

LIFE AND WORKS OF JOSE RIZAL

CHAPTER I DE GUZMAN - SALUTA

RIZAL'S LIFE, WORKS, & WRITINGS

The "Rizal Law" (R.A. No. 1425)

Republic Act No. 1425, known as the Rizal Law, mandates all educational institutions in the Philippines to offer courses about José Rizal. The full name of the law is "An Act to Include in the Curricula of All Public and Private Schools, Colleges and Universities Courses On the Life, Works and Writings of Jose Rizal, Particularly His Novels *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*, Authorizing the Printing and Distribution Thereof, and for Other Purposes."

The measure was strongly opposed by the Roman Catholic Church in the Philippines due to the anti-clerical themes in *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*.

History

Sen. Claro M. Recto was the main proponent of the then Rizal Bill. He sought to sponsor the bill at Congress. However, this was met with stiff opposition from the Catholic Church. During the 1955 Senate election, the church charged Recto with being a communist and an Anti-Catholic. After Recto's election, the Church continued to oppose the bill mandating the reading of Rizal's novels *Noli Me Tángere* and *El Filibusterismo*, claiming it would violate freedom of conscience and religion.

In the campaign to oppose the Rizal bill, the Catholic Church urged its adherents to write to their congressmen and senators showing their opposition to the bill; later, it organized symposiums. In one of these symposiums, Fr. Jesus Cavanna argued that the novels belonged to the past and that teaching them would misrepresent current conditions. Radio commentator Jesus Paredes also said that Catholics had the

right to refuse to read them as it would "endanger their salvation".

Groups such as Catholic Action of the Philippines, the Congregation of the Mission, the Knights of Columbus, and the Catholic Teachers Guild organized opposition to the bill; they were countered by Veteranos de la Revolucion (Spirit of 1896), Alagad in Rizal, the Freemasons, and the Knights of Rizal. The Senate Committee on Education sponsored a bill co-written by both José P. Laurel and Recto, with the only opposition coming from Francisco Soc Rodrigo, Mariano Jesús Cuenco, and Decoroso Rosales.

- The Archbishop of Manila, Rufino Santos, protested in a pastoral letter that Catholic students would be affected if compulsory reading of the unexpurgated version were pushed through. Arsenio Lacson, Manila's mayor, who supported the bill, walked out of Mass when the priest read a circular from the archbishop denouncing the bill.
- Rizal, according to Cuenco, "attacked dogmas, beliefs and practices of the Church. The assertion that Rizal limited himself to castigating undeserving priests and refrained from criticizing, ridiculing or putting in doubt dogmas of the Catholic Church, is absolutely gratuitous and misleading." Cuenco touched on Rizal's denial of the existence of purgatory, as it was not found in the Bible, and that Moses and Jesus Christ did not mention its existence; Cuenco concluded that a "majority of the Members of this Chamber, if not all [including] our good friend, the gentleman from Sulu" believed in purgatory.
- The senator from Sulu, Domocao Alonto, attacked Filipinos who

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proclaimed Rizal as "their national hero but seemed to despise what he had written", saying that the Indonesians used Rizal's books as their Bible on their independence movement; Pedro López, who hails from Cebu, Cuenco's province, in his support for the bill, reasoned out that it was in their province the independence movement started, when Lapu-Lapu fought Ferdinand Magellan. Outside the Senate, the Catholic schools threatened to close down if the bill was passed; Recto countered that if that happened, the schools would be nationalized. Recto did not believe the threat, stating that the schools were too profitable to be closed. The schools gave up the threat, but threatened to "punish" legislators in favor of the law in future elections.

A compromise was suggested, to use the expurgated version; Recto, who had supported the required reading of the unexpurgated version, declared: "The people who would eliminate the books of Rizal from the schools would blot out from our minds the memory of the national hero. This is not a fight against Recto but a fight against Rizal", adding that since Rizal is dead, they are attempting to suppress his memory.

On May 12, 1956, a compromise inserted by Committee on Education chairman Laurel that accommodated the objections of the Catholic Church was approved unanimously. The bill specified that only college (university) students would have the option of reading unexpurgated versions of clerically-contested reading material, such as *Noli Me Tángere* and *El Filibusterismo*.

The bill was enacted on June 12, 1956, our Philippine Flag Day.

Content Aftermath

The *Noli* and *Fili* were required readings for college students. Sec. 1 mandated that the students were to read the novels as they were written in Spanish, although a provision ordered that the Board of National Education create rules on how these should be applied. The last two sections were focused on making Rizal's works accessible to the general public: the second section mandated the schools to have "an adequate number" of copies in their libraries, while the third ordered the board to publish the works in major Philippine languages.

After the bill was enacted into law, there were no recorded instances of students applying for exemption from reading the novels, and no known procedure for such exemptions. In 1994, President Fidel V. Ramos ordered the Department of Education, Culture and Sports to fully implement the law as there had been reports that it has still not been fully implemented.

