

RIZAL'S EXILE, TRIAL, AND EXECUTION

José Rizal played a crucial role in inspiring the revolution against Spanish rule. His reformist ideals and literary works exposed the injustices committed by the Spanish colonial government. Because of his advocacy for peaceful reforms, Rizal was exiled to Dapitan, where he continued his intellectual and humanitarian contributions. However, his eventual arrest, trial, and execution marked the culmination of his struggle against colonial oppression.

Rizal's Life While Exiled in Dapitan

After being accused of involvement with the Philippine Revolution, José Rizal was exiled to **Dapitan**, a remote town in Mindanao, **from 1892 to 1896**. Despite his isolation, he made significant contributions to the local community, transforming Dapitan into a model town through his various projects and humanitarian efforts.

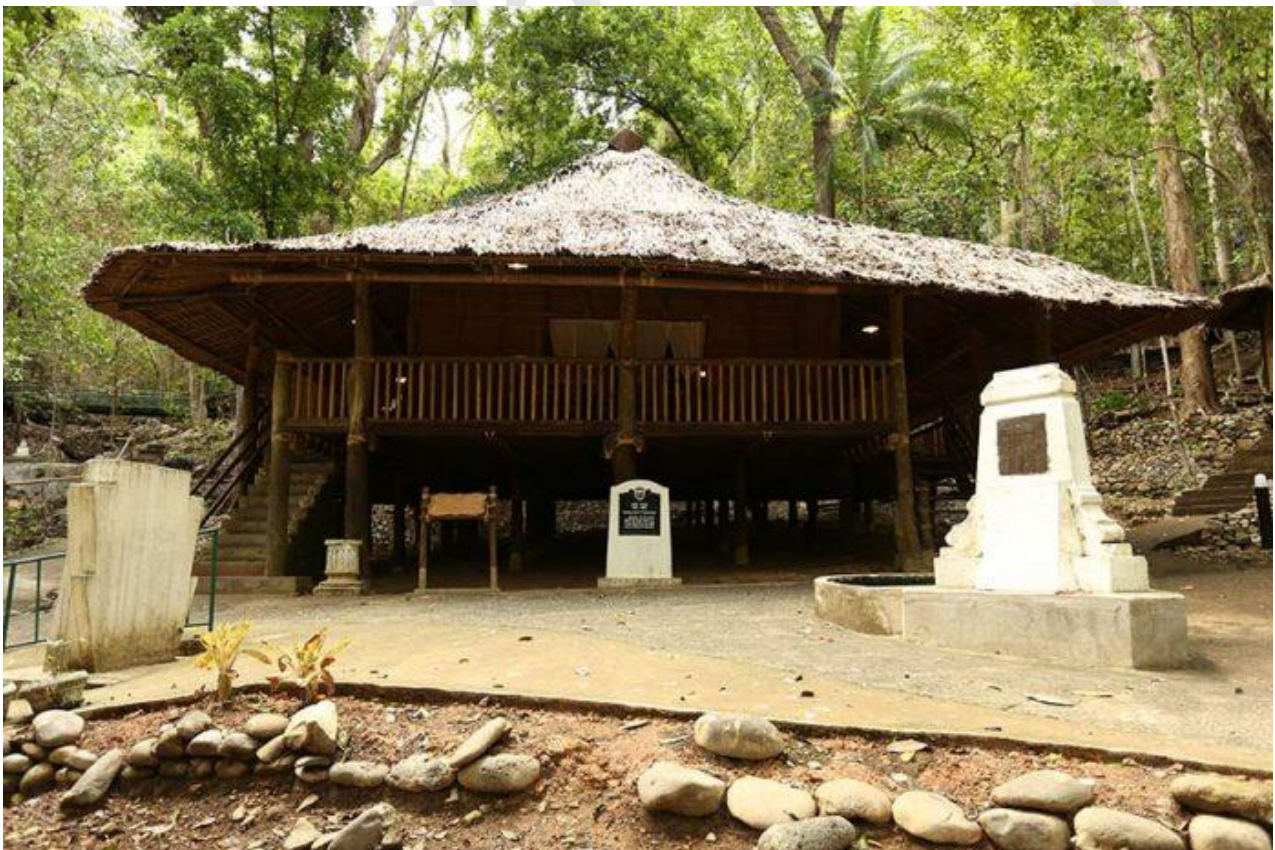


Figure 1. Rizal Shrine in Dapitan. Retrieved from: <https://www.lamudi.com.ph/journal/home-national-hero-jose-rizal/>

