

Chapter Four

State and Societies, 1764–1898

THE IMPERATIVE TO REFORM

In the late eighteenth century, Spain was compelled to reconsider the way it ruled the Philippines, as external realities intruded on the isolated life of the colony. Most dramatically, the rise of British power and temporary loss of Manila exposed the state's weakness in defense and control of the population. More fundamental still was economic change. The galleon trade had begun losing money as European merchants and smugglers used the maritime peace enforced by Britain's navy to trade directly with China. British rule then opened the Philippines to world trade, and the Spanish state was unable to reverse this trend or stop the illegal entry of commodities into the colony.

After almost 250 years, the galleon trade ended with the last eastbound ship leaving the Philippines in 1811, the last westbound ship in 1815. In the next ten years, Mexican revolutionaries won independence and Spain's American empire dwindled to a few Caribbean islands. The Philippines lost both customs revenue and its commercial *raison d'être* and was forced to make administrative and economic changes to survive. Exiles from Spanish America complicated this process, competing for jobs and influence with Philippine-born Spaniards. Ironically, the challenge of creating a modern colonial state and economy was faced in the imperial periphery just as much of the empire was lost.

But Spain's decline was offset by economic growth and industrialization in the wider world that created new markets for raw materials. The development of Philippine agricultural and mineral resources was therefore the logical replacement for the galleon trade. This development would make land—hitherto underexploited—a more important resource, and Manila and other

port cities would become commercial, managerial, and professional centers. The object was to create a unified colonial economy out of the separate indio, Chinese, and Spanish sectors and to modernize the state in order to promote and benefit from these changes.

THE NEW ECONOMY

Export Agriculture

The reorientation of the colonial economy began with the arrival in 1778 of Governor-General José de Basco y Vargas, who saw the futility of the galleon trade and the potential for large-scale production of cash crops for export. He encouraged Spaniards to invest in the cultivation of spice plants; of silk, cotton, indigo, and hemp; of fruit trees, sugarcane, cacao, and coconut. He tried to spur local manufacturing to limit the silver drain. And he established the Royal Company of the Philippines in 1785 to finance these projects and handle the new trade he envisioned with Europe, other Spanish colonies, and the rest of Asia.¹ Unfortunately, his proposals met with “profound and general silence.”² Resistance came from friars who opposed changes in the labor force and from others with vested interests in the galleon trade. Although the Royal Company did promotional work and started pilot projects, it failed to introduce the new skills and scientific knowledge lacking in the friar-dominated educational curriculum.³

Basco was able to accomplish a few things, however: He repealed the ban on Chinese merchants, which helped bring internal trade back to life; he began to open Manila to foreign traders, both Asian and non-Asian; and he established the tobacco monopoly. This last enterprise was a “tax farm”—a government-auctioned right to produce, sell, and/or operate a monopoly. Later examples included liquor, meat-slaughtering, municipal tax collection, and cockfighting. (For colonial governments in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, tax farming was a common source of revenue that spared them the expense of developing state capacity in revenue collection.) The tobacco monopoly was successful in several ways. First, the state, paid in advance on a yearly basis, was able to remit revenues to Spain. Second, the cultivation of tobacco led to the production of cigars, which became the Philippines’ only major manufactured export in the nineteenth century. And finally, the clearing of forested land for tobacco pioneered the way for other commercial crops—especially abaca and sugar—to be cultivated in interior and mountainous regions of the colony.⁴

Change came more rapidly with the end of the galleon trade, which was a money-losing business in its last two decades. When it ended, the Spanish

lost all remaining control of the Philippines' foreign trade, for the Royal Company had been reduced to a shambles by mismanagement, friar opposition, and waning interest on the part of Manila merchants.⁵ In 1834, the company was abolished, and Manila was officially opened for trade and residence to merchants of any nationality coming from any foreign port. At the same time, discrimination against Chinese ships trading at Manila ended; henceforth all ships were subject to the same taxes and procedures.⁶ In the following decade, the trading privileges of *alcaldes mayores* (provincial governors) and military governors were abolished in order to stimulate private trade. This opportunity, though meant for Spaniards coming to the Philippines looking for work, was taken up by Chinese immigrants who played an important role in the development of cash cropping.

When Basco allowed the Chinese to return in 1778, their numbers were officially limited to a "necessary" four thousand, the *Parián* was reestablished, and a capitation (head) tax was imposed. As priorities shifted to economic development from the 1830s, however, policy changed to encourage immigration and eliminate restrictions on movement. The new immigrants fanned out beyond the urban Spanish settlements of previous generations to the places where export crops were being produced. They initially faced competition from Chinese *mestizos* who had taken up wholesaling and provisioning urban areas during the previous century. But the new immigrants were able to reclaim their role and expand it—linking provincial producers to the world market—through a combination of well-placed agents and credit from Western commercial firms. The latter were British and some American trading companies that advanced imported goods on credit, allowing Chinese businesses to operate with little of their own capital.⁷ In the absence of government direction, the firms also conveyed demand information from foreign markets, guiding producers' planting decisions—a key factor in the development of sugar plantations.⁸

So Basco's ideas were eventually realized. In the first decade of the nineteenth century—the last of the galleon trade—exports of Philippine origin accounted for less than 10 percent of the value of total exports, and many of these were harvested forest or sea products such as bird's nest, mother-of-pearl, tortoise shell, sea cucumber, and timber.⁹ By the 1840s, though, almost 90 percent of total export revenue came from six Philippine-grown cash crops: sugar, tobacco, abaca (hemp) fiber and cordage, indigo, coffee, and cotton.¹⁰ Throughout the colony, the cash economy replaced trade in kind, and by the 1830s only three provinces still paid tribute in rice. In the 1850s and 1860s, the ports of Iloilo and Cebu opened to foreign shipping, stimulating trade and agriculture in the Visayas.¹¹ Soon new tracts of forestland on Negros Island were cleared for sugar.



