought it was from Americans alone that we should seek advice; now it seems Germany wants to meddle; and we cannot predict what is going to happen in the future. ...

"Since the beginning, my political belief has been to send there [to America] and spend our money on anyone who is willing to give us arms. Once we have attained a certain degree of strength, we can then have more than just confidence. What I want is for us to hire foreign officers who might teach us the art of warfare and form the nucleus of a corps consisting of new soldiers having high educational attainment and recruited from different provinces. These officers will compose the General Staff and, when the time comes, take command of the troops."²

The recognition of Philippine independence was the most urgent matter that Aguinaldo had to consider. On 23 June 1898, upon the advice of Mabini, Aguinaldo established a revolutionary government whose object was "to fight for the Independence of the Philippines until all free nations, including Spain, expressly recognize her, and to prepare the country to become a true Republic."³ This revolutionary government would evolve seven months later into the Philippine Republic, the ultimate dream of the revolution.

At the time, the national Filipino leaders could not fathom if the Philippine Islands would finally become a recognized independent nation, and if the Americans, who had occupied the capital city of Manila in August 1898, would leave them to take over the national leadership. Spain was becoming a passé as the colonial power, as the rearmed Filipino revolutionists were liberating from them the provinces. Battles after battles, the Spaniards were defeated, but the United States was posturing as the colonial successor.

The looming war urged Aguinaldo to transfer the headquarters of his government from Cavite to the town of Malolos in Bulacan, a province north of Manila in September 1898. It was a safer place and from there they could easily escape from the Americans if war broke out. The revolutionary congress was inaugurated there on the 15th of that month and began enacting laws for the country. Its members were elected from the provinces,

² *The Letters*, 74.

³ Emilio Aguinaldo's Decree of June 23, 1898, establishing the Revolutionary Government, *The Laws of the First Philippine Republic (The Laws of Malolos) 1898-1899* (Manila: National Historical Commission, 1972), 35. Hereinafter cited as *The Laws*.

or appointed as representatives of the provinces that could not yet hold elections. Some of the powers of the congress were “to work for the general welfare of the Filipino people and to implement the laws of the Revolution.”⁴

In an atmosphere of a revolution being finished, an impending new war, and sensing other powers making clandestine moves, the Filipino national leaders decided to turn toward education. They wanted to educate the youth of the country by establishing a national university. Such an act in a time of revolution and war was not ideal. The national leaders should have waited for the revolution to be terminated first and for the republic to be firmly established. Any observer will only ask why they suddenly made such a move in a precarious time.

Why A National University

This paper identifies three reasons why the revolutionary government and First Philippine Republic established a national university in a time of war: to satisfy the thirst for education, to free the Filipino from the Spanish colonial education, and to produce graduates that the Republic would need for its operations.

Thirst for education

Filipinos have always regarded education as a key toward the progress of the nation in general and the success of the individual person in particular. It is a useful “heritage” that most parents can leave to their children. Parents would sacrifice through hard work in order that their children can attain it.

In ancient times, Filipinos placed learning in high regard. Everyone must know how to read and write, to discern their past or history, and to be productive members of the community. It was the parents who acted as the first teachers. From them, the young learned the alphabet and about the exploits of their ancestors.⁵ The knowledge acquired was passed down from one generation to another.⁶

⁴ *The Laws*, 37.

⁵ Francisco Colin, *Labor Evangelica, Ministerios Apostolicos de los Obreros de la Compañia de Jesus, Fundacion y Progresos de su Provincia en las Islas Filipinas* (Madrid: Por Ioseph Fernandez de Buendia, 1663), 63.

⁶ Pedro Chirino, *Relacion de las Islas Filipinas de lo que en Ellas an Trabaiado los Padres de la Compañia de Jesus* (Rome: Por Effevan Paulino, 1604), 52; Colin, *Labor Evangelica*, 63.

Additionally, one of the early Spanish missionaries in the Philippine Islands, Pedro Chirino, observed that the islanders knew reading and writing, and that it was rare to find a man, and much less a woman, who could not read and write.⁷ Chirino recorded that the alphabet of the Tagalogs had three vowels, which could serve as five, and twelve consonants. With those words, the Tagalogs could write letters and exchange communication. They used iron points as pens in writing on reeds and palm-leaves.⁸

Moreover, the ancient Filipinos did not produce printed books where they could preserve the literature of their history, society, government, and industries. Their records were rather placed in poem-songs, which were retained in the memory of their chanters, and were chanted before an audience.⁹ The chanters must possess sharp memories to be able to retain the records in mind and must have good voices in order that they could disseminate them before an audience.¹⁰ The chanting of the records could last for hours or an entire night.¹¹ They were chanted during their feasts, offerings, rowing, planting, and funerals.¹²

When the Spaniards arrived, they had to tear down the things that the natives were doing. The writing systems must be hispanized, and the religions must be replaced by the Roman Catholic Church. The Spaniards built schools, colleges, and a university but for one major purpose: to subjugate and emasculate the native mind and spirit. Rizal narrated that the Spaniards started accomplishing this as early as the 16th century:

“You, the youth of today, especially the Christians, are being wisely educated to despise your past, your race, beliefs, and traditions so that seeing yourselves constantly being humbled and keeping before your eyes

⁷ Chirino, *Relacion de las Islas Filipinas*, 39.

