

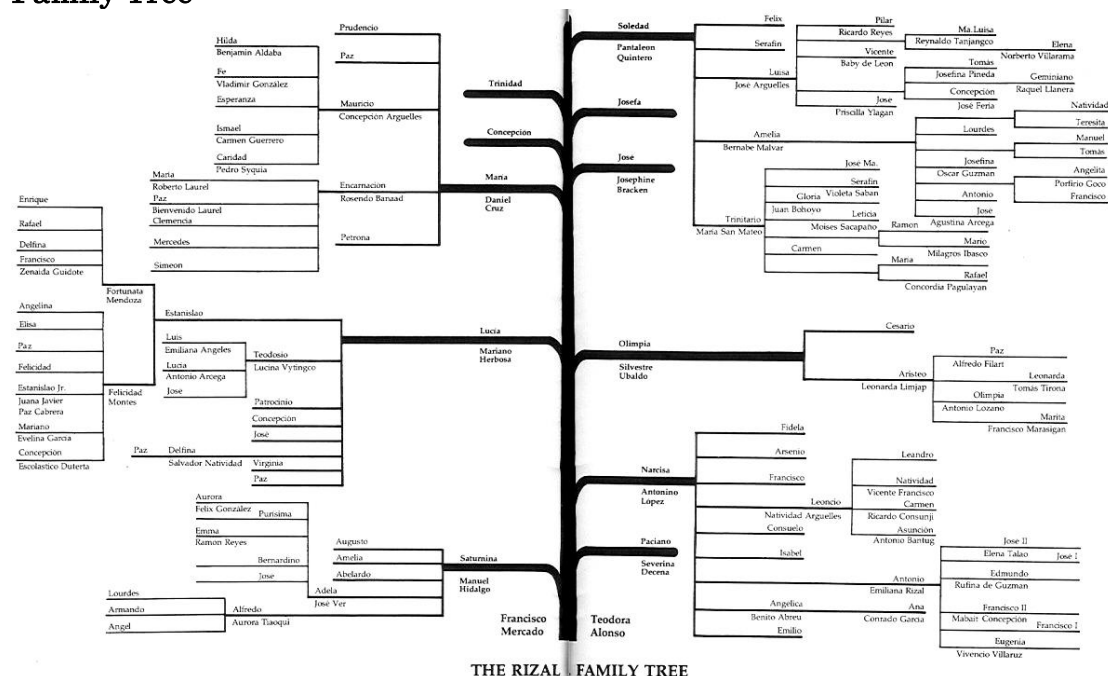
José P. Rizal's Biography

Early Life and Family Background

José Protasio Rizal Mercado y Alonso Realonda, commonly known as José Rizal, was born on June 19, 1861, in Calamba, Laguna, Philippines. He was the seventh of eleven children born to Francisco Mercado Rizal and Teodora Alonso Realonda, both of whom came from affluent families with Chinese, Spanish, and Filipino ancestry. His father, Francisco, was a successful farmer who owned land, while his mother, Teodora, was an educated woman who influenced Rizal's love for learning.

The Rizal family belonged to the principalia, the educated and land-owning class of the Philippines, but they still experienced discrimination from the Spanish colonial authorities due to their lack of pure Spanish blood. Rizal's full name reflects his complex heritage—he was baptized as José Protacio Rizal Mercado y Alonso Realonda, but later dropped "Mercado" to avoid suspicion from the Spanish authorities, who were monitoring Filipinos advocating for reforms.

Family Tree



The Rizals is considered one of the biggest families during their time. Domingo Lam-co, the family's paternal ascendant was a full-blooded Chinese who came to the Philippines from Amoy, China in the

closing years of the 17th century and married a Chinese half-breed by the name of Ines de la Rosa.

Researchers revealed that the Mercado-Rizal family had also traces of Japanese, Spanish, Malay and Even Negrito blood aside from Chinese.

Jose Rizal came from a 13-member family consisting of his parents, Francisco Mercado II and Teodora Alonso Realonda, and nine sisters and one brother.

FRANCISCO MERCADO (1818-1898)

Father of Jose Rizal who was the youngest of 13 offsprings of Juan and Cirila Mercado. Born in Biñan, Laguna on April 18, 1818; studied in San Jose College, Manila; and died in Manila.

TEODORA ALONSO (1827-1913)

Mother of Jose Rizal who was the second child of Lorenzo Alonso and Brijida de Quintos. She studied at the Colegio de Santa Rosa. She was a business-minded woman, courteous, religious, hard-working and well-read. She was born in Santa Cruz, Manila on November 14, 1827 and died in 1913 in Manila.

SATURNINA RIZAL (1850-1913)

Eldest child of the Rizal-Alonzo marriage. Married Manuel Timoteo Hidalgo of Tanauan, Batangas.

PACIANO RIZAL (1851-1930)

Only brother of Jose Rizal and the second child. Studied at San Jose College in Manila; became a farmer and later a general of the Philippine Revolution.

NARCISA RIZAL (1852-1939)

The third child. Married Antonio Lopez at Morong, Rizal; a teacher and musician.

OLYMPIA RIZAL (1855-1887)

The fourth child. Married Silvestre Ubaldo; died in 1887 from childbirth.