The debate during the enactment of the Rizal Law has been compared to the Reproductive Health bill (RH bill) debate of 2011 which as of the present is already operational in the country, Akbayan representative Kaka Bag-ao, one of the proponents of the RH bill, said, quoting the Catholic hierarchy, that "More than 50 years ago, they said the Rizal Law violates the Catholic's right to conscience and religion, interestingly, the same line of reasoning they use to oppose the RH bill."

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How Rizal became our Philippine National Hero (Truth or Fiction)

In 1901, US President McKinley established a commission that sought to create a Philippine national hero; this commission was headed by William H. Taft. The purpose of the commission was to unite the Philippines by showing a Filipino model. It must be noted that in these times the Philippines were divided due to the fresh war that the Philippines had with its new colonizers, the Americans.

According to Charles Bohlen, one-time ambassador to the Philippines, "Taft quickly decided that it would be extremely useful for the Filipinos to have a national hero of their revolution against the Spanish in order to channel their feelings and focus their resentment backward on Spain. But he told his advisers that he wanted it to be someone who really wasn't so much of a revolutionary that, if his life were examined too closely or his works read too carefully, this could cause us any trouble. He chose Rizal as the man who fit his model."

There were six (6) choices as to who would best fit to be the Philippine National Hero.

These were:

Jose Rizal
Andres Bonifacio
Emilio Aguinaldo
Antonio Luna
Marcelo H. del Pilar
Apolinario Mabini

The criteria for judging are as follows:

1. The person must be a Filipino
2. The person must be dead
3. The person must have a solid sense of patriotism
4. The person must be a calm thinking person.

Emilio Aguinaldo was instantly voted off the list since at that time he was still alive. He cannot be awarded as the Philippine National Hero since he might tarnish the award. The recognition must be made to a dead person so that he will not anymore do any damage to that title. Remember the purpose of the award: to unite the Filipinos. Moreover, Aguinaldo was a former General of the Kataas-taasan Kagalanggalang Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan (KKK), a revolutionary group during the Spanish time.

This group was against the colonial rule of Spain and fought a bloody revolution in order to attain independence. Unfortunately, the independence won by Aguinaldo was short-lived when the Americans started their "benevolent assimilation" right after "helping" the Philippines win its war. Clearly, Aguinaldo wasn't the type of person who the Americans wanted to be the figure shown to the public. If they chose him, they stand a problem of him being vocal of anti-American sentiments.

Save for the last requirement, all others were possible candidates for the title of Philippine National Hero. It was on the fourth requirement that Jose Rizal outbid the others (Although Marcelo H. del Pilar was somewhat like Rizal, he wasn't considered nationalistic enough). He was a calm thinking person. Unlike the others who staged a revolution through bloody fights, Rizal was a pacifist. Throughout his life, he found peaceful means in asking for reforms for the Philippines. He joined the *La Solidaridad*, a newspaper where Filipinos in anonymity freely wrote of their nationalistic sentiments. Also, he wrote two novels: *Noli*

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Me Tangere and *El Filibusterismo* which he sought to awaken the Filipinos in the quagmire they were in.

Upon returning to the Philippines from Europe, he formed a civil organization, La Liga Filipina, which sought to organize a civil organization movement that will stand-up for the injustices of the Spaniards to the Filipinos. Yet, we cannot say that he was totally against a bloody revolution. When he was visited in his exile in Dapitan, Dr. Pio Valenzuela, a member of the KKK, asked for Rizal's advice regarding a revolution planned by the KKK. He refused the revolution, not because of the mere act of it, rather, he said the Filipinos were not yet ready and they were ill-equipped. He knew that the revolution was to be planned well and it must succeed. Otherwise, it would be harder the second time around; also, the more reason would there for the Spaniards to torture the Filipinos.

Going back, Rizal was the one chosen by the commission. According to a source, Theodore Friend is quoted "Taft with other American colonial officials and some conservative Filipinos, chose him (Rizal) as a model hero over other contestants Aguinaldo too militant, Bonifacio who is too radical, and Mabini unregenerate."

Critiques "Rizal pointed out problems in the Spanish colonial society, but he did not want to drive out the Spanish. He never wanted independence for the so-called Philippines. That was the important factor because it would be a contradiction for the so-called Filipino people to advocate independence from the USA. He did not join Bonifacio and Katipunan. He was a conformist. He wanted better conditions for so-called Filipinos under Spanish rule. Taft also picked Rizal because he was already dead and he could not speak against the

American neocolonialism."

CHAPTER 1

Rizal's Birth

In Rizal's biography "Memoirs of a Student in Manila":

- Rizal was born in the lakeshore of Calamba, Laguna
- Midnight of Wednesday June 19, 1861
- His birth almost caused the life of his mother Teodora Alonso Realonda
- His mother vowed to take her new born on a pilgrimage to visit the Virgin of Antipolo in line with the safe labor due to Rizal's unusual head size
- He was baptized 3 days later in a Catholic Church, and named "Jose" in honor of San Jose
- His mother is a devotee of the patron Saint Joseph that explains the name "Jose"
- Father Rufino Collantes, the parish priest who baptized him noticed the unusual head size and urged the family members to take good care of him as he prophesized that Rizal will become a great man one day.