Figure 4.1. Douane de Manille (Customs of Manila), 1852 lithograph by A. N. Vaillant (Gallery of Prints, Makati City, Metro Manila)

As exports rose, economic life became more complex and “metropolitan Manila”—Intramuros and its growing suburbs—grew into a real commercial center (see box 4.1). The city’s opening to foreign traders made it a port of call for ships from India, China, and as far away as the east coast of the United States. It contained people enjoying more diverse jobs, more money transactions, and more cultural diversions. Manila’s population increased from 100,000 in 1822 to about 150,000 by mid-century. (There was no strict enumeration until 1903, so all population estimates are based on tribute lists and parish records of births and deaths.) Most of this population growth came from migration to the city. According to demographer Daniel F. Doepfers, “Manila’s population in the early 1890s was primarily derived from two zones of intense interaction facilitated by water transportation—from around Manila Bay and the short Pasig River . . . and across the South China Sea from the coastal core of riverine southern Fujian . . . [both] long-standing patterns of circulation.”¹²

The steady stream of internal migrants in the nineteenth century came mainly from the nearby Tagalog-speaking provinces that had long supplied Manila with its basic necessities. People migrated to the city for a variety of reasons—some found increased economic and educational opportunities, others were driven by loss of livelihood caused by the importation of cheap manufactured textiles from Britain. Both Chinese and internal migrants were

Box 4.1. Nineteenth-Century Manila

“Foreign visitors around the middle of the nineteenth century found Intramuros, where the Spanish elite tried to make life as much as possible like life in Spain, dull and monotonous, with few social activities and frequent religious processions. Across the Pasig River, Binondo, the commercial center was a much livelier place.

“Binondo was where the rich merchants—foreign, Chinese mestizos and natives—resided, in the newest, most elegant houses along the Pasig River. Escolta and Rosario were the principal streets in the district, where most of the Chinese shops could be found. In the district could be found all the large working establishments of Manila. Binondo’s importance as commercial capital can be seen from the average daily traffic in its main thoroughfares in 1858; over the *Puente Grande* (great bridge), 1,256 carriages passed; through the largest square, the Plaza de San Gabriel, 979 and through the main street, 915. On the *Calzada*, the great promenade of the capital, 499 carriages were counted, representing the aristocracy of Manila. . . . Manila’s development as a cosmopolitan center brought modern amenities. Tramway lines with horse-drawn cars were running through the city and its suburbs by the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1884, the government constructed a waterworks system for Manila and its suburbs with funds bequeathed by a Spanish philanthropist. Steam tramways were introduced in 1888. The gas lamps of Manila’s streets were replaced with electric lights in 1893. The first news-sheet was published in 1822. By the end of the Spanish regime, there were five dailies and a biweekly paper, subject to strict censorship (jointly exercised by a priest and a layman).

“Foreign travellers found more variety in Manila’s cultural life from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards. By the 1880s, there were four theaters in Manila, a bull ring, a Spanish comedy company, and occasional visits by foreign performers such as a circus or an Italian Opera Company to entertain the public in the city. The first big hotel was opened in Binondo in January 1889 with 83 rooms and stabling for 25 horses. It ranked with the best hotels in the East.”

—Manuel A. Caoili, *The Origins of Metropolitan Manila: A Political and Social Analysis* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1999), 40–41

subject to push-and-pull factors, but while Chinese (as well as Spanish) migrants were overwhelmingly male, Doepfers argues from individual registration data that many *indias* were part of the migrant stream:

Certainly there is an important record of employment and subsistence opportunities for Filipino women in the city dating from at least the mid-nineteenth century. A long history of cash-wage employment in the cigar industry, petty commerce, and social complementarity with some of the more than 25,000 unaccompanied Chinese and Spanish sojourners, in particular, offer powerful rationales for female migration in the absence of cultural rules to the contrary and against a background of disruptive rural economic change.¹³

But while internal male migrants had higher-than-average literacy rates—suggesting sons of the elite pursuing higher education—female migrants

tended to be illiterate and poor. Two points should be noted here: First, despite the relative “backwardness” of Spain and its colonial administration that will become apparent in this chapter, forces of modernization were felt in the Philippines well before the twentieth century. And second, insofar as those forces were often not benign, we can trace a gender disparity in their impact upon individual lives.

Many Spaniards also migrated to the Philippines, especially after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 dramatically decreased travel time from Europe. But they did not have much involvement in the export economy beyond the collection of customs duties for the state. British and Chinese domination of imports, exports, and distribution left little scope for Spaniards bereft of managerial experience or capital, and the country became known informally as an “Anglo-Chinese colony.” This 1849 observation by the Belgian consul conveys the marginality of Spaniards to economic life:

The Spanish firms established in Manila have for the most part only very limited capital and many of them, in order to maintain themselves or to undertake any ventures, have to resort to the funds of the religious corporations . . . which they borrow at 5 percent annually.¹⁴

Spanish wealth, like Spanish power, resided in the religious orders. These maintained formal control over old friar estates that covered “nearly 40 percent of the surface area in the four Tagalog-speaking provinces” surrounding Manila and supplied the city with rice, fruit, and vegetables.¹⁵ Much more significant in the production of export crops were the accumulated small plots in outlying provinces controlled by indio and mestizo elites, the new producers of wealth.

The Importance of Land

The transition to an export economy had a major impact on land tenure and social stratification in the Philippine countryside. Before the nineteenth century, most families living in rural towns tilling family farms grew rice and vegetables for their own consumption and produced little surplus. Their earnings depended on middlemen and markets, and their few cash expenses included church contributