

## Marcelo H. del Pilar and the Katipunan – sources of confusion

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The tabulation below aims to assess whether there is any good evidence for saying that Del Pilar was the instigator of the Katipunan and/or was ever directly involved in its affairs.

The sources in the table have been presented as evidence by diverse authors and at different times, dating right back to 1896. Each source is considered on its own individual merits, and not one is found to be solid or persuasive.

It is also instructive to look at the sources as a whole, in order to judge their cumulative weight. Can they be woven together into a single, coherent and credible narrative? No, they cannot. One source, for example, has been taken to mean the Katipunan was already in existence in 1889, and another has been claimed as proof that Marcelo H. del Pilar was already writing to Deodato Arellano in the KKK cipher in January 1891. Those interpretations are obviously incompatible with the assertion (based on another source) that thereafter, in April 1891, Del Pilar asked Moises Salvador to convey his instructions to people in Manila that the Katipunan should be established. The chronology does not make sense. Similarly, we now know from the “Casaysayan” etc documents in the Madrid military archives that the KKK had already been conceived by January 1892, which makes it chronologically implausible to say (based on yet other sources) that Del Pilar was still urging the formation of the Katipunan in July 1892, and again in June 1893, and yet again as late as November 1894.

It will not be hugely surprising if substantive evidence does come to light some day that Del Pilar did have direct contact with the Katipunan. The conclusion of these notes is simply that none has yet been found.

Any feedback will be most welcome, and if I have omitted any significant sources, please let me know at jimrichardson10@hotmail.com

Date	Source	“Evidence”; <a href="#">comments</a>
Mar 1889	Marcelo H. del Pilar to Pedro Icasiano, 25 March 1889, in <i>Epistolario de Marcelo H. del Pilar</i> , vol.I (Manila: Imprenta del Gobierno, 1955), 73.	Del Pilar says he has received a letter from Pedro Serrano Laktaw “may dalang sello oficial ng Katipunan doon”.  <a href="#">This Katipunan was the comité de propaganda headed by Pedro Serrano Laktaw (see Schumacher, <i>The Propaganda Movement</i>, Ch.VI).</a>
May 1889	Marcelo H. del Pilar to P. Ikazama, 16 May 1889, in <i>Epistolario</i> , I, 124.	Del Pilar says he asked “Don Andres” to send P. Ikazama “el reglamento”.

This reglamento might have been that of the organization La Solidaridad, or perhaps the Lodge Revolución, both of which had recently been formed in Barcelona. Whoever edited the *Epistolario* and identified “Don Andres” as Bonifacio offers no basis or explanation for doing so.

Dec 1889 “Katipunan sa Barcelona?” in Mariano Ponce at Jaime C. de Veyra, *Efemerides Filipinas*, Salin ni Edgardo M. Tiamson et al, (Lungsod Quezon: Office of Research Coordination, Unibersidad ng Pilipinas, 1998), 648-54.

Title - “Katipunan sa Barcelona?” - is that of a Tagalog translation of an article originally written in Spanish, date unknown, but describing events in Barcelona in December 1889.

This Katipunan comprised Mariano Ponce and associates, who the Spanish press alleged had constituted a secret “Centro Filipino” in Barcelona and were putting out pamphlets which “attempt to loosen the bonds of union with the mother country...” (see Schumacher, *The Propaganda Movement*, Ch.X).

Jan 1891 Marcelo H. del Pilar to Deodato Arellano, 7 January 1891, in Horacio de la Costa, SJ, (ed.), *The Trial of Rizal* (Manila: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1961), 93.

The names “Dzte” (Dato) and “VZKKQJC” (MARCELO) are in KKK code.

This letter, together with letters from Rizal, Luna and others, was among the documents found at Bonifacio’s workplace in August 1896 and subsequently presented as exhibits at Rizal’s trial. The trial records describe these documents collectively (i.e. not solely this letter) as being “in Tagalog and in code”. Del Pilar, Rizal, Luna and the others did not pen their letters in the KKK code. Bonifacio (or another KKK member) made copies in code. “Andres Bonifacio revered Del Pilar to such a degree,” Epifanio de los Santos writes, “that he copied *con amore* the letters written written by Del Pilar to Arellano, in order to keep them like relics...” [Epifanio de los Santos, “Marcelo H. del Pilar,” *Philippine Review*, V:8 (August 1920), 516.]

Jun 1893 Marcelo H. del Pilar to Juan A. Zulueta, 1 June 1893, in *Epistolario*, I, 265.

“What is needed,” Del Pilar writes, “is a special organ designed specifically for the Philippine cause. Its members, or some of them, may be Masons, but it is imperative that the organization itself should be independent of Masonry. It seems that this was what the L.F. [Liga Filipina] is going to bring about.” (Translation in De la Costa (ed.) *The Trial of Rizal*, 93.)

