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THE FIRST FILIPINO DOCTORS OF MEDICINE AND SURGERY (1878-97)*

Luciano P.R. Santiago, M.D.

The first Faculty of Medicine in the Philippines was established belatedly by the Spanish colonial government in 1871 – more than three centuries after the conquest of the Philippines and in the last quarter of Spanish domination of the Islands. It formed part of the University of Santo Tomás (U.S.T.) in Manila, the only university in the Philippines in the 19th century. It was allowed to grant only the licentiate degree in medicine, after completion of the six-year course, which in the Spanish system permitted the candidate to practice medicine. The doctorate was then almost purely an academic title, which required the presentation and defense of a medical treatise. (The national hero, José Rizal, for example, obtained the licentiate but not the doctorate in medicine at the *Universidad Central de Madrid*. Although he completed the course for the doctorate, he did not submit a thesis. Thus, Rizal was not a Doctor of Medicine; nor did he ever claim to be one.) In 1872, the doctorates in the ecclesiastical and legal sciences were also suppressed for Filipinos at the University of Sto. Tomás.¹

With these academic constraints, many Filipino students from wealthy families traveled to Europe to start or continue the licentiate course or acquire the doctorate in medicine or law in Spain or France. This was facilitated by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, which reduced the voyage to Europe from 60 to 30 days. Next to law, medicine was the most popular course for Filipino students in the peninsula. The licentiate in both faculties could be obtained in any Spanish university but only the *Universidad Central de Madrid* was empowered to grant the M.D. and Ll.D. degrees in Spain. The medical school of Madrid University was the *Facultad de Medicina de San Carlos*.²

In their free time, most of the Filipino youths in both disciplines joined hands to organize and catalyze the Propaganda Movement in the mother

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country. Like Rizal, some of them were so engrossed in nationalist activities that they sacrificed or delayed their ambition of graduating with the highest possible degree in their field.³

Filipino Medical Students in Europe

The following is an alphabetical list, probably almost complete, of the twenty-eight Filipino medical students in Europe in the last quarter of the 19th century:⁴

- *1. José Albert y Mayoralgo (1867-1946) of Binondo, Manila, L.M. & M.D.⁵
2. Galicano Apacible y Castillo (1864-1949) of Balayan, Batangas, L.M.⁶
3. Santiago Barcelona y de los Reyes (1863-1937) of Pulilan, Bulacán, L.M.⁷
- *4. Aristón Bautista Lin (1863-1928) of Sta. Cruz, Manila, L.M. & M.D.⁸
5. Fernando Canon y Aluma (1860-1938) of Biñán, Laguna – completed five years of the medical course in Madrid but later shifted to electrical engineering.⁹
6. Santiago Carillo of Biñán, Laguna, L.M.¹⁰
- *7. Dominador Gómez de Jesús (1866-1930) of Manila, L.M. & M.D.¹¹
8. Feliciano González y Timbang of México, Pampanga – died of tuberculosis in 1889 while a medical student in Barcelona.¹²
- *9. Joaquín González López (1853-1900) of Baliuag, Bulacán, L.M. & M.D.¹³
10. Santiago Icasiano y Bello (1861-1940) of Bulacán, Bulacán, L.M.¹⁴
11. Simplicio Jugo Vidal (1862-ca.1925) of Cápiz, Cápiz, L.M.¹⁵
- *12. Francisco Liongson y Tongco (1869-1919) of Bacolor, Pampanga, L.M. & M.D.¹⁶
13. Graciano López Jaena (1856-1896) of Jaro, Iloilo – abandoned his medical studies.¹⁷
14. José Ma. Panganiban y Enverga (1863-1890) of Mambulao, Camarines Norte – died of tuberculosis while a medical student in Barcelona.¹⁸
- *15. Félix Pardo de Tavera y Gorricho (1859-1932) of Intramuros, Manila, L.M. & M.D. (Paris).¹⁹
- *16. Trinidad Hermenegildo Pardo de Tavera y Gorricho (1857-1925) of Intramuros, Manila, L.M. & M.D. (Paris).²⁰
- *17. Antonio Molo Paterno y de Vera Ignacio (1860-1895) of Sta. Cruz, Manila, L.M. & M.D.²¹
18. Maximino Molo Paterno y de Vera Ignacio (1863-1929) of Sta. Cruz, Manila, L.M.²²

The First Filipino Doctors of Medicine and Surgery (1878-97)