⁸ Chirino, *Relacion de las Islas Filipinas*, 39-41.

⁹ Chirino, *Relacion de las Islas Filipinas*, 52.

¹⁰ Miguel de Loarca, *Relación de las Islas Filipinas*, Arevalo, Iloilo, 1582, Emma Blair and James Alexander Robertson, *The Philippine Islands 1493-1898* (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1903), Volume V, 121.

¹¹ Francisco Ignacio Alcina, *Historia de las islas e indios de Bisayas ... 1668*, translated into English by Cantius J. Kobak, O.F.M., and Lucio Gutierrez, O.P., as *History of the Bisayan People in the Philippine Islands* (Manila: UST Publishing House, 2005), Volume III, 43.

¹² Colin, *Labor Evangelica*, 63.

your own inferiority, you will obediently place your neck under the yoke and become slaves.”¹³

The repression that the Spaniards committed against the Filipino natives for more than three centuries dampened no Filipino yearning to be educated. Rizal knew that the desire to learn was natural for the human person. He voiced it out in his second novel, *El Filibusterismo*, which was published in Ghent, Belgium, in 1891, through the youth character Isagani, “(Apart from the duty of each person to seek perfection, there is the innate desire in him to cultivate his intelligence, a desire here which is more powerful than the repressed.)

That innate longing to be educated would heighten during the Revolution, with the oppressed using it as another tactical weapon.

Freedom from Colonial Education

The Spanish government issued a royal decree on 20 December 1863 formalizing the public education system in the Philippine Islands. It ordered that a Normal School would be established in Manila under the direction of Jesuits priests to train primary instruction teachers; that there would be in each town at least one primary school for boys and another for girls; that the parish priests would be the local inspectors and would direct the teaching of Christian doctrine and morals; and that there would be a Sunday class for adult students.¹⁴

The order looked impressive and was gradually implemented in many towns. Schools were constructed, and students were accommodated. However, those who had been produced by such schools were not happy. One of them was Rizal. In his famous essay “The Indolence of the Filipinos,” he criticized the Spanish colonial education system:

The education of the Filipino from birth until the grave is brutalizing, depressing, and anti-human (the word *inhuman* is not expressive enough... .) Undoubtedly, the Government, some Jesuit priests and some Dominicans like Fr. Benavides, have done much by founding colleges,

¹³ *Rizal's Prose*, Centennial Edition (Manila: Jose Rizal National Centennial Commission, 1962), 197.

¹⁴ “Reglamento de la Escuela Normal de Maestros de Instrucción primaria de indígenas de las Islas Filipinas,” *Gaceta de Madrid*, Año CCII, Num. 358, 24 de Diciembre de 1863, 1.

primary schools, etc. But this is not enough; their effect turns out to be futile. For five or ten years the youth comes in contact with books, chosen by the very same priests who boldly declare that it is an evil for the Filipinos to know Castilian, that the Filipino should be separated from his carabao, that he should not have any further ambition, etc. During these five or ten years the majority of students have grasped nothing more than no one understands what the books say, not even perhaps their own professors. During these five or ten years the students have to contend with the daily preaching that lowers human dignity, gradually or brutally killing self-respect—that eternal, tenacious, persistent effort to humble the native, to make him accept the yoke, to reduce him to a level of a beast.¹⁵

For Rizal, the colonial education system was not that productive and was rather brutal to young students. In his other essay “The Town Schools in the Philippines” (1886), he described that instruction in those schools was limited to reading, writing, and the four principal arithmetical operations. It was also confined to the Catholic doctrines, because when the pupil could already read, he was made to read, memorize, and recite without understanding a single word of the mysteries of the Most Holy Rosary and books such as the *Doctrina Cristiana* (Christian Doctrine). When the pupil failed to recite them, the teacher whipped his hands with ferrule.¹⁶ In his first novel *Noli Me Tangere* (published in 1887), Rizal also described how the whippings of students who could not recite the catechism books degraded their moral and dignity.¹⁷

The Filipino revolutionists cultivated similar sentiments. They were aware that the Spaniards through education had emasculated the Filipino mind and spirit, since they themselves received the flawed instructions from the colonial masters. They had become tired of the Spanish friars controlling their minds and directing their lives. They wanted an education system that would be free from the sphere of the Catholic Church. While still exiled in Hong Kong, the revolutionary leaders expressed their desire for the future

¹⁵ Jose Rizal, *Political and Historical Writings*, Centennial Edition (Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1964), 256-257.

¹⁶ Jose Rizal, “The Town Schools in the Philippines,” *Miscellaneous Writings of Dr. Jose Rizal*, National Heroes Commission Edition (Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1964), 8-9.

