

One Hundred Years of Jesuit Scientists: The Manila Observatory 1865-1965

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I. FOUNDATION AND EARLY YEARS, 1865-1897

IT was a memorable day in the history of Philippine science when a young Jesuit scholastic, professor of mathematics and physics at the Ateneo Municipal of Manila, began his systematic observations of the weather just a hundred years ago¹. Impelled by his own scientific interests, Francisco Colina, S.J., had set up for himself a few simple instruments to make primitive observations on the weather two or three times a day. When another recently-arrived scholastic, Jaime Nonell, S.J., who had had a little experience before coming to the Philippines in the modest meteorological observations of his seminary physics professor, saw the terrible destruction wrought by a strong typhoon later that year, he made use of Colina's observations, taken every hour during the typhoon.

¹ Actually, it seems that observations were made even before 1865, but the systematic recording of them dates from the beginning of that year. The principal sources on the history of the Observatory to 1900 are Miguel Saderra Masó, S.J., *Historia del Observatorio de Manila, 1865-1915* (Manila: McCullough, 1915); and Pablo Pastells, S.J. *Misión de la Compañía de Jesús en Filipinas en el siglo XIX* (3 vols.; Barcelona: Editorial Barcelonesa, 1916). For the events till 1870 Pastells based himself on an account written for him in 1912 by Father Jaime Nonell, S.J. Saderra Masó had at his disposal the archives of the Observatory, destroyed in 1945.