Name	Life Span	Birthplace/ Deathplace	Racial Backgd.	Institution, Degree/Year		
1. Dr. Joaquín González López	7/22/1853	Baliuag, Bulacán	ME	UST	BA	ca.1870
	9/21/1900	Manila		UV UCM	LM MD	ca.1877 1878
2. Dr. Trinidad Hermenigildo Pardo de Tavera y Gorricho	4/13/1857	Manila	EF-c	UST	BA	1873
	3/26/1925	Manila		UPa UST	LM MD LM	ca.1880 ca.1881 1894
3. Dr. Enrique Rogers y Matti	7/15/1857	Sta. Cruz, Manila	EF	ADM	BA	1875
	12/25/1889	Barcelona		UB UCM	LM MD	ca.1882 ca.1883
4. Dr. Félix Pardo de Tavera y Gorricho	2/21/1859	Manila	EF-c	ADM	BA	1876
	1932	Paris		UPa	LM MD	ca.1883 ca.1884
5. Dr. Antonio Molo Paterno y de Vera Ignacio	1/17/1860	Sta. Cruz, Manila	MS	ADM	BA	1876
	10/21/1895	Tambobong (Malabón, M.M.)		UCM UST	LM MD MD	ca.1883 ca.1884 1889
6. Dr. Benito Valdés y Salvador	3/21/1860	Floridablanca, Pampanga	ME	UST	BA	1878
	9/8/1935	Manila		UB UCM UST	LM MD MD	1884 1885 1887
7. Dr. Salvador Vivencio del Rosario y San José	3/18/1864	Manila	MS	UST	BA	1879
	10/28/1928	Manila		UCM UST	LM MD MD	1886 1889 1908
8. Dr. José Albert y Mayoralgo	4/3/1867	Binondo, Manila	MS	ADM UST	BA --	1882 1882-84
	8/13/1946	Quiapo, Manila		UCM	LM MD	1887 1889
9. Dr. Manuel Sta. María y Bustamante	12/24/1868	Binondo, Manila	MS	ADM UST	BA --	1884 1884-87
	1898	Guagua, Pampanga		UB UCM	LM MD	1889 1890

10. Dr. Aristón Bautista Lin (Linpingco)	2/22/1863	Sta. Cruz, Manila	MS	ADM	BA	1879
	3/3/1928	Quiapo, Manila		UST	LM	1885
				UCM	MD	1891
11. Dr. Dominador Gómez de Jesús	11/5/1866	Manila	MS	ADM	BA	1881
				UST	--	1881-87
				UB	LM	ca.1889
	5/17/1930	Manila		UCM	MD	1895
12. Dr. Isidoro de Santos y Ongsiaco	4/4/1873	Tondó, Manila	MS	UST	BA	1887
				UB	LM	1893
	8/24/1939	ditto		UCM	MD	1895
13. Dr. Francisco Liongson y Tongco	12/3/1869	Bacolor, Pampanga	MS	UST	BA	1887
					TPSE	1888
					TAPTT	1889
				UCM	LM	1895
	2/7/1919	ditto			MD	1896
14. Dr. Baldomero Roxas y Luz	2/27/1869	Lipá, Batangas	MS	ADM	BA	1885
				UST	--	1885-88
				UCM	LM	ca.1894
	9/9/1965	Manila			MD	1897

Abbreviations used:

ADM	- Ateneo de Manila
BA	- Bachiller en Artes
EF	- Español Filipino or criollo
EF-c	- Español Filipino-cuarteron
LM	- Licenciado en Medicina
MD	- Doctor en Medicina
ME	- mestizo español (Spanish mestizo)
MS	- mestizo de sangley (Chinese mestizo)
TAPTT	- Título de Agrimensor y Tasador de Tierras
TPSE	- Título de Profesor de Segunda Enseñanza
UB	- Universidad de Barcelona
UCM	- Universidad Central de Madrid
UPa	- Université de Paris
UST	- Universidad de Santo Tomás
UV	- Universidad de Valladolid

19. Mariano Ponce y Collantes (1863-1918) of Baliuag, Bulacán, L.M.²³
20. Pablo Rianzares Franco of Biñán, Laguna, L.M.²⁴
21. José Rizal Mercado y Alonso (1861-1896) of Calambá, Laguna, L.M.²⁵
- *22. Enrique Rogers y Matti (1857-1889) of Sta. Cruz, Manila, L.M. & M.D.²⁶
- *23. Salvador Vivencio del Rosario y San José (1864-1928) of Manila, L.M. & M.D.²⁷
- *24. Baldomero Roxas y Luz (1869-1965) of Lipá, Batangas, L.M. & M.D.²⁸
- *25. Manuel Sta. María y Bustamante (1868-1898) of Binondo, Manila, L.M. & M.D.²⁹
- *26. Isidoro de Santos y Ongsiaco (1873-1939) of Tondó, Manila, L.M. & M.D.³⁰
- *27. Benito Valdés y Salvador (1860-1935) of Lubao, Pampanga, L.M. & M.D.³¹
28. Maximo Viola y Sison (1864-1933) of San Miguel de Mayumo, Bulacán, L.M.³²

