

Abstract

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A VENEZUELAN ANATOMIST CITED IN THE HUMAN ANATOMY TREATISE TESTUT-LATARJET

Le traité d'anatomie Testut-Latarjet (The human anatomy Testut-Latarjet treatise) published in 1887, is considered one of the most complete on human anatomy, with detailed descriptions of the human body and anthropological concepts, accompanied by philosophical and anthropological concepts. This anatomy treatise is still a very useful teaching tool in many Latin American and European Medical Faculties. In 1902, this anatomical treatise won the Saintour Prize, awarded by the French Academy of Medicine and since 1910 it has been translated into Spanish, Italian, German and other languages. The Testut-Latarjet treatise on human anatomy consists of four volumes with a total of 4,935 pages in its 1960 Spanish edition, as well as 4,144 highly detailed illustrations in color. The 1960 Spanish edition of Testut-Latarjet treatise in its volume IV included a citing of the doctoral thesis: *El elemento nervioso en el apendice libre. Sus aplicaciones quirurgicas (External innervation of the cecal appendix: its surgical applications)* written in 1943 by Rubén Rodríguez Escovar, M. D., a Venezuelan anatomist and surgeon, who held the Department of Human Anatomy at the Universidad Central de Venezuela, distinguishing himself as teacher and researcher over a period of 40 years. Certainly, Rubén Rodríguez Escovar is not in the greatest group of prominent anatomists mentioned in the Treatise. Nevertheless, on merit alone for his research about meso-appendicular region's innervations, he was cited into *Testut-Latarjet's* treatise. As far as the present author knows, Rubén Rodríguez Escovar is the sole Non-European anatomist to be mentioned in the outstanding Testut-Latarjet Human Anatomy Treatise.

Keywords: human anatomy, innervation of the cecal appendix, Testut-Latarjet treaty, Rubén Rodríguez Escovar.

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Introduction

Human anatomy has historically been a cornerstone in medical education world-wide. By learning gross anatomy, medical students get a first approach about the structure of the human

body which is the basis for understanding pathologic and clinical problems. An adequate grasp of human anatomy has always entailed in-depth study and knowledge of the human body as a basis of understanding and applying it in the practice of medicine. Throughout history, many

eminent anatomists have written notable books and treatises on anatomy, among who for example are Andreas Vesalius, Juan Valverde, Jean M. Sappey, Leo Testut, Henry Rouviere, Andre Latarjet, Henry Gray, and many other anatomists. Competent physicians, particularly surgeons, need a deep understanding of human anatomy for safe clinical and surgical procedures. Among many anatomical treatise, the Testut-Latarjet Treatise is qualified as one of the most comprehensive human anatomy treatises ever used to teach and learn in many medical school around Latin America and Europe to develop training of competent physicians and surgeons. The main objective of this paper is to review the information available about Rodriguez Escovar's doctoral thesis cited in the Testut-Latarjet Human Anatomy Treatise, Spanish edition, in 1960. The Testut-Latarjet human anatomy treatise: its use in the Universidad Central de Venezuela. During the Spanish colonial period in Venezuela, there were no books for the study of human anatomy: there were only notes, written and transmitted over time by Lorenzo Campins y Ballester, Spanish physician who founded medical studies in Caracas, Venezuela in 1763 at the *Real y Pontificia Universidad de Caracas*, which was already established in 1721 [1]. After Venezuela's Independence in 1810, it was not until 1838 when Dr. José Maria Vargas, Venezuelan physician who reformed medical studies in Venezuela wrote the first book of human anatomy, his *Curso de Lecciones y Demostraciones Anatómicas* (Course of Anatomical Lessons and Demonstrations) for teaching use in the *Universidad Central de Caracas*, which was founded in 1827 as successor of the *Real y Pontificia Universidad de Caracas*. Dr José Maria Vargas used for lectures his anatomy text for 15 years [2] and subsequently, his successor Dr. José de Briceño Carmona also used Vargas book for lectures until 1883. In the meantime in Europe as a part of the large rise of the French anatomical sciences for four centuries, in the eighties of the nineteenth century the Testut's Human Anatomy, written in the first instance by Dr Leo Testut, was published in France in 1887. Testut was professor of human anatomy at Faculty of Medicine of Lyon, France from 1886 to 1919 [3]. The French Academy of Medicine named Leo Testut a correspondent member in 1895.

He received the "honorary professor" title in 1919 after retiring from University of Lyon. Testut

also acted as president of the World Association of Anatomists. Leo Testut incorporated his outstanding student André Latarjet as co-author, who lengthened the treatise adding new anatomical knowledges, from 1925 on, came to be called the Human anatomy Testut-Latrajet [4]. This text is considered to be one of the most complete human anatomy treatises (fig. 1), with its meticulous and thorough descriptions of the human body, accompanied by philosophical and anthropological concepts.



In 1893, this outstanding treatise was taken on board as basic human anatomy teaching text by Dr. Pablo Acosta Ortiz at the Universidad Central de Venezuela and endorsed for teaching use by subsequent human anatomy professors in the faculty of Medicine at the Universidad Central de Venezuela throughout the twentieth century [5]. In 1902, this anatomical treatise won the Saintour Prize, awarded by the French Academy of Medicine and since 1910 it has been translated into Spanish, Italian, German and other languages.

