

ANDRES BONIFACIO AND THE OUTBREAK OF
THE KATIPUNAN REVOLT

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The Philippine Revolution was an event of great importance and significance in our history. It represented the united effort, will and purpose of the Filipino people to secure for themselves and their posterity the blessings of freedom and to raise their country to the status and dignity of a free and independent nation.

The initial step towards this goal was taken in 1892 when Andres Bonifacio organized that year the Katipunan Society. Starting with only a handful of members, the Katipunan ng mga Anak ng Bayan, as the Society was formally known, propagated itself gradually, although slowly at the beginning, among the Filipinos. Persons initiated into the Katipunan went through the ordeal of the "blood compact." This consisted in the initiate's making a small incision on his arm, and with his own blood pledging his adherence to the Society and his willingness and readiness to defend it and the cause for which it stood, even at the cost of his own life.

The members of the Katipunan were organized into small centers or groups called Sanggunian Bayan and Balangay, under their respective leaders and officers while the Society as a whole was ruled by a supreme council, Kata-astasang Pangaluhana, at the head of which was a Supremo. Except for a brief interval in the early stages of the Katipunan, the post of Supremo was held by Andres Bonifacio.

By August, 1896, the Katipunan had grown to large proportions. According to Olegario Diaz of the Guardia Civil Veteran, in the Manila area alone there were no less than 14,000 Katipunan members at the time the Katipunan uprising began. In Cavite, Batangas, Laguna and

Nueva Ecija, he estimated that at least 20,000 had been initiated into the Katipunan.

To preserve its secret character, the Katipunan Society adopted effective and ingenious measures. Members of the Society were thoroughly imbued and indoctrinated with ideas of love of country and of unswerving loyalty and devotion to the Katipunan. Every Katipunero was required to keep in strict confidence everything connected with the activities of the Katipunan. The identity of Katipunan members was kept at mystery to outsiders by the use of assumed names. Andres Bonifacio was May-Pag-asa; Emilio Aguinaldo was Magdalo; Ildefonso Laurel was Maytiaga; Briceio Pantas was Bungahan; Jose Basa was Kulog; etc. Moreover, the Katipunan Society had an alphabet of its own. It was based on the Roman alphabet but some of letters were differently arranged. The letter "a" for example was "z" in the Katipunan alphabet; the letter "i" was "n"; "l" or "ll" was "j"; "n" was "ii"; "o" was "e"; and "v" was "x". The founders of the Katipunan evolved this ingenious device and used it in the drafting of their official documents as a further safeguard against intrusion into the secrets of the Society.

Thanks to the effectiveness of the measures it adopted for its own security and the rigid discipline of its members, the Katipunan, even after it had grown numerically to gigantic proportions, remained undetected and unmolested. There were numerous and persistent rumors of its existence and of its plan to overthrow, through force and violence, the Spanish regime in the Philippines; but to August 1896, the Spanish colonial officials could find no concrete and conclusive evidence to substantiate such rumors. Governor Blanco consistently refused to give credence to reports, brought to him from various sources, of the existence of subversive groups, invariably dismissing such reports as the product of wild and fervid imaginings on the part of the friars.

On the 19th of August, 1896, however, on information given him by a member of the Katipunan, Fr. Mariano Gil of Tondo found positive and conclusive proofs of the existence of the Katipunan. From revelations made by Katipuneros who were taken in for police investigation immediately after the discovery, the Spanish authorities came to know the real nature and purpose of the society