Fourteen or half of the twenty-eight Filipino medical students in Europe received their doctorates (those with asterisk before their names). At least twelve earned their M.D. degree from the University of Madrid and two from The Sorbonne of the University of Paris. (See the accompanying Table for their basic biographical data.) Only eight of these fourteen scholarly gentlemen have adequate biographical articles written about them and none has a book length biography. Individually or as a group, they have never been specifically identified before as the first Filipino Doctors of Medicine. Most of them became the first Filipino specialists in their respective fields. They had to make the drastic transition from the Spanish to the American system, not the least of its problems being the change in language. With the sole exception of Gómez, all of them yielded, sooner or later, to the pressures of the new colonial order.

In the American system, all physicians were Doctors of Medicine whereas in the Spanish system most physicians in the Philippines were licentiate. The American government, however, recognized the rights of Filipino licentiate to continue practicing medicine under the new regime. U.S.T. began granting M.D. degrees in 1902. Since "Licentiate" was an uncommon or awkward title in English, this started the practice of calling all physicians in the Philippines "doctors" regardless of whether they had obtained the doctorate or not. This state of affairs has sown confusion in our historical sources, which makes it at times difficult to sort out who were the real Doctors of Medicine during the Spanish period.³³

The First Filipino Physicians were Licentiates in Medicine and Surgery (1877)

To the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Sto. Tomás was assigned the Hospital de San Juan de Dios in the walled city as its teaching hospital. In 1875, the building and revenues of the defunct Colegio de San José, also in Intramuros, were ceded to the school by royal decree. Its first dean was Licenciado Don Rafael Ginard y Mas, who had been practicing medicine in Manila since the 1850s. The requirement for admission to the medical school was the degree of Bachelor of Arts, which was then granted to graduates of the five-year *segunda enseñanza*, the equivalent of high school. Completing four years of the six-year medical licentiate course entitled the student to the degree of Bachelor of Medicine (M.B.). However, it appears that most of the students did not bother to apply for this privilege.³⁴

The first seven Filipino physicians, all of them Licentiates, were Joaquín González López (Baliuag, Bulacán), Enrique López de Séneca y Rivero (Cápiz, Cápiz), José Lozada y Aguilera (Binondo, Manila and Lipá, Batangas), Nicanor Padilla y Escobar (Lingayén, Pangasinán), José Diego Panis y Manio (Calumpit, Bulacán), Narciso de San Agustín y Lacsamana (Cavite, Cavite) and Felipe Zamora y Quisumbing (Binondo, Manila).³⁵

González graduated as a Licentiate in Medicine in 1877 from the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Valladolid in Spain. The following year, he received the M.D. degree from the *Universidad Central de Madrid*, becoming the first Filipino Doctor of Medicine.³⁶

The other six pioneer Filipino physicians comprised the first batch to graduate as Licentiates in Medicine and Surgery in 1877 from the Faculty of Medicine of the U.S.T. Unlike Dr. González, they did not pursue the doctorate in Spain because, as stated earlier, they could already practice their profession with a licentiate. The great expense involved in undertaking the doctorate abroad should also be noted. However, this realistic factor did not seem to apply to the pioneer physicians, who all belonged to very wealthy families. Their pattern of education was, in fact, the one most licentiate graduates of U.S.T. followed in the 19th century.³⁷

The First Filipino Doctors of Medicine and Surgery (1878-1897)

1. Dr. Joaquín González López (1853-1900), the First Filipino Doctor of Medicine and Ophthalmic Surgeon (1878).

A Spanish mestizo, Dr. González graduated as a Bachelor of Arts from

the University of Sto. Tomás in around 1870. He apparently enrolled the following year at the newly inaugurated Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy of his alma mater. However, in March 1872, he left for Spain in order to continue the medical course at the University of Valladolid in his father's native city. He was the first Filipino medical student to arrive in Europe. As mentioned above, he obtained the Licentiate in Medicine in 1877. From Valladolid, he transferred to the College of Medicine of San Carlos of the University of Madrid, where he graduated as a Doctor of Medicine in 1878. The title of his thesis is not known but it must obviously have been the first medical treatise written by a Filipino.³⁸

