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Rizal's Studies in the University of Madrid

MIGUEL MARIA VARELA

AMONG the documents preserved in the Central Library of the University of Madrid are the academic records of José Rizal for 1882-1885, the years in which he was enrolled in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of that University. Rizal's file includes the following documents:

1. A transcript of record issued by Dr. Antonio Estrada, Secretary of the University of Santo Tomás of Manila. It lists the courses taken by Rizal and the grades he obtained during the school year 1877-1878. He received the grade of *sobresaliente*¹ in each of the following subjects: Cosmology, History of Philosophy, Metaphysics, Natural Theology. The transcript is dated 1 August 1878 and bears the signatures of Fray Joaquín Fonseca, O.P., Rector of the University, and Dr. Estrada.

2. An application form of the University of Madrid, dated 20 September 1882, in which Rizal applies for enrollment in

¹ The Spanish grading system, with approximate English equivalents, is as follows:

<i>Sobresaliente con matrícula</i>	Excellent, with award of at least partial scholarship
<i>de honor</i>	
<i>Sobresaliente</i>	Excellent
<i>Notable</i>	Very Good
<i>Bueno</i>	Good
<i>Aprobado</i>	Passed
<i>Suspenso</i>	Failed

The grade of *bueno* is no longer in use in the University of Madrid.

two courses — *Literatura General* and the first year of *Historia Universal* — for the school year 1882-1883.²

3, 4. Stubs of the matriculation fee receipts for the two courses mentioned in 2, bearing date of 20 September 1882. All such receipts in the file bear in Rizal's handwriting the phrase "Recibí la parte superior" and his signature, which is sometimes "José Rizal" and at other times "José Rizal y Alonso". The system obviously was that the upper half of the receipt was given to the matriculating student and the lower half retained in the registrar's office.

5, 6. Matriculation forms for the subjects mentioned in 2. All matriculation forms carry on the reverse side the examination form which must be filled out by the secretary of the board examining the student at the end of course. It includes the date of the examination, the grade obtained, and the signature of the examinee.

7, 8. Stubs of the examination fee receipts for the courses mentioned in 2, bearing date of 28 May 1883 and signed "José Rizal y Alonso".

9. Application form for the school year 1883-1884 in the following subjects: *Historia Universal* (second year), *Literatura Griega y Latina*, *Lengua Griega* (first year). Dated 27 September 1883.

10, 11, 12. Stubs of matriculation fee receipts in the subjects indicated in 9; same date.

13. Application form for examinations, filled out by Rizal on 24 May 1884, requesting that he be examined in the subjects mentioned in 9 during the month of June next.

14, 15, 16. Stubs of the examination fee receipts for the subjects mentioned in 9.

² In European universities, as in those of North America, the school year begins in October and ends in June.

³ In Spanish universities final examinations are held twice in the school year: the *examen ordinario* in June and the *examen extraordinario* in September. For a reasonable cause the student may postpone his examination to September.

17. Application form for the school year 1884-1885 in the following subjects: *Lengua Griega* (second year), *Historia Crítica de España*, and *Lengua Hebrea*. Dated 6 October 1884.

18. Application for *matrícula de honor*⁴ in *Literatura Española* and *Lengua Árabe*, dated 6 October 1884. The second page of the application bears the signed approvals of the Registrar, the Department Chairman, and the Rector.

19, 20, 21, 22, 23. Matriculation forms for the courses mentioned in 17 and 18. The corresponding examination forms on the reverse side are all filled out except that for *Lengua Árabe*.

24, 25, 26. Stubs of the matriculation fee receipts for the courses mentioned in 17. Dated 6 October 1884.

27. A form sent by the Secretary-General of the University of Madrid to the Secretary of the University of Santo Tomás, 26 February 1885, requesting authentication of the transcript of record submitted by Rizal (see No. 1 above). The form was returned to Madrid on 20 April 1885 with a handwritten marginal note by the Secretary of Santo Tomás testifying to the authenticity of the transcript. It was received 8 June 1885. This request for authentication seems to be in consequence of Rizal's petition mentioned below, No. 28.

28. A memorandum of Rizal's addressed to the Rector of the University of Madrid, Dr. Juan Creus y Manso, requesting that the four courses he took in the University of Santo Tomás be credited in place of the two courses in Metaphysics required by the University of Madrid. The memorandum is in Rizal's handwriting and reads as follows:

Excmo. é Ilmo. Sr. Rector de la Universidad Central⁵

⁴ That is, for a scholarship grant in these courses, by reason of the awards received the previous year in Greek and in Greek and Latin Literature.

⁵ This was the official name of the University of Madrid until 1943. It was a reminder that as the direct descendant of the University of Alcalá it was the only one in Spain empowered to grant the doctoral degree in any faculty of higher studies.

Excmo. Señor:

José Rizal Mercado y Alonso, alumno de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, a V.E. con el debido respeto expone:

Que habiendo presentado una solicitud al Director General de Instrucción Pública en demanda de validez de las asignaturas aprobadas en la Universidad de su país, y habiendosele dicho por el Secretario de la Facultad, ser necesario dirigirse a V.E. para que atendiera a la petición, que se consigna en la hoja que acompaña; suplica pues, se sirva dar curso al adjunto documento al Consejo de Instrucción Pública, o á donde los Reglamentos indican para el exacto cumplimiento de las leyes.