Life in Dapitan

Rizal spent **four years** in exile, during which he lived a simple yet productive life. He resided in **Talisay**, a piece of land he purchased with his earnings from **winning a lottery**. There, he built a **house, a school, and a hospital**, dedicating his time to various fields, including **education, medicine, agriculture, and engineering**. Despite his confinement, Rizal maintained correspondence with friends and supporters, sharing his insights on social reforms.



Figure 2. Depiction of Rizal's lotto winning ticket with the number 9736. Retrieved from: <https://fyumul.blogspot.com/2021/12/9736.html>

His daily routine involved **medical practice, teaching, scientific research, and writing**. Rizal treated numerous patients, both rich and poor, often providing free medical services to the underprivileged. He also engaged in agricultural projects, cultivating crops and experimenting with modern farming techniques to benefit the local farmers. His studies in **botany, zoology, and ethnology** further enriched his understanding of the region's natural environment.

Meeting Josephine Bracken

During his exile, Rizal met **Josephine Bracken**, an **Irish** woman who had traveled to Dapitan with her adoptive father, **George Tafer**, seeking treatment for his blindness. Bracken and Rizal developed a deep romantic relationship, and she became his **common-law wife**. Their relationship was met with resistance from the **Spanish friars**, who refused to allow them to marry under Catholic rites. Nevertheless, Bracken remained devoted to Rizal, staying with him until he left for Manila before his trial. According to the accounts of **Chief Inspector Moreno**, Rizal and Bracken were married following Catholic rites hours before Rizal's death. After Rizal's death, Bracken returned to Hong Kong, where she married Vincente Abad and had a daughter with him. Bracken later died of tuberculosis at the age of 25.



Figure 3. *Josephine Sleeping*, a sculpture of Josephine Bracken made by Rizal. Retrieved from: <https://www.respectrebelrevolt.com/post/jos%C3%A9-rizal>

Rizal's Contribution to Society While Exiled

Even in exile, Rizal continued to serve the Filipino people through his various humanitarian, educational, and scientific contributions, which showcased his commitment to national progress.

Rizal made the following contributions to Dapitan during his exile:

- **Education:** Rizal established a school for young boys in Dapitan, where he taught subjects such as Spanish, mathematics, and science. His teaching emphasized practical skills and moral values. The school followed a hands-on approach to education, integrating physical training, manual labor, and arts alongside intellectual instruction.
- **Medicine:** As a physician, he provided free medical services to the poor. He successfully performed eye surgeries and treated various diseases. His expertise in ophthalmology proved invaluable, as he restored the sight of many blind patients in Dapitan.
- **Agriculture and Engineering:** Rizal introduced modern agricultural techniques, improved irrigation systems, and helped in constructing water supply facilities. He assisted farmers in increasing their yields through better planting methods and crop selection.
- **Community Development:** He designed a **public plaza**, improved the town's **sanitation system**, and promoted **sustainable fishing practices**. Rizal's influence transformed Dapitan into an organized and progressive community.
- **Scientific Research:** During his time in Dapitan, Rizal conducted extensive studies in biology, anthropology, and archaeology. He discovered new species of flora and fauna, some of which were later named in his honor. His scientific findings were sent to European scholars, demonstrating his international intellectual connections.