In the famous clinic of Dr. Louis de Weckert in Paris, Dr. González trained further in ophthalmology. Thus, he was also the first Filipino ophthalmologist. (Rizal, who trained in the same center, was the second.) Before returning to the Philippines, he toured France, Italy, Germany and Switzerland observing medical practice in those countries.³⁹

Back in the Philippines, he set up a clinic in Binondo and later, in Baliuag, Bulacán, his native town. The son of the local Augustinian parish priest, Fray Fausto López (1845-1866), he belonged to a prominent family of Baliuag through his mother, Doña María Amparo González y Angeles. Dr. González himself used "López" as his second surname. It has been customary in Philippine historiography to gloss over this type of family background despite the fact that it is a principal theme of Rizal's courageous novel, *Noli Me Tangere*, published more than a century ago (1887). Although this reticence is understandable, especially during the lifetime of the biographee and those of his children, perhaps it is time that, like Rizal, we lift the taboo on the subject and deal with it forthrightly as part of the reality of the past. Felipe Calderón (1868-1908), the author of the first Philippine Constitution, who was also the grandson of a Franciscan friar, revealed that "Dr. Joaquín González was the son of a friar; the latter has bettered our race... We do not look upon that (background) as a discredit to a man."⁴⁰

Dr. González married Doña Florencia Sioco y Rodríguez, a Chinese mestiza of Bulacán and Pampanga in 1884. In the first stage of the Revolution, Dr. González manifested his loyalty to the colonial government by serving in the Spanish medical corps. In the second stage, however, he emerged as one of the outstanding figures of the First Philippine Republic. Elected to represent the province of Pampanga in the Malolos Congress, he participated actively in the framing of the constitution. Unsuccessfully, he championed the principle of unity of Church and State. Impressed by his academic credentials, President Emilio Aguinaldo appointed him the first rector of the



Dr. Joaquín González López
M.D. Universidad Central de Madrid, 1878
(Courtesy of Bro. Andrew González, FSC)

Universidad Científico-Literaria de Filipinas (1898-99). In this short-lived institution, he also taught legal medicine, toxicology and public health.⁴¹

When the Americans took over the Philippine colony by force of arms, the first Civil Governor, William Howard Taft, in an effort to appease the Filipino intellectuals, named Dr. González chairman of the Civil Service Board. However, before he could fill this post, Dr. González died suddenly of peritonitis due to a ruptured appendix in 1900. At that time, the surgical technique of appendectomy had not been devised.⁴²

Following in his footsteps, three of his sons, Fernando, Jesús and Virgilio, also became Doctors of Medicine. A fourth son, Bienvenido, a Doctor of Science, became the sixth president of the University of the Philippines (1939-51).⁴³

2. Dr. Trinidad Hermenegildo Pardo de Tavera y Gorricho (1857-1925; M.D. 1881), the First Filipino Medical Author

In the racial computations of his era, Dr. Pardo de Tavera was a *cuarterón* or three-fourth Spanish by blood. His maternal grandmother, Doña Ciriaca de los Santos (d. 1862), was a Tagala from Imus, Cavite. (She lies buried at the San Agustin Church in Intramuros.) His family, however, completely considered themselves Filipinos. His parents were Don Félix Pardo de Tavera y Gómez, who died young, and Doña Juliana Gorricho, whose father was a wealthy Mexican Basque. His uncle, Dr. Joaquín Pardo de Tavera, a Doctor of Laws graduate of the University of Sto. Tomás (1868), became his legal guardian. (Joaquín's wife, Gertrudes Gorricho, was also the sister of Juliana, his late brother's wife.) Joaquín was banished to the Marianas in 1872 on charges of conspiracy to overthrow the colonial government. He was pardoned in 1874 on condition that he would not return to his native land. He thus decided to settle in Paris with his extended family.⁴⁴

After obtaining the B.A. degree from the Colegio de San Juan de Letrán in 1873, Trinidad took the medical course at the University of Sto. Tomás for a few years. Afterwards, he joined his uncle's family in Paris continuing his medical studies at the prestigious Sorbonne. Here he graduated with the degrees of Licentiate in Medicine in around 1880 and Doctor of Medicine a year later. The title of his thesis is not known. A versatile scholar like many a doctor of his time, Dr. Pardo de Tavera also took up linguistics at the *Ecole Nationale des Langues Orientales*, which awarded him a diploma in 1885. He endeavored to trace and understand the origins of Tagalog, the dominant language of his country. In 1887 he married Doña Concepción Cembrano y Calderón of Manila, a first cousin of Felipe Calderón.⁴⁵