Rizal's Parents

Francisco Mercado-Rizal

- Native of Binan, Laguna
- He moved to Calamba, Laguna after his father's death, and became a tenant-farmer for a Dominican owned hacienda
- Rizal described his father to be "A Model of Fathers" since His father was hardworking, strong willed, independent minded, principled, one not easily deceived nor influenced,

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valiant in spirit, strong character, and well educated

- He studied Latin and Philosophy at the College of San Jose in Manila

Dona Teodora Alonso Realonda

- Born in Manila on November 8, 1826
- She was 8 years younger than her husband Francisco Mercado- Rizal
- She studied at the College of Santa Rosa, a well-known college for girls in Manila
- Rizal described his mother to be a "Truly Remarkable Woman" since His mother belong to the affluent families in Manila, a woman possessing a refined culture and irrefutable character, strong spirit, well versed with literature, mathematics, and spoke Spanish fluently

Rizal Children/Siblings

1. **Saturnina** - "neneng", studied at La Concordia College in Sta. Ana, Manila, Married to Manuel T. Hidalgo
2. **Paciano** - "uto", considered to be Rizal's 2nd father, enraged by the Gomburza execution and Rizal's sentiments he quit his studies and joined the Philippine Revolution as a general, retired as a farmer after the war and lived in Los Banos, old bachelor had 2 children with his mistress Severina Decena
3. **Narcisa** - "sis", a school teacher of Morong, married to Antonio Lopez a nephew of Father Leoncio Lopez
4. **Olimpia** - "ypia", married to Silvestre Ubaldo, a telegraph operator from Manila
5. **Lucia** - no known nickname, married to Mariano Herbosa who died of cholera and was denied a Christian burial for being a brother in law of Rizal

6. **Maria** - "biang", married to Daniel Faustino Cruz from Binan Laguna
7. **Jose** - "pepe", lived with Josephine Bracken an Irish girl from Hong Kong, had a son but died 3 hours after birth, child was named Francisco after his father's name
8. **Concepcion** - "concha", died at 3 years of age, brought grief to the whole family, considered the first sorrow Rizal experienced
9. **Josefa** - "panggoy", served as member of the women's section of the Katipunan, died an old maid at the age 80
10. **Trinidad** - "trining", died an old maid at the age of 83, considered to be the only sister of Rizal to see her country free and independent
11. **Soledad** - "choleng", youngest of the Rizal siblings, married to Pantaleon Quintero of Calamba, Laguna

Rizal Family

- Rizal family was big yet the children lived a very harmonious relationship, family ties were strong and love was spread among the children and the parents
- Rizal's parents are considered to be disciplinarians, the children were never spoiled
- The children were taught by their parents' values of love for their fellow men, God, honesty, obedience, and respect especially for the elderly
- Strong religious values are also taught by their parents including going to church and hearing mass every day, praying the Angelus and Holy Rosary together regularly every day, inculcated the value of kissing the hands of their parents after prayers "pagmamano"

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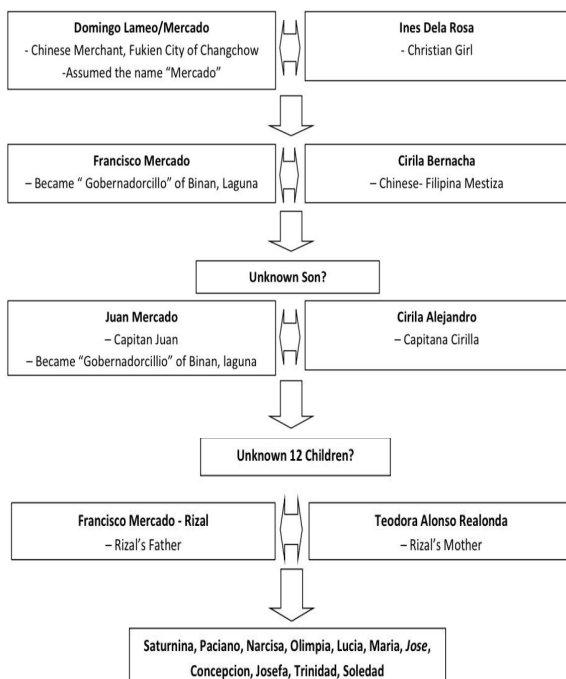
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- Like ordinary children they were also allowed to play and have fun in their backyard and in the azoteas
- Rizal's family belonged to one of the affluent families in Calamba, through hard work, and frugal living, they were able to build a large stone house near the church, and another one, they own a carriage which was considered a status symbol of the "illustrados" at the time, constructed the biggest private library, and sent all their children to colleges in Manila
- Rizal family played as cordial and hospitable hosts to all visitors and guests during town fiestas, holidays, and other celebrations, they opened their home to everyone regardless of their color, race, rank, and socio-economic status in life

Rizal's Ancestors

Rizal was a descendant of the Malay race; his blood was a mixture of Negrito, Indonesian, Chinese, Japanese, and Spanish genes.

Father Side



Mother Side