Figure 4. *Draco rizali*, a species of flying lizard named after Rizal. Retrieved from: <https://www.gmanetwork.com/news/specials/content/11/rizal-and-the-creatures-of-dapitan/>

Rizal's Trial and Execution

In 1896, **Governor-General Ramon Blanco** permitted Rizal to travel to **Cuba** to serve as an **army doctor** in exchange for ending his exile. Shortly after Rizal left the Philippines, the *Katipunan* launched the Philippine Revolution. After four years in exile, Rizal was arrested and charged with **sedition**, **rebellion**, and **conspiracy**. His trial was highly biased, serving as a tool for Spanish authorities to suppress his influence. Despite his commitment to peaceful reform, he was portrayed as a traitor who incited rebellion.

Katipunan's Plan to Rescue Rizal

Andrés Bonifacio and the *Katipunan* had devised a plan to rescue Rizal from exile and recruit him into the revolutionary movement. They sent **Dr. Pio Valenzuela** to visit Rizal and inform him of the plan of the *Katipunan* to rescue him. The *Katipunan* offered Rizal a chance to escape in exchange for his support of the revolution. However, Rizal declined their offer, as he firmly believed in achieving **reform through peaceful means** rather than through **armed conflict**. His refusal to join the revolution did not stop the Spanish authorities from perceiving him as a threat.



Figure 5. Historical marker depicting the visit of Dr. Pio Valenzuela to Rizal. Retrieved from: <http://upbsi.org/travelogue/24rizal-in-dapitan/rizal-in-dapitan.html>

Rizal's Trial

Rizal was arrested en route on his way to Cuba and imprisoned at **Fort Santiago**. Procedural irregularities marked his trial by a **Spanish military court**, as he was denied a fair defense. Despite his arguments that he did not support the revolution, he was found guilty and sentenced to death.

The trial was a clear miscarriage of justice. Rizal was accused of being the intellectual force behind the *Katipunan*. The prosecution relied on **circumstantial evidence**, including his association with known revolutionaries and his writings criticizing the Spanish government. He was not given sufficient time to

prepare a proper defense, and his legal counsel, **Lt. Luis Taviel de Andrade**, had limited ability to contest the charges.

Rizal's Execution

On **December 30, 1896**, Rizal was executed by **firing squad** at **Bagumbayan** (now Luneta Park). His final moments were marked by dignity and composure as he bravely faced death. Witnesses described how he **refused to be blindfolded** and insisted on **facing his executioners**. As the shots were fired, Rizal managed to turn his body so that he fell facing the sky, a symbolic act of defiance and patriotism.

Rizal's execution ignited a stronger sense of nationalism among Filipinos. His martyrdom inspired more Filipinos to join the revolutionary movement, leading to the eventual Philippine Revolution against Spanish rule.



Figure 6. *Martyrdom of Rizal*, a painting of Carlos "Botong" Francisco depicting the execution of Jose Rizal. Retrieved from: <https://philippinefolkartmuseum.org/exhibit-rizal-martyrdom-botong-francisco/#>

Mi Último Adiós

On the eve of his execution, Rizal wrote his final poem, ***Mi Último Adiós* (My Last Farewell)**, which encapsulated his love for the Philippines and his willingness to sacrifice for its freedom. Rizal secretly hid *Mi Último Adiós* inside an **alcohol lamp (cocinilla)**, which he gave to his sister, **Trinidad**, during their last meeting before his execution. He instructed her to look inside the lamp, where she found the poem written

on a small piece of paper. This clever method ensured that the poem would be preserved and shared with the world despite the strict surveillance he was under.

Analysis of the Poem

The following themes are present in Rizal's *Mi Último Adiós*:

- **Patriotism** – Rizal expresses his unwavering love for his country, stating that he gladly offers his life for its freedom.
- **Hope and Faith** – Despite his impending death, he remains hopeful that the Philippines will achieve independence.
- **Martyrdom** – Rizal accepts his fate with courage, viewing his execution as part of the nation's struggle for liberty.
- **Universal Message** – The poem transcends its historical context and serves as a universal message of selflessness, sacrifice, and devotion to one's homeland.

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