

# 19<sup>th</sup> Century Philippines

# INTRODUCTION

In our previous discussion, we described the 19<sup>th</sup> century world during the time of Rizal.

To further understand the period in which Rizal lived, we also need to look at the Philippines and Spain during that time.

This is important in helping us appreciate Rizal's effort in working for our freedom as a nation.

# Spain in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century

## Political instability

- Spain **regressed** as a world power after the death of Ferdinand VII.
- By 1830, Spain's American colonies became independent states except Cuba and Puerto Rico.
- **Carlist War** - struggle between Isabella (Ferdinand's daughter) and Charles (Ferdinand's brother).

Isabella II won and became the sole female monarch of Spain.

- Lost in Peru and Chile
- Frequent changes in the government

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a troubled period of politics in Spanish history.

- Political instability
- *Canovite system* or rotativism (Maguigad et al, 2002).
- The liberals and conservatives took turns in administering the country.

Spain's political instability negatively affected the Philippines.

Effects:

- Frequent **changes** in the colonial administrators of the Philippines.
- **Short tenure** of the governor general's
- Administration was **inefficient and corrupt**
- **Dumping ground** of the relatives of Spanish politicians

# Abandonment of Mercantilism

Since there was a political change, there was also a shift in the economic system.

Before the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Europeans were practicing mercantilism.

- It is an **economic doctrine** based on the idea that the country's wealth and power can be measured in its stock of gold and silver.
- It also means that all trade should be conducted within a certain country and its colonies.
- The **monarch** dictates the trade and the wealth should flow towards the center of the imperial power.
- Result: creation of monopolistic ventures like the Galleon Trade (Manila and Acapulco); the Philippines was not allowed to trade with other European countries.

By the 18th and 19th centuries, there was a shift towards **laissez faire** or free market trade.

- Countries and their colonies began trading with one another.
- Merchants were trading freely
- Profits from international commerce began to shape official policies.
- There was a demand for Philippine products such as: sugar, coffee, rice, etc.
- Began trading with other merchants such as: British, Americans, French, etc.
- Mercantilism was abandoned.

#### **foreign trade**

Effect:

- More wealth for more people
- Filipino growers and traders gained wealth.
- The rise of the class of merchants (**mestizos**).

Spain's adoption of the laissez-faire policy affected the Philippines.

Effects: (Capino, 1977)

- Created a new **middle class**
- Families were able to send their children to **school** (higher education).
  - These gave them a different perspective on how Spaniards treated the Filipinos.
- Increase contact with the West
  - Brought new political ideas from Europe: **equality and God-given rights**
- Opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 and the creation of the telegraph line
  - Connected the Philippines to the rest of the world.
- Enlightenment ideas became prevalent among the middle class
  - ***Ilustrados*** or the enlightened ones
    - Began questioning the abuses of the Spanish Regime
    - Sought reforms: brought forth the reformists (ex. Bizal)

# The Philippines During Rizal's Time

## Administrative Organization government

- Governed by the Spanish crown, through the **Ministry of Colonies**
- **Unitary government** because policies were implemented by colonial administrators
- Emanated from **Manila**, the seat of the central

## The Governor-General (appointed by the Spanish monarch)

- Head of the colonial government
- Represented the crown
- **Vice Royal Patron** over religious affairs
- Commander in chief of the army
- Ex-officio president of the **Royal Audiencia** (Supreme Court)
- Had the legislative powers
- Laws he enacted were called **actos acordados** (Maguigad, 2000).
- He had the power to decide which law or royal decree should be implemented or disregarded in the colony.

Local government units: provinces, towns, cities and barrios (Agoncillo, 1990).