¹⁷ Jose Rizal, *Noli Me Tangere*, offset printing of the 1887 edition (Manila: Comisión Nacional del Centenario de José Rizal, 1961), 91.

of education, arts, and sciences in the Philippine Islands. In a *Manifesto* dated April 1898, they said:

“We want a public instruction less levitical and more extensive in what refers to natural and positive sciences; so that it may be fitted to indurate woman as well as man in the establishment and development of the industries and wealth of the country, marine and terrestrial mining, forestal and industrial of all kinds, an instruction which is to be free of expenses in all its degrees and obligatory in its primary portion, leaving and applying to this object all such property as is destined today to supply the sustainment of the same; taking charge of the administration of such property a Council of Public Instruction, not leaving for one moment longer in the hands of religious institutions, since these teach only prejudice and fanaticism, proclaiming, as did not long since a rector of the university of Manila, that ‘medicine and physical sciences are materialistic and impious studies,’ and another, that ‘political economy was the science of the devil.’

“We want to develop this public instruction, to have primary schools, normal schools, institutes of second degree, professional schools, universities, museums, public libraries, meteorological observatories, agricultural schools, geological and botanical gardens and a general practical and theoretical system of teaching agriculture, arts and handicraft and commerce. All this exists already in the country, but badly organized and dispersed, costing the contributors a good deal without practical results, which might have been expected, by the incompetency of the teachers and the favoritism employed in their nominations and remunerations.”¹⁸

Manpower for the Republic

When the revolutionary government was established in June 1898, it had no enough men and women to serve as its personnel. It primarily lacked

¹⁸ Murat Halstead, *The Story of the Philippines and Our New Possessions* (Chicago: Our Possessions Publishing Co., 1898), 301.

lawyers who were supposed to research, draft, critic, and polish decrees, proclamations, letters, and other documents that Aguinaldo would sign and issue. The dearth of legal personnel made Mabini to become busy with drafting and polishing those documents. Mabini himself was the one personally writing papers for Aguinaldo's signature.

It must have been laborious if only a few men like Mabini who were working for the issuances of the executive government. Mabini wrote almost anything for the government: in September 1898, he drafted a decree harmonizing all orders from the departments of the government;¹⁹ in November 1898, he was drafting a decree about the general headquarters of the government;²⁰ in December 1898, he was explaining in a letter to Aguinaldo how the Board of Treasury should take charge of the collection of the rental of the government estates in order that the government loans could be paid in installment with the collections;²¹ on 10 January 1899, he sent a memorandum asking the secretary of the treasury to submit a plantilla of personnel in the treasury "to be able to study and submit to the Council a complete plan of organization of the different departments of the government";²² on 14 January 1899, he submitted to Aguinaldo the lengthy Tagalog translations of the amendments that he had written and wanted inserted into the final draft of the Philippine Constitution;²³ on 16 January 1899, he also sent a memorandum to the secretary of war and navy informing it of the organization of the armed forces in the province of Bohol;²⁴ on 28 January 1899, he told the secretary of the interior to provide the governor of Leyte, who was a Filipino, with sufficient security to safeguard his interests and personal protection.²⁵ Mabini was making those various forms of communication, while also sending letters to friends, acquaintances, military generals, members of the revolutionary congress, and foreigners transacting with the government.

Aside from having no sufficient legal minds, Aguinaldo's government also lacked physicians, pharmacists, and surgeons who were needed in the war

¹⁹ *The Letters*, 60.

²⁰ *The Letters*, 76.

²¹ *The Letters*, 82-83.

²² *The Letters*, 88-89.

²³ *The Letters*, 91-93.

²⁴ *The Letters*, 99.

²⁵ *The Letters*, 108.

effort. The number of professional military officers and soldiers was also insignificant. The dearth of this kind of people cajoled the thinkers of Aguinaldo's government into coming up with an institution that would gather, teach, and produce such professionals.

The Literary University of the Philippines

On 19 October 1898, upon the advice of the Council of Government (Cabinet), President Aguinaldo issued a decree which said that "*se crea un Centro docente que se denominará Universidad Literaria de Filipinas*" (a teaching Center that shall be called Literary University of the Philippines is created).²⁶ The decree had a translation in Tagalog, which put the said objectives in these words: "*magtatayo nang isang Centro ó Colegiong pagtuturoan na pamamagatang Universidad Literaria de Filipinas.*" This new university would teach law, medicine, surgery, pharmacy, and notarial practice.

The principal mover behind this decree could not have been Mabini, since he was absorbed in dealing with Aguinaldo's orders for political and military affairs. It could have been Felipe Buencamino Sr., the secretary of *fomento* (welfare). Buencamino had been appointed as director of war on 26 September 1898;²⁷ but the following October, he had been replaced by Antonio Luna and was already acting as the welfare secretary. The decree of 19 October 1898 bore the letterhead SECRETARÍA DE FOMENTO (Secretary of Welfare), and his name appeared below Aguinaldo's signature. It was also Buencamino who proposed the composition of the professors in the University and the date of the opening of classes at the University.²⁸

The University would be located in the convent or parochial house of the Barasoain Church in Malolos. The decree also elucidated the administration, officials, faculty, curricula, and admission regulations of the University. It would be published in the revolutionary newspaper *El Heraldo de la Revolucion*.²⁹

University Administration

²⁶ Emilio Aguinaldo's Decree of October 19, 1898, establishing the Literary University of the Philippines, *The Laws*, 49.