Es gracia que espera conseguir de V. E. cuya vida guarde Dios muchos años.

Madrid, 24 de Febrero de 1885

JOSE RIZAL MERCADO Y ALONSO

29. A letter of the Rector of the University, Dr. Creus, to the Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, Don Francisco Fernández González, dated 28 February 1885, asking that Rizal's petition be considered by the Dean and the professors of the subjects concerned.

30. A letter of the Dean dated 11 March 1885, informing the Rector that Rizal's request had been favorably acted upon. On the left-hand margin of the first page is a notation by the Rector ordering that this letter be included among the documents to be forwarded to the Dirección General de Instrucción Pública.

31. A letter of the Rector of the University of Madrid to the Director General of Public Instruction, Don Aureliano Fernández Guerra, dated 20 March 1885, informing him that the University had no objection to Rizal's petition and requesting that it be granted.

32. A letter of the Director General to the Rector, dated 13 April 1885, granting the petition. A notation by the Rector on the left-hand margin of the letter, dated 21 April 1885, directs that the approved petition be complied with.

33, 34, 35. Stubs of examination fee receipts for the courses indicated in 17.

36. A handwritten loose-leaf note of the Registrar of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters bearing date of 12 June 1885. In it he certifies that Rizal obtained the grade of *sobresaliente* in *Lengua Griega* (second year), *Lengua Hebrea*, and *Literatura Española*, and the grade of *bueno* in *Historia Crítica de España*.

37, 38, 39, 40, 41. Five slips of paper on each of which is given Rizal's full name, a course taken by him, and the special award given in addition to the grade. The awards are either *premio* or *mención* (i.e., honorable mention).

42. A note issued by the Department of Philosophy and Letters to the Department of Medicine of the University requesting that the former be informed of the date Rizal was examined for the Bachelor's degree, and the pertinent facts about the diploma granted to him. Apparently this note was sent when the Department of Philosophy and Letters was preparing the official transcript of record of Rizal, since it is dated 12 June 1885, a week before his final oral examination for the degree of *Licenciado en Filosofía y Letras*, the approximate equivalent of the Master of Arts degree in Anglo-Saxon universities.

43. *Extracto del Expediente Académico*, a summary of Rizal's academic record, bearing date of 12 June 1885 and signed by the Secretary General of the University and the *Oficial del Negociado*.

44, 45, 46. Three forms, the first filled out by Rizal, requesting permission to be examined for the degree of *Licenciado en Filosofía y Letras*.

47. *Acta del Grado de Licenciado en Filosofía y Letras*, a record of the proceedings for the conferring of the licentiate degree on Rizal, signed by the President of the Examining board, Dr. Mariano Viscasillas, and the other two examiners, Dr. Francisco Sánchez de Castro and Dr. Manuel María del Valle. Rizal signed his name under the rubric: *Firma del Graduando*.

48, 49. Two forms concerning the last examination before the conferring of the degree, known as the *Ejercicio de Grado*.

The second of these forms indicate the topic chosen by Rizal for his oral examination: "Cicerón considerado en su triple carácter de hombre de estado, de orador, y de escritor" (Cicero as statesman, orator and man of letters). The names of the examiners are noted and the grade obtained: *sobresaliente*.

50. Another transcript of record enumerating the courses taken by Rizal and the grades and special awards won by him during his stay at the University.

From these documents it appears that during his three years as a student in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Madrid, Rizal obtained one grade of *bueno*, one of *notable*, eight *sobresalientes*, two *premios* and two *matriculas de honor*. The last two, which were the highest granted by the University at the time and entailed a scholarship grant, were won by Rizal in Spanish Literature and Arabic, taken during his third year. It is not clear from official records whether he also obtained one *menção* in Spanish Literature and two other *premios* in Greek and Hebrew. This information does not appear on his transcript but in loose-leaf notes which were probably taken down by a *bedel* or minor official.

Although Rizal fulfilled all the requirements for the licentiate in Philosophy and Letters, he does not seem to have obtained the diploma attesting this. We can surmise one reason: a diploma was rather expensive even in those days before inflation, and Rizal most probably did not have the 527.50 pesetas which it would have cost him.

The matriculation forms give us an additional piece of information: Rizal's lodgings in Madrid during these three years. He had at least three different addresses: Calle del Barquillo, *número* 34, in 1882-1883, Calle San Miguel, *número* 7, *cuarto* 1, in 1883-1884, and Calle de Pizarro, *número* 13, *cuarto* 2, in 1884-1885. All of these lodgings are quite close to the University, then established in what was formerly a Jesuit novitiate on the Calle de San Bernardo.

At the Puerta del Sol, which is the very heart of Madrid, there is a coffee shop, the Antiguo Café de Levante, which in the late nineteenth century used to be a rendezvous of young

intellectuals. The owners of the establishment today still show the interested visitor a room lower than street level where university students used to foregather for coffee. Those of them who later became famous in the history of their respective countries are remembered in the carved images which line the walls of the modernized room. There we find Rizal's bust alongside those of Bolivar and other South-American leaders and patriots. It may be worth finding out which of Rizal's Spanish and foreign contemporaries in the University of Madrid later became conspicuous in the political and social development of their respective homelands, whether they knew each other and Rizal, and whether they carried on any significant exchange of ideas.