

Rizal's execution: Little known facts

[By Raymund Catindig](#) | Updated December 29, 2010 - 12:00am

MANILA, Philippines - As we commemorate tomorrow the 114th year of national hero Dr. Jose Rizal's execution at the Luneta, there are some details that may not be known to many – for instance, why he refused to be blindfolded and demanded that he face his executioners.

Or that only one bullet, from the guns of the firing squad, actually ended the life of the Filipino martyr that further fueled the Philippine revolution.

The court-martial of Rizal commenced on Dec. 26, 1896. Even before the death verdict was handed down, Rizal knew he was a dead man since his trial had been a moro-moro (sham).

By 6:30 of the morning of Dec. 30, Rizal, dressed in a black suit with white vest, began his march to the field of his execution in Bagumbayan, now the Luneta, from his prison cell in Fort Santiago.

Rizal was accompanied by his military appointed counsel Lt. Taviel de Andrade, and Fathers Estanislao March and Jose Villaclara.

Holding a rosary in his right hand, Rizal was tied at the elbows as his group walked behind four advance guards armed with bayonets.

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Historical accounts showed that six to eight Filipino volunteer troops composed the firing squad designated by Spanish authorities to execute Rizal.

A descendant of one of the executioners, Adolfo Pastor Quetcuti, related that only one of the rifles was loaded with a live bullet while the rest were blanks.

This is to ease the guilt of Rizal's executioners who knew he was innocent, he explained.

Another group of peninsular troops also stood behind them as an additional measure just in case the Filipino troops decided to back out.

Rizal refused to be blindfolded and insisted on facing his executioners, but this was denied.

Rizal wanted to show he was no traitor and that he was willing to die for his country.

Dr. Felipe Ruiz Castillo, who took Rizal's vital signs and pulse rate before the execution, was amazed to find that the national hero was calm and unafraid.

Upon hearing the squad commander's shout of "Fuego (Fire)," Rizal turned to face the firing squad.

Rizal fell face up and was able to see the dawn breaking before he uttered in his final breath: "Consummatum est (It is finished)."

In 1898, the first Philippine President Emilio Aguinaldo issued his first decree marking Rizal's death anniversary on Dec. 30 rather than his birthday on June 19 to commemorate his heroism and sacrifice for the country.

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