²⁷ *The Laws*, 46.

²⁸ *The Laws*, 53.; *The Laws*, 61.

²⁹ *The Laws*, 52.

The Literary University would be headed by a professor, who would be called a rector. It was the faculty of all professors of the University that would elect him to that position. His appointment would require the approval of the secretary of welfare.³⁰

The faculty of professors would also elect from among themselves a commission composed of four members headed by the rector. This commission would “*formular y proponer el Reglamento del gobierno interior, y acordar además el plan de enseñanza que á su juicio deba adoptarse*” (formulate and propose the regulations of the university administration, and decide which curricula or teaching plan should be adopted). The said regulations would also require the approval of the secretary of welfare.³¹

The University would have a secretary general, a position whose appointment “*no podrá recaer sino en persona que tenga el título de Licenciado o Doctor en alguna de las Facultades*” (would only be given to a person who has a licentiate or doctorate degree and belonging to the faculty). He would be appointed by the president of the revolutionary government.

Qualifications of the Faculty

The professors of University would also be appointed, as proposed by the secretary of welfare, by the president of the revolutionary government. They would teach “*Ambos Derechos, Derecho Administrativo, Medicina y Cirugía, y Farmacia hasta el Doctorado inclusivo, y las asignaturas correspondientes á la carrera del Notariado*” (two laws [canon and civil laws], administrative law, medicine and surgery, and pharmacy up to and including the doctorate, and the subjects corresponding to notarial career).³²

The professors must have the titles *licentiate* or *doctorate*. They would be conferred by the president of the revolutionary government and attested to by the secretary of welfare. All titles issued by the University of Santo Tomas after 12 August 1898 were nullified and voided by the decree of 19 October 1898.³³

The 12th of August 1898 was the last day that the Spanish colonial government was in control of the archipelago, because the following day, it surrendered to the American forces. The act of nullifying all actions of the University of Santos Tomas after 12 August 1898 signified the refusal of the

³⁰ *The Laws*, 51.

³¹ *The Laws*, 51

³² *The Laws*, 51.

³³ *The Laws*, 51.

revolutionary government to recognize the actions made by the Americans after it had taken over the colonial headquarters in Intramuros, Manila, on 13 August 1898.

The salaries of the professors and secretary general would be determined in other decrees to be later issued.³⁴

Student Admission Requirements

The enrollment at the Literary University would begin once the decree of 19 October 1898 was published in *El Heraldo de la Revolución*. The first academic year was to commence on 1 November 1898 and would last until the last day of April 1899.³⁵ The opening of classes was moved to 10 November through a decree that Aguinaldo signed on 28 October 1898 and as proposed by Buencamino.³⁶

Students of the University of Santo Tomas who could prove that they had finished five years of jurisprudence and would pass the examination at the Literary University would be conferred the title *Licenciado de Ambos Derechos* (licentiate of both laws [canon and civil laws]). They could also be given the title licentiate or doctor of medicine and surgery, or pharmacy, if they could prove their studies in the said university. For the medicine students who had given optional services to the revolution, it would be enough for them to obtain a licentiate in medicine if they could prove that they had finished four years of study at the University of Santos Tomas, and if they could pass the examinations required for the licentiate degree at the Literary University.³⁷

Those who had enrolled at the University of Santo Tomas in any course in 1897 or 1898 could receive a certificate from the Literary University if they could pass the examinations.³⁸

³⁴ *The Laws*, 51.

³⁵ *The Laws*, 51.

³⁶ *The Laws*, 61.

³⁷ *The Laws*, 52.

³⁸ *The Laws*, 52.

The certificates related to the subjects at the Literary University which were issued by the University of Santos Tomas before 13 August 1898 were valid and carried legal effects.³⁹

The Faculty

Also on 19 October 1898, Aguinaldo issued a decree naming the members of the four faculties of the Literary University. The decree was proposed by Buencamino. The first professors of the university would be:⁴⁰

Faculty of Laws:

Cayetano S. Arellano
Pedro A. Paterno
Arsenio Cruz-Herrera
Pablo Ocampo
Hipolito Magsalin
Tomas G. Del Rosario
Felipe Calderon

Faculty of Medicine and Surgery:

Dr. Joaquin Gonzales
Dr. Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera
Dr. Jose Albert
Dr. Salvador V. Del Rosario
Dr. Ariston Bautista
Dr. Ysidoro Santos
Dr. Francisco Liongson
Licentiate Justo Lucban
Licentiate Jose Luna

Faculty of Pharmacy:

Dr. Mariano V. Del Rosario
Dr. Antonio Luna
Licentiate Leon Ma. Guerrero
Alejandro Albert
Enrique Perez
Manuel Zamora
Mariano Ocampo

Of the Notaries:

Licentiate Aguedo Velarde
Arcadio del Rosario
Juan Gabriel y Manday

³⁹ *The Laws*, 52.