Whoever edited the *Epistolario* (p.265) speculates that the “special organ” might refer to the Katipunan, but offers no basis for this speculation.

Del Pilar's hope that the Liga will fulfil the role he has in mind shows he is not thinking about the Katipunan.

- Nov 1894    Marcelo H. del Pilar to D. José Reyes Tolentino y Compañeros, La Modestia, Manila, 3 November 1894, in *Epistolario*, I, 266-71.
- Del Pilar refers to a "new organization" for which he has prepared a "plan of documentation".
- Spaniards who believed Del Pilar was the founder of the Katipunan often chose to quote from this particular letter. But why? The letter makes no reference to the Katipunan. It talks about a "new organization," and yet the Katipunan has already been in existence for over two years. The letter is about the demoralized state of the Masonic Lodges, caused by Spanish persecution and Pedro Serrano Laktaw's malversation of funds. Contemporary observers like José M. del Castillo and even Governor General Ramon Blanco himself, it is safe to say, only resorted to quoting this letter as documentary evidence of Del Pilar's connections with the separatist movement because they had nothing better. See José M. del Castillo y Jiménez, *El Katipunan o el filibusterismo en Filipinas* (Imprenta del Asilo de huérfanos del S. C. de Jesús, Madrid 1897) 24-34; and Ramón Blanco, *Memoria que al Senado dirige el general Blanco: acerca de los últimos sucesos ocurridos en la Isla de Luzón* (Madrid: Establecimiento Tipográfico de "El Liberal", 1897), 75.
- Sep 1896    Pio Valenzuela y Alejandrino, declaration dated 3 September 1896 in Retana, *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino*, III, 213-4.
- Valenzuela says Marcelo H. del Pilar had been "the President of the Associates of the Katipunan, residing in Spain."
- This quote (like all quotes) should be considered in context. Valenzuela made this statement under torture or duress, and some of the information he gave his interrogators is obviously false. Earlier in the same paragraph, Valenzuela says "he recalled that among the persons mentioned by Bonifacio as active members [of the Consejo Supremo Superior of the Katipunan] were Francisco Roxas, Doroteo Cortes, the Lunas...etc etc." All of this was a complete fiction.
- Sep 1896    José Dizon y Matanza, declaration dated 23 September 1896, in Retana, *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino*, III, 284.
- "Who was it," Dizon is asked, "who brought instructions from Spain for the establishment of the Katipunan in Manila?" "Moises Salvador," Dizon replies: "[H]e brought them from Madrid, from Marcelo H. del Pilar, and delivered them to Deodato Arellano and Andres Bonifacio, but Deodato Arellano also received other instructions

from Marcelo H. del Pilar.... Deodato Arellano showed me some letters he received direct from Del Pilar referring to the organization of the Katipunan, and in one of them he asked whether Moises Salvador had done what he was commissioned to do. Salvador replied that he had. Moreover, Deodato Arellano and Andres Bonifacio told me of Moises Salvador's mission."

Again, this statement was made under torture or duress. The quotation above is from the declaration Dizon made on 23 September 1896. But the previous day, 22 September, he said this: "[On 7 July 1892, when Rizal's deportation was announced] Andres Bonifacio...[others] and myself gathered in a house on Calle Ylaya and decided to form a society to be called the Katipunan, the purpose of which was to be...the liberation of the Islands from the power of Spain.... The program of the society was then drawn up under six clauses...it was agreed these clauses could be amended as and when opportune." The declaration Dizon made on 22 September, in other words, does not seem compatible with the story he told the following day about Del Pilar sending instructions about the Katipunan's formation that were carried from Madrid to Manila by Moises Salvador. Salvador had returned to the Philippines in April 1891, fifteen months prior to July 1892.

It is likely that Dizon was to some degree was saying what he thought his interrogators wanted to hear. He did not conjure the name "Moises Salvador" from nowhere. It might not be coincidental that Moises Salvador was being interrogated by the same interrogators on the very same day - 23 September 1896 - and confessed to them (or so the record says) that he had brought instructions from Madrid about the establishment of Masonic Lodges and the Liga Filipina. [Moises Salvador y Francisco, declaration dated 23 September 1896, in Retana, *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino*, III, 295]. The Spaniards often drew no distinction between Masonry, the Liga and the KKK, so even if Dizon's interrogators did not torture him into making a confession that was factually false, it is entirely possible that they misrepresented what he said.

