

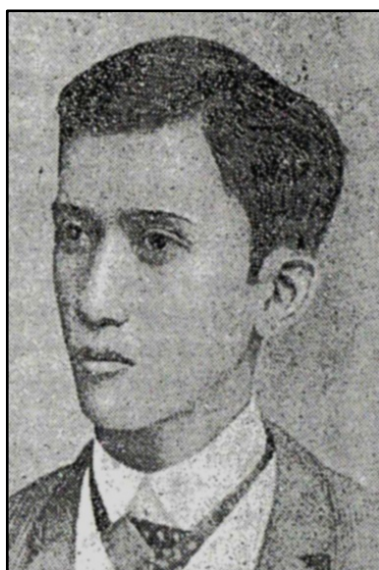
Epifanio “Don Panyong” de los Santos

The Census and Creating a Filipino Nation

The U.S. Census Bureau has always highlighted American diversity through its decennial snapshots of the population. As the United States grew and the population became more diverse, the Census Bureau’s workforce adapted to represent the country’s people and needs. As immigration from non-European countries increased in the 19th century, the Census Bureau tried to hire enumerators that lived in the neighborhoods and spoke the language. Others became a part of the operations in Washington, DC. From the first surges of Chinese immigration into California in the 19th century, immigrants of Asian and Pacific Islander heritage have long contributed to the Census Bureau’s mission, both at headquarters and in the field.



Epifanio’s picture from the 1903 Census.



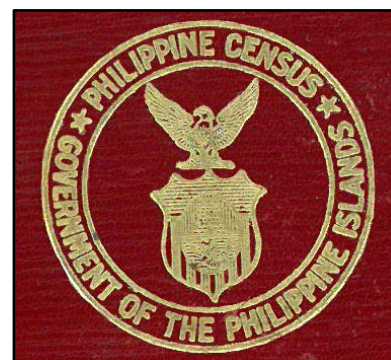
A Young Epifanio.

(old newspaper clipping, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons).

Epifanio de los Santos y Cristóbal was born on April 7, 1871, in Malabon, Manilla, to Escolasticio de los Santos and Antonina Cristóbal y Tongco. Epifanio’s mother was a musician, while his father was an influential man from the province of Nueva Ecija, where Epifanio spent much of his youth collecting plants and flowers and learning about the various local communities. From an early age, Epifanio excelled at almost everything he touched, and most people assumed he would become a musician since he showed marked talent in that area. Indeed, after graduating *summa cum laude* from the Ateneo Municipal de Manila Epifanio, the university offered him a professorship in music. However, Epifanio also excelled at writing, both fiction and history, art, and law and he decided to pursue the latter. He received his law degree from the University of Santo Tomas and passed the bar in 1898.

Around this time, Epifanio began to get involved with revolutionary activities promoting independence from Spain. He wrote in the aptly named “La Independencia” under a pen name, and participated in the Malolos Congress, the first constituent assembly under the First Philippine Republic. Epifanio received an appointment as district attorney of Nueva Ecija. In 1902, he was elected as governor of the province.

With the the Phillipine Organic Act of 1902 imposed by the United States, the Phillipines would be governed in part by a representational Philippine Assembly—but in order to do this a census was needed. Additionally, the Organic Act stipulated that the census would not be conducted until the cessation of hostilities, and that the Assembly could only be formed if there was peace for two years after the census was completed. Accordingly, the Census of the Philippine Islands taken in 1903 had major implications for the governance of the islands.



Official seal of the 1918 Census of the Philippine Islands.



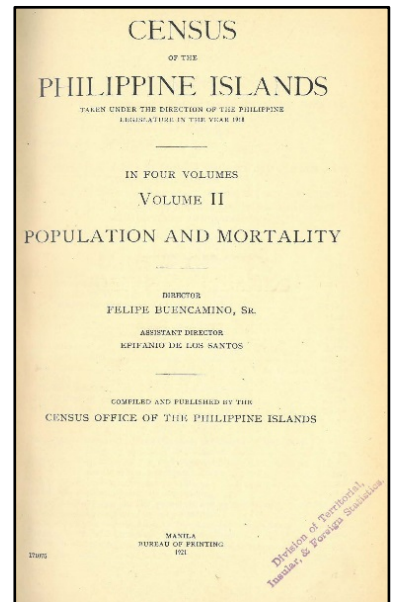
Courtesy of *Talambuhay ng mga bayani at natatanging Pilipino* (Biographies of heroes and unique Filipinos).

Because of this, coupled with widespread illiteracy and mistrust of the American government, the Census Bureau determined that the provincial governors should be the district supervisors of the census. Although some of the governors were relics of the old Spanish system of cronyism, Epifanio was a truly dedicated and competent public servant. Epifanio's jaunts through the country side collecting specimens as a youth now gave him an advantage in both knowing his territory, as well as its people. In December of 1902, Epifanio spent two weeks in Manila going over the district maps and learning how to conduct the census. In mid-January, all of the governor-supervisors were in charge of collecting their materials in Manila, packing them by hand, and then distributing them to their enumerators and special agents—who passed on their training to the local *presidentes* (mayors). On March 2, 1903, the Philippine census began, and Epifanio successfully spearheaded the count of 134,147 people, as well as the manufactures and agriculture of Nueva Ecija.

Following the success of the 1903 Census, Epifanio, won reelection as governor of Nueva Ecija in 1904. Following that term, he served as provincial fiscal prosecutor of Bulacan and Bataan provinces.

In 1918, at the next census of the Philippines, and the first one conducted almost entirely by the Filipinos, Epifanio was the assistant technical director of the census, in charge of technical aspects and editing. Due to his previous experience and his ability to master any task, Epifanio was integral throughout the 1918 Census process and received special recognition from the director, Felipe Buencamino, Sr., for his competence and enthusiasm.

Throughout his lifetime of public service, Epifanio always seemed more interested in researching Filipino history, writing treatises on the problems he saw in government, and collecting Filipino literature, music, manuscripts, and art than in conducting the affairs of government. Epifanio had traveled around the world collecting pieces for his collection as well as forming bonds with international groups. He spoke fluent Spanish, English, French, German, Ita, Itneg, and Ibalao. He became the first Filipino member of the Spanish Royal Academies of Language and History. His collections became some of the most complete and unique involving Filipino history, although a fire destroyed a portion of his collection. So impressive was his library and collection that, upon his death, the Filipino government purchased it from his widow.



Volume II of the final 1918 report.



Statue of Epifanio in Nueva Ecija. *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (Makati City, Philippines) 17 May 2014.

The last appointments of his life allowed Epifanio to indulge in his true passion. In 1925, he became the director of the Philippine Library and Museum. He was also the first Filipino elected president of the Philippine Library Association. As such, most credit him with contributing to early Philippine studies on diverse topics such as anthropology, ethnology, demographics, and linguistics.

Epifanio was married twice: first to Doña Ursula Paez of Malabon and then to Margarita Torralba of Malolos. He had a total of 12 children, many of

whom followed in his footsteps into the arts. At the young age of 58, Epifanio passed away on April 18, 1928, in Manila, after a lifetime of giving voice and governance to the Filipino people and nation. The Philippine government honored him with a state funeral. The Philippine government named the main road through Manila, as well several schools, a hospital, and an auditorium in tribute to the man who did so much to preserve Philippine culture.