⁴⁰ *The Laws*, 53.

The decree also named Mariano Crisostomo y Lugo as the secretary general. The appointed professors were told to meet at the convent of the Barasoain Church on 22 October 1898 to carry out the provisions of Article 5 (election of the rector) and Article 6 (election of the members of the commission of four) of the decree of 19 October 1898. The faculty member who was elected rector was Joaquin Gonzales. He would later be replaced by Leon Ma. Guerrero.

Men of Wisdom and Talents

The appointed professors were a group of sagacious men. They were the most qualified persons that the revolutionary government could select to direct the fledgling university. They had earned their degrees from colleges and universities in Manila and in Spain or other countries in Europe. They had also been practicing their respective professions prior to their appointments. Hence, it would be interesting to go over the credentials of the most prominent professors.

Joaquin Gonzales (1853-1900; born in Manila) came from a wealthy family. He received his bachelor of arts from the Colegio de San Juan de Letran and the doctor of medicine at the Central University of Madrid in Spain.⁴¹ When he returned to the Philippines, he opened a clinic in Binondo, Manila, where he accepted both wealthy and indigent patients. Additionally, a few years later, he moved with his wife to her hometown of Apalit in Pampanga. Consequently, in 1898, he was elected as a representative of the province to the Malolos Congress.⁴²

Leon Ma. Guerrero (1853-1935; Manila) was a botanist, researcher, pharmacist, and scholar who was born from a family of intellectuals. He received a bachelor of arts degree from the Ateneo Municipal de Manila and a bachelor of pharmacy from the University of Santos Tomas. Additionally, in 1876, he became the first Filipino licensed pharmacist when the said university conferred on him the title licentiate in pharmacy. Subsequently, he went on to serve as a professor in this university. Moreover, his studies in Philippine plants led him to be recognized as the “Father of Philippine Botany.”⁴³

⁴¹ Nicolas Zafra, *The Malolos Congress* (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1999), 35.

⁴² *Filipinos In History*, Volume III (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1996), 113.

⁴³ *Filipinos In History*, Volume I (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1998), 221-222.

Consequently, he was appointed as delegate to the Malolos Congress representing Davao.⁴⁴

Mariano Crisistomo Lugo (1862-?; Bulacan) finished his secondary education at the Colegio de San Juan de Letran and licentiate in jurisprudence at the University of Santo Tomas. He was an elected member of the Malolos Congress, representing his home province.⁴⁵

Pedro A. Paterno (1858-1911; Manila) received a bachelor of arts from the Ateneo Municipal de Manila, and studied philosophy, theology, and law at the University of Salamanca in Spain. He was also the only member of the Malolos Congress who had a doctor of civil and canon law, which he earned from the Central University of Madrid.⁴⁶ Likewise, a writer, historian, scholar, journalist, and newspaper publisher, his scholarly books included *La Antigua civilizacion Tagalog* (published in 1887), *Los Itas* (1890), and *El cristianismo en la antigua civilizacion Tagalog* (1892). He was also the author of *Ninay* (1887), the first Filipino novel.⁴⁷ Consequently, he was one of those appointed to represent Ilocos Norte to the Malolos Congress.

Arsenio Cruz-Herrera (1863-1917; Manila) graduated with a bachelor of arts degree from the Colegio de San Juan de Letran, and a licentiate in canon law and licentiate in jurisprudence from the University of Santo Tomas.⁴⁸ Moreover, Aguinaldo appointed him as director of public instruction on 26 September 1898.⁴⁹ Furthermore, he was also elected as a delegate of Manila to the Malolos Congress.

Felipe Calderon (1868-1908; Cavite) came from an affluent family, graduated from the Ateneo Municipal de Manila with a bachelor of arts, and received from the University of Santo Tomas a licentiate in laws. Consequently, he was an appointed delegate of Paragua

⁴⁴ Zafra, *The Malolos Congress*, 36.

⁴⁵ Zafra, *The Malolos Congress*, 33.

⁴⁶ Zafra, *The Malolos Congress*, 41.

⁴⁷ *Filipinos In History*, Volume II (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1990), 89-90.

⁴⁸ Zafra, *The Malolos Congress*, 33.

⁴⁹ *The Laws*, 46.

(Palawan) to the Malolos Congress,⁵⁰ where he became the “Father of the Malolos Constitution” for having drafted it.

Ariston Bautista (1863-1928; Manila) earned a licentiate in medicine from the University of Santo Tomas and went to the Central University of Madrid for his doctorate in medicine.⁵¹ Following this, he attended to patients during the cholera epidemic in Luzon in the 1880s. He did not ask for fees from his poor patients. Being a wealthy businessman, he financed the education of some intelligent Filipino students.⁵² Correspondingly, at the Malolos Congress, he was an appointed delegate of Cebu.