- Provinces (**alcaldias**)
  - Headed by an **alcalde mayor** (provincial governor)
  - Executive and judicial functions
- Divided into towns or pueblos
  - Headed by a **gobernadorcillo** or town mayor
  - Elected by all married males; 19<sup>th</sup> cent. He was voted by 13 electors
  - Principal responsibility was tax collection
- Each town was divided into barrios or barangays (Romero et al, 1978)
  - Smallest unit of government
  - Headed by a **cabeza de barangay**
  - Function: peace and order; tax and tribute collection
- City government or ayuntamiento (Zaide, 1994)
  - Governed by a cabildo or city council
  - Composed of: city mayor or **alcalde en ordinario**, councilors (**regidores**), chief constable (**aguacil mayor**) and a secretary (**escribano**)

A key figure in the local administration was the Spanish friar (Schumacher, 1997).

- Union of the Church and the State
- The friar was the supervising representative of the Spanish government for all local affairs.
- His approval was necessary on almost all acts of the local officials.
- Ruler of the town
- Approval was required for census lists, tax lists, list of army conscripts, and register of births, deaths, and marriages.
- *Frailocracia* (Lopez Jaena) - friars were more powerful and influential than the civil authorities.

Another institution that was feared then was the Guardia Civil.

- Organized in 1867
- Corps of native police under the leadership Spanish officers for the purpose of dealing with the outlaws and renegades (Maguigad et al, 2000).
- It was the most feared instrument of summary arrests of individuals identified by the friars as *filibusteros* or enemies of the government and *erehes* of the Catholic Church.

## Judicial power was vested on the Audiencia Real (De Leon, 2000).

- Supreme Court and the lower courts
- Adjudicate appeals for civil and criminal cases
- Serves as forum for settling issues on governance
- Auditing agency of the finances
- Under it were the courts of first instance and the justice of the peace courts

There was no legislative branch in the Philippines during these time.

- The Philippine representation in the Spanish Cortes was **abolished** in 1837.
- Governance in the Phil. Was based on special laws.

Spanish colonial administration was corrupt and inefficient.

- Why?
- The Philippines was **far** from Spain, therefore the governor-general had absolute power.
- Widespread **selling** of lower positions to highest bidders (Capino, 1977).

# The Social Structure of Filipino Society

Philippine society was **feudalistic** because of the encomienda system (Romero et al, 1978).

- Filipinos were treated as slaves.
- Imposed and collected all forms of taxes and tributes.
- Forced labor

The social structure that was implemented was **pyramidal** due to the doctrine of **limpieza de sangre** or purity of blood (Maguigad, 2000).

- Peninsulares - Spaniards born in Spain.
- Insulares - Spaniards born in Phil.; the Spanish and Chinese mestizos; Principalia or the ruling class of native elites
- Indios or Natives

Effect of doctrine of **Limpieza**

- Social ranking was created
- Social tension was created between classes
- System of racial discrimination was institutionalized

# Educational System

Middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, schools were under the **Friars**.

Primary education was not given attention (parochial schools).

End of 19<sup>th</sup> cent. Only **UST** was the higher education  
(Dominicans, 1611).

Opened secondary  
school for boys

Secondary education  
for girls

## Public education for the natives (Educational Decree of 1863).

- Establishment of one elementary school for boys and one elementary school for girls in each town of the Phil.
- Establishment of a normal school for training of teachers with a mastery of the Spanish Language

## Friars resisted the teaching of Spanish language to the Filipinos

- Would lead to the development of political and social awareness
- Trigger desire for freedom and independence

## Serious weaknesses of educational system

- Over emphasis on religion
- Limited and irrelevant curriculum
- Obsolete class facilities
- Inadequate instructional materials
- Absence of academic freedom
- Racial prejudice

# Economic Situation

Philippines was opened to foreign trade in 1834.

Result: Rise of foreign firms in Manila which stimulated agricultural production, and export of sugar, rice, hemp and tobacco.

The consequences of economic growth of the Philippines in the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

- Opportunities for trade
- Increased Filipino contacts with foreigners and *peninsulares*
- Some families were able to send their sons to European schools
- Filipinos who studies abroad were able to learn the intellectual developments in Europe
- Awareness of European society made the European-educated Filipinos disillusioned with Spain