Oct 1896 Olegario Diaz, Guardia Civil Veterana, Report

Says that "...Marcelo H. del Pilar, from Madrid, in July 1892, advised the creation of another

dated 28 October 1896, in Wenceslao E. Retana, *Archivo del bibliófilo filipino*, vol. III (Madrid: Imprenta de la viuda de M. Minuesa de los Rios, 1897), 429.

association which was to be similar [to the Liga Filipina] but which was to include the agricultural laborers and persons of little or no education and instruction but who, directed in the localities by the *caciques* and the chiefs, were to form an enormous nucleus which should, at the proper time, give forth the cry of rebellion. He (del Pilar) provided minute instructions concerning the organization and forwarded a project of regulations. Deodato Arellano,...Andres Bonifacio, Ladislao Diua and Teodoro Plata were those commissioned to carry into practice the project of Pilar, they discussed the regulations and added to them, making them still more terrifying, agreeing that should all immediately proceed with the preparatory works, and they were not interrupted till the conspiracy was discovered,..."

Olegario Diaz does not say where he obtained this information. Most likely the source was some poor soul being tortured. Diaz's report, moreover, is self-contradictory. If, as he says, Del Pilar sent his advice from Madrid in "July 1892," it could not have reached Arellano, Bonifacio etc. by 7 July 1892, the date on which Diaz says (elsewhere in his report) the Katipunan was founded.

1897 Isabelo de los Reyes, *La Religión del Katipunan*, Segunda edición (Madrid: Tipolit. De J. Corrales, 1900), 57.

Photograph of Marcelo H. del Pilar captioned "Autor, segun otros, del Katipunan".

There is no indication of who the "others" were, or why they said Del Pilar was the author of the Katipunan. Isabelo de los Reyes himself says (p.30) that the Katipunan "fue ideada y fundada por A. Bonifacio, Deodato Arellano" and others on 7 July 1892, in response to news of Rizal's deportation.

1899 "El 'Katipunan' de Barcelona," *Alrededor del Mundo*, 22 September 1899.

Title of article in Spanish paper - "El 'Katipunan' de Barcelona".

This Katipunan was a wine drinking circle - "No se alarmen los benévolos lectores que este *Katipunan* no guarda analogía con aquel otro que tanto nos dio que sentir a Filipinas; es, sencillamente, un círculo 'reducidísimo' de Jóvenes alegres y templados que en Barcelona rinden culto a las libaciones más ricas y sabrosas de la divinidad del mosto."

1908 Aguedo del Rosario, "The Katipunan of 1896" [1908], Appendix C to

Says the Katipunan was founded on 7 July 1892 "at the initiative of the lawyer, Marcelo H. del Pilar, who was at the time living in Barcelona..."

*The Minutes of the Katipunan* (Manila: National Historical Institute, 1978), 113.

In 1892 Del Pilar was living in Madrid, not Barcelona, but Aguedo del Rosario's brief memoir is far more seriously at fault in the next sentence.

"The purpose of the Katipunan," he writes, "was at all times from the beginning to secure, by legitimate means, radical reforms that would tend to improve existing conditions in the island[s] and eventually their emancipation from the Mother Country." Say what? The Katipunan sought radical reforms "by legitimate means?" Del Rosario must have known this was not true, but he wrote it anyway. How, then, can we have any confidence that what he said about Marcelo H. del Pilar is true?

1920 Epifanio de los Santos, "Marcelo H. del Pilar," *The Philippine Review*, V:8 (August 1920), 528.

"...It is very correctly stated that Andres Bonifacio ordered Teodoro Plata to draw up the statutes of the Katipunan, and that he did this with the aid of Ladislao Diwa and Valentin Diaz. After the statutes had been discussed, Andres Bonifacio, with the concurrence of Deodato Arellano, submitted them to Del Pilar for approval. Upon the latter's letter approving the statutes, Andres Bonifacio used the same for the purpose of gaining adepts."

No source given.

1952 Leon Ma. Guerrero, "Del Pilar," *Philippines Free Press*, 13 December 1952.

"Bonifacio used [letters] he himself received [from Del Pilar] as guides for action."

No source given.

1975 Renato Constantino, *A History of the Philippines* (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1975), 163. [This is a US edition of *A Past Revisited*].

"The Katipunan organ, the *Kalayaan*, carried del Pilar's name as editor-in-chief, a ploy to throw off the authorities; this had del Pilar's sanction."

Constantino's endnote here cites Arturo Ma. Misa, "Del Pilar and the Katipunan," *Philippines Free Press*, 4 July 1959. Misa's source is not known.

N.B. These notes are not about whether Del Pilar was a separatist (he was); whether he was revered by the Katipuneros (he was); or whether some of his relatives, friends and brother Masons were Katipuneros (they were).