Jose Albert (1867-1946; Manila) completed his bachelor of arts at the Ateneo de Manila, and licentiate and doctorate degrees in medicine at the Central University of Madrid.⁵³ Furthermore, on 26 September 1898, Aguinaldo appointed him as the director of hygiene.⁵⁴

Justo Lucban (1863-1927; Camarines Norte) earned a bachelor of arts from the Colegio de San Juan de Letran and a licentiate in medicine from the University of Santo Tomas. Additionally, as a younger brother of revolutionary general Vicente Lucban, he represented his home province to the Malolos Congress as an elected delegate.⁵⁵ He previously had enlisted as a medical officer in the revolutionary forces.⁵⁶

Antonio Luna (1866-1899; Manila) received his licentiate in pharmacy from the University of Barcelona and doctor of pharmacy from the Central University of Madrid.⁵⁷ Moreover, he was imprisoned in 1896 for having been implicated in the revolution but

⁵⁰ Zafra, *The Malolos Congress*, 31.

⁵¹ Zafra, *The Malolos Congress*, 30.

⁵² *Filipinos In History*, Volume III, 45-46.

⁵³ Zafra, *The Malolos Congress*, 27.

⁵⁴ *The Laws*, 46.

⁵⁵ Zafra, *The Malolos Congress*, 38.

⁵⁶ *Filipinos In History*, Volume II, 10.

⁵⁷ Zafra, *The Malolos Congress*, 38.

was released later after having condemned the uprising. Furthermore, he studied military science in Belgium and returned to the Philippine Islands where in 1899 he was appointed as the revolutionary government's director of war, despite Mabini's serious objections.⁵⁸ The youngest brother of the famous Filipino painter Juan Luna, he was regarded as one of the fiercest revolutionary generals, although he never won a single battle.

Aguedo Velarde (1857-1913; Manila) obtained licentiate in law and in jurisprudence from the University of Santo Tomas.⁵⁹ After graduation, He got a job as a substitute notary public in the province of Tayabas and as a register of deeds in Bulacan. He spent a long time in prison in 1896-97 for his participation in the revolution.⁶⁰ He represented Albay to the Malolos Congress as an appointed delegate.

Arcadio del Rosario (1846-?; Manila) finished a bachelor's degree in canon law at the Colegio Real San Jose and a bachelor in civil law from the University of Santo Tomas.⁶¹ During the debates for the proposed Philippine Constitution at the Malolos Congress, he passionately opposed the union of the Church and State, which was being pushed by Felipe Calderon. Subsequently, he and his group in the Congress triumphed in having the separation of the two entities enshrined in the draft of the Constitution.⁶²

Such were among the men who would run the country's first state university. They were college degree holders, versatile genuines, and competent professionals. Their influence in the Literary University, had it flourished for an extended period, raises intriguing questions.

The Curricula

The proponents of the Literary University had already devised a *plan de enseñanza* (plan of teaching) before they submitted to Aguinaldo for his signature the decree creating the institution. The plan consisted of the courses that would be offered, the curricula that would be followed,

⁵⁸ *The Letters*, 135.

⁵⁹ Zafra, *The Malolos Congress*, 45.

⁶⁰ *Filipinos In History*, Volume II, 255-256.

⁶¹ Zafra, *The Malolos Congress*, 42.

⁶² *Filipinos In History*, Volume IV (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1994), 87-88.

and the subjects that would be taught. However, only the documents for the law curriculum have been discovered from among the thousands of revolutionary documents. The curriculum prescribed the following subjects that the students had to take:

Preparatory: Metaphysics
General Spanish Literature (alternate)
Critical History of Spain (alternate)

First Year: Elements of Natural Law
Institutions of Canon Law
Economics and Statistics (alternate)

Second Year: Institutions of Roman Law
Patronage of Indians, Ecclesiastical Discipline

Third Year: Common and statutory Spanish civil law (1st Course)
History of Spanish Law
Criminal Law, political and administrative law
Colonial Legislation
Military Justice Code

Fourth Year: Common and statutory Spanish civil law (2nd Course)
Commercial Law of Spain and other Principal Nations of Europe
Elements of Political Finance

Fifth Year: Procedural civil, criminal, canonical, and administrative law (1st Course)
Theory and practice of drafting public instruments (1st Course)
Public international law

Sixth Year: Procedural civil, criminal, canonical, and administrative law (2nd Course)
Theory and practice of drafting public instruments (2nd Course)
Private international law⁶³

The textbooks that the professors and students would use were the following:

⁶³ *The Laws*, 54.