LUCIA RIZAL (1857-1919)

The fifth child. Married Matriano Herbosa.

MARIA RIZAL (1859-1945)

The sixth child. Married Daniel Faustino Cruz of Biñan, Laguna.

JOSE RIZAL (1861-1896)

The second son and the seventh child. He was executed by the Spaniards on December 30, 1896.

CONCEPCION RIZAL (1862-1865)

The eighth child. Died at the age of three.

JOSEFA RIZAL (1865-1945)

The ninth child. An epileptic, died a spinster.

TRINIDAD RIZAL (1868-1951)

The tenth child. Died a spinster and the last of the family to die.

SOLEDAD RIZAL (1870-1929)

The youngest child married Pantaleon Quintero.

Academic Background and Intellectual Growth

From a young age, Rizal demonstrated exceptional intelligence. He learned the alphabet from his mother at three years old and could read and write by five. His early education was under private tutors before he was sent to Biñan, Laguna, where he studied under Justiniano Aquino Cruz.

At the age of nine, he was sent to Ateneo Municipal de Manila (now Ateneo de Manila University), where he graduated with highest honors in 1877. Rizal later enrolled at the University of Santo Tomas (UST) to study medicine, but he faced racial discrimination from Spanish students and professors. Seeking a better education, he traveled to Spain in 1882 and continued his studies at the Universidad Central de Madrid, where he earned his Doctor of Medicine degree in 1884. He later specialized in ophthalmology to treat his mother's worsening blindness.

Apart from medicine, Rizal was a polymath—he excelled in literature, history, philosophy, linguistics, and the arts. He was fluent in 22 languages, including Spanish, French, German, English, and Tagalog.

Rizal's Travels and Studies Abroad

Rizal's travels played a crucial role in shaping his views on colonialism, freedom, and social justice. His first trip abroad was in 1882, when he left the Philippines secretly for Spain. In Madrid, he joined the Propaganda Movement, a group of Filipino expatriates advocating for reforms in the Spanish government's rule over the Philippines.

After completing his medical studies in 1885, he traveled across Europe, visiting France, Germany, Belgium, and England, where he continued studying, writing, and refining his ideas on Filipino nationalism. He spent time in Heidelberg, Germany, training under the renowned ophthalmologist Dr. Otto Becker .

While in Europe, Rizal wrote his two most famous novels:

1. Noli Me Tángere (1887) – A novel that exposed the abuses and corruption of Spanish friars and officials in the Philippines.
2. El Filibusterismo (1891) – A sequel to Noli Me Tángere, advocating for revolution as a means of change.

These works were banned in the Philippines, and anyone caught possessing them could be imprisoned or exiled.

First Homecoming (1887–1888)

Despite warnings from his friends, Rizal returned to the Philippines in 1887 to establish reforms. He opened a medical clinic in Calamba and treated patients, including those who were poor and unable to afford medical care. However, his novel, Noli Me Tángere, had angered Spanish friars, who pressured the government to arrest him.

To avoid persecution, Rizal left the country again in 1888, traveling to Hong Kong, Japan, the United States, and Europe .

Rizal's Return to Europe (1888–1892)

While in Europe, Rizal continued advocating for reforms. He moved to London , where he studied historical documents to disprove Spain's claim that Filipinos were inferior. In Belgium, he completed El Filibusterismo .

By 1892, Rizal had grown tired of exile and believed that peaceful reforms could still be achieved. Against the advice of his friends, he decided to return to the Philippines.

Trip Back Home and Exile in Dapitan (1892–1896)

Rizal arrived in the Philippines on June 26, 1892, and founded La Liga Filipina, a civic organization promoting unity, education, and peaceful reforms. However, Spanish authorities saw this as a threat and arrested him on July 6, 1892 .

Instead of executing him, they exiled him to Dapitan, a remote town in Mindanao, where he spent four years (1892–1896). During this time, he:

- ✧ Established a school for poor children.
- ✧ Provided medical treatment to locals.
- ✧ Built an irrigation system to improve farming.
- ✧ Conducted scientific studies on Philippine flora and fauna.

Despite being in exile, Rizal remained a symbol of Filipino resistance .

Rizal's Final Journey and Execution (1896)

In 1896, the Philippine Revolution against Spanish rule erupted, led by the Katipunan, a secret revolutionary group inspired by Rizal's writings. Although Rizal had no direct involvement, Spanish authorities arrested him for rebellion, sedition, and conspiracy .

He was taken to Manila and put on trial. Despite presenting evidence that he was not involved in the revolution, he was found guilty and sentenced to death by firing squad .

On December 30, 1896, at 7:00 AM, Rizal was executed in Bagumbayan (now Luneta Park, Manila). Before his death, he wrote his famous poem "Mi Último Adiós" (My Last Farewell), expressing his love for the Philippines and his willingness to die for his country.

Legacy and Influence

Rizal's death fueled the revolution and inspired Filipinos to continue their fight for independence. In 1898, the Philippines declared independence from Spain. Today, Rizal is honored as the Philippines' national hero, and his writings remain influential in Filipino nationalism.

His legacy lives on in monuments, schools, and institutions bearing his name, and December 30 is celebrated as Rizal Day, a national holiday in the Philippines.

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