In the mid-nineties of the twentieth century, the Testut-Latarjet's Human Anatomy was replaced as anatomy treatise at the Universidad Central de Venezuela. In its place came a whole set of human anatomy books by diverse authors, among whom were Moore, Dalley, Rouviere, Snell, Latarjet-Ruiz along with the mutually complementary atlases on human anatomy by

Sobotta, Netter, Gosling, Mc Minn and others, each with a different emphasis such as teaching based on problems, clinical anatomy, surface anatomy, topographic anatomy and other pedagogical approaches, plus the use of new information technologies to access to many web sites about human anatomy and also to get into Instagram, YouTube and other social networks or social media.

Currently *Le traité d'anatomie Testut-Latarjet* (the Testut-Latarjet Human Anatomy Treatise) is still seen as a basic consulting and learning text, thereby remaining a valid option today, more than a century after it was first published and is still used as such in many Faculties of Medicine in Latin America and Europe

Rubén Rodríguez Escovar cited in *Le traité d'anatomie Testut-Latarjet*.

Rubén Rodríguez Escovar, M.D. (1918-1994) was an outstanding anatomist who held the Department of Human Anatomy at the Universidad Central de Venezuela, distinguishing himself as teacher and researcher over a period of 40 years during which time he also become known as a outstanding general surgeon [6].



He was born in Sanare, Lara State, in the northwest of Venezuela on January 20th, 1918. Rubén Rodríguez Escovar (also mistaken written still in references as Escobar) was a son of Manuel Rodríguez García and Emperatriz Escobar. He

completed his primary and secondary education in Lara State and went on to Caracas for his medical study at the Faculty of Medicine of the Universidad Central de Venezuela. After he got his medical degree, Rodríguez Escovar started to do appendectomies in the Vargas Hospital in 1943 with dissection of the nervous element to avoid the postoperative appendicular syndrome arising from the amputation neuroma or that it be included in the ligatures [7]. He continued developing this clinical research and used it in his doctoral thesis, *El elemento nervioso en el apéndice libre. Sus aplicaciones quirúrgicas* (The nervous element in the free appendix, its surgical applications) with which he gained his degree of Doctor of Medical Science [8].

Rodríguez Escovar was founding member of the Panamerican Anatomy Association, member of the French Association of Anatomists and director of the Experimental Surgery Institute of the Universidad Central de Venezuela from 1971 to 1983. He was also founding member of the Venezuelan Atheneum of Morphology, further to which, he gained prominence as a general surgeon, being Assistant Professor of Surgery II at the Vargas Hospital. During his teaching career, Rubén Rodríguez Escovar (Fig. 2) published several papers in Venezuelan and foreign medical journals on surgical and anatomical matters. He was full member of the Venezuelan Surgery Society and, in 1963, elected as correspondent member No. 30 of the Venezuelan Academy of Medicine; he was also an official consultant to the U.S. Peace Corps and corresponding member of the French Society of Surgery [9].

The anatomist José Izquierdo M.D., Rodríguez Escovar's mentor, who fully supported his doctoral thesis *El elemento nervioso en el apéndice libre. Sus aplicaciones quirúrgicas* (The nervous element in the free appendix: Its surgical applications) to the extent that he submitted it for the consideration of Michel Latarjet, professor of human anatomy at University of Lyon, son of André Latarjet and editor of the Testut-Latarjet Human Anatomy Treatise until 1978, the date of its final edition.

The Rodríguez Escovar's research in his doctoral thesis is cited in the ninth edition in Spanish, dated 1960, of the Testut-Latarjet Human Anatomy Treatise in Volume IV, page 429 where it says, *Inervación extrínseca – El profesor doctor Rubén Rodríguez de la Universidad de Caracas, ha descrito un elemento nervioso especial,*

formación extrínseca, que determina la sensibilidad de la región mesoapendicular", "Extrinsic innervation – the professor, Dr. Ruben Rodriguez of Caracas University, has described a special nervous element of extrinsic formation, that determines the sensibility of the mesoappendicular region" [10].

In this paragraph we found a mistake, Salvat's editor's use the inaccurate words *Universidad de Caracas* as an alternative to *Universidad Central de Venezuela*.

Rodriguez Escovar's anatomical description is a contribution to the teaching and learning of human anatomy concerning extrinsic innervation of the cecal appendix with possible clinical-surgical application.

Discussion

Among anatomists the Testut-Latarjet Human Anatomy Treatise is qualified as one of the most

comprehensive human anatomy treatises. Because of its exhaustive descriptive content and illustrations, the Testut-Latarjet Human Anatomy Treatise is still a very useful teaching tool in many Latin American and European Medical Faculties. Indeed, certainly Rubén Rodríguez Escovar is not in the greatest group of prominent anatomists mentioned in the Treatise, among who are Vesalius, Valverde, Falopio, Eustaquio, Aranzio, Mondeville, Vacarí, Sappey, Broca, Luschka, Scarpa, Orfila, Hunter, Waldeyer, Merckel and others. Nevertheless on merit alone for his research about meso-appendicular region's innervations, he was cited into *Testut-Latarjet's* treatise. As far as the present author knows, Rubén Rodríguez Escovar is the sole Non-European anatomist to be mentioned in the outstanding Testut-Latarjet Human Anatomy Treatise.

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(received 19.11.2020, published online 29.12.2020)

(одержано 19.11.2020, опубліковано 29.12.2020)

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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