1. Lessons from the Professor—Roman Law by Hanecio, Sanchez Roman, and other authors.
2. Lessons from the Professor —Civil Code
3. Lessons from the Professor —Civil Code – Colmeiro
4. Lessons from the Professor —Mercantile Law
5. Procedural Law (1st Course) Civil Procedure
6. Theory and the practice of writing etc. (1st Course))—Larsoso y Marquez de Curart
7. Procedural law etc. (2nd Course) or Criminal
8. Theory and practice (2nd Course))—Larsoso y Marquez de Curart— Lessons from the Professor.⁶⁴

The Students

To date, contemporary research activities covering the Philippine revolutionary records, which are mostly stored at the National Library of the Philippines, have so far yielded no documents containing the names, credentials, and degrees of the students of the Literary University. However, it is possible that the first students of the university were those mentioned in the decree of 19 October 1898. They were law, medicine, and surgery students who would matriculate at the Literary University and would be conferred degrees if they could prove their studies at the University of Santos Tomas, and if they would pass the examinations that the Literary University would conduct. They were also students who enlisted in the revolutionary forces as medical officers who, if they could present proof that they had earned at least four years of medical study at the University of Santos Tomas and if they could hurdle the requirements for the degree at the Literary University, would also be conferred degrees.⁶⁵

One identified would-have-been student of the Literary University was the young revolutionary Emilio Jacinto, the right-hand man of Andres Bonifacio. Jacinto was born in Manila in 1875 and was studying law at the University of Santo Tomas when the revolution broke out. In the last quarter of 1898, he sent a letter to Mabini asking if he could enroll at the Literary University and what the requirements were. In a letter dated 17 December 1898, Mabini answered:

MR. EMILIO JACINTO

⁶⁴ *The Laws*, 54.

⁶⁵ *The Laws*, 52.

My very dear friend:

Many thanks for your present. During the first days, I pretended not to remember you, fearing that *they* would not approve of our friendship. I needed then all their faith in me so that I could give the stamp of regularity on the progress of the government, although I did not accomplish this fully.

When I received your letter, I sent someone to ask Captain Emilio whether you could stay in Malolos with the assurance that nobody would trouble you *for what had taken place before*. He answered yes, adding that you should forget everything.

Regarding your matriculation fees, it is necessary that you come personally because, having lost your certificate, you have to present an affidavit, signed by two witnesses, to the effect that you have finished First Year Law and you were actually taking up the Second Year course. There is still time. December 1st is the deadline.

I am glad of your coming because I am confident that you can be of great help to us.

I am at your service in anything that I can be of help.

AP. MABINI ⁶⁶

The “what had taken place before” that Mabini was referring to was the feud between Aguinaldo and Bonifacio, which resulted in the execution of the instigator of the revolution. For unknown reasons, Mabini’s letter was not sent to Jacinto and remained in his files; hence, the latter did not matriculate at the Literary University. He remained fighting the local Spanish forces in Laguna. He died there on 16 April 1899. The students of the Literary University could have been just like him—in their late teens or early 20s, and full of enthusiasm to learn and contribute to the nation.

Transfer to Tarlac

On 23 January 1899, the *Republica Filipina* (Philippine Republic) was established in Malolos with Aguinaldo as president. Based on the Constitution that the Malolos Congress drafted from September to December 1898, it replaced the revolutionary government as the government of the Filipino people. The Constitution stated that the

⁶⁶ *The Letters*, 81.

executive, legislative, and judicial powers were vested in the president, the National Assembly, and the Supreme Court of Justice, respectively.

However, on 4 February 1899, the feared war between the Filipinos and the Americans finally erupted. The Filipino forces were taken by surprise. One Filipino territory after the other fell to the attacking American forces; and one battle after the other, the Filipinos were on the losing position. The following March, the Americans were approaching Malolos with the intent to destroy Aguinaldo's government and forces.

The young Philippine Republic had to flee. It had to bring its personnel, soldiers, records, arms, ammunition, office furniture, printing equipment, and other effects wherever it was going. As foreseen when the revolutionary government transferred from Cavite to Malolos in September 1898, the Filipino government would head north in case of a war with the Americans. By the end of March 1899, the Americans entered and captured Malolos, but the Philippine republic had already deserted the place.

On 21 June 1899, the town of Tarlac in the province of the same name was made the capital of the Philippine government. The National Assembly began holding sessions there the following 14 July. The Literary University and its faculty, students, library, and documents were also brought by the government.

Examinations

During the 19th century, as in the previous centuries, examinations in primary schools, secondary schools, colleges, and the university in the Philippine Islands were conducted orally. The examiners would face each student, ask questions about the subject matters taught, and give grades according to the student's performance. If the student got a grade of *aprobado* (approved), he passed the subject. The examiners were usually outsiders or did not belong to the school faculty, but there were also faculty members who served as such.

On 15 September 1899, the Literary University's second Rector Leon Ma. Guererro named the members of the University's boards of examiners. Each board was composed of a president and two *vocales* (members). The Faculty of Law and Faculty of Medicine each had three boards, the most number of board of examiners, since perhaps they had the most number of students. The other faculties (pharmacy and notarial practice) only had one board each.

Also competent and luminaries in their respective professions like their
peers—the Literary University professors, the examiners were:⁶⁷

Faculty of Law:

Number 1

President: Licentiate Ambrosio R. Bautista

Members: Licentiate Pedro A. Paterno
Licentiate Felipe Buencamino

Number 2

President: Licentiate Gracio Gonzaga

Members: Licentiate Juan Arias
Licentiate Tiburcio Hilario

Number 3:

President: Licentiate Hugo Ilagan

Members: Licentiate Felix Ferrer
Licentiate Alberto Barreto

Faculty of Medicine:

Number 1

President: Licentiate Maximo Paterno

Members: Licentiate Anastacio Francisco
Licentiate Marciano Barrera

Number 2

President: Licentiate Francisco Liongson

Members: Licentiate Sebastian de Castro
Licentiate Catalino L. Bustos

Number 3

President: Licentiate Santiago Barcelona

Members: Licentiate Felix Bautista
Licentiate Santiago Ycasiano

Faculty of Pharmacy:

President: Licentiate Alejandro Albert

Members: Licentiate Mamerto Manalo
Licentiate Leandro Panlilio

Faculty of Notarial Practice:

President: Licentiate Tiburcio Hilario

Members: Licentiate Alberto Barreto

⁶⁷ *The Laws*, 55.

Licentiate Felix Ferrer

First Graduation Exercises

On 29 September 1899, there was a festive atmosphere in Tarlac as the first anniversary of the ratification of the proclamation of Philippine independence by the Malolos Congress was being commemorated. The Literary University was also holding its first graduation activities. Degrees were conferred to law students. Leon Ma. Guerrero delivered the graduation address in which he articulated:⁶⁸

“Members of the graduating class, do not be deaf to the call of the country; on the contrary, help create a free country, an endeavor in which all your brothers and countrymen are engaged. The soldier faces a shower of bullets and shots and repulses the enemy; the doctor and the pharmacist strengthen the body that it may be build fortifications; the priest will console the dying and you, men of the law, will uphold the empire of justice and defend from every attack the glorious liberty of our people.”⁶⁹

By November 1899, Aguinaldo had to disband his forces and resort to a guerilla method of fighting. The Literary University would cease, as the government that established it was dissolved.

Legacy

When Aguinaldo and his remaining forces fled to the interiors of northern Luzon, the faculty and students of the Literary University, in the words of Teodoro Agoncillo, had to “disperse.”⁷⁰ It completely ceased to exist when the First Philippine Republic was finally demolished with the capture of Aguinaldo in March 1901.

Although abolished after such a short existence, the Literary University of the Philippines still left a lasting legacy. The legacy that it left is that it is

⁶⁸ Teodoro M. Kalaw, *The Philippine Revolution* (Mandaluyong: Jorge B. Vargas Filipiniana Foundation, 1989) 148-150.

⁶⁹ Kalaw, *The Philippine Revolution*, 150.

⁷⁰ Teodoro Agoncillo, *History of the Filipino People*, 8th Edition (Quezon City: Garotech Publishing, 1990), 211.

one of the evidence for the advanced and independent thinking of the leaders of the revolutionary government and the First Philippine Republic. The revolutionary leaders had a foresight for making decisive actions for the Filipino people—one thing that the next Filipino leaders did not possess.

The next generation of Filipino leaders (1907-1946) led by Manuel Quezon and Sergio Osmeña were not as sagacious as the revolutionary leaders. Quezon and the others were already elected members of the Philippine Assembly, which was established in 1907, and had the means to introduce legislations such as establishing a state university, but they only waited for the American rulers to do so: the University of the Philippines, which was created in 1908. The First Philippine Republic also introduced laws creating the country's systems for health, education, agriculture, military, money and coinage, records-keeping and archives, postal services, and others. Many of these were supplanted by the American rulers, and those that were supposed to be modified by Quezon and his contemporaries, such as the Literary University, waited until the Americans had to act on them. Even the means for establishing a republic took the Quezon generation three decades to think of through independence missions and the Tydings-McDuffie Law, while the Aguinaldo leadership took only less than one year to realize it through the Malolos Constitution.

Conclusion

This paper explained the motives behind the First Philippine Republic's establishment of a national university in a time of war, or the three reasons why, despite the difficulties of war and the blood being sacrificed on the battlefields—environments which were not conducive to learning, running a national university still occupied the minds of the revolutionists. The three reasons are: to satisfy the natural thirst for learning, to make the Filipino people gain not only political independence but also intellectual liberation, and to produce graduates that would provide the needed manpower for the young republic. This paper also showed how the Literary University was administered, was run by its faculty, selected its students, prescribed the curricula, determined the subjects to be taught, conducted the examinations, and produced its first graduates. Lastly, it highlighted the legacy or the footprint that the Literary University left to the nation: the foresightedness of the leaders of the First Philippine Republic, which could hardly be duplicated by the subsequent generations of Filipino leaders.

On the other hand, this paper failed to identify the students of the Literary University. The records of those students may be found among the more than 400,000 pieces of Philippine revolutionary documents which are stored in the

National Library of the Philippines. Access to those records have been limited because of the thefts that occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. Even seasoned scholars, historians, and writers have found it difficult to gain access to them owing to the restrictions that the library authorities have imposed.

It will be a great benefit to public knowledge if the students of the Literary University could be recognized. Some of them might have become government officials, legal luminaries, artists, physicians, scientists, and other professionals during the American regime. Thus, this paper highly recommends that future studies about this institution should focus on the names, background, and courses of its students, and what had happened to them after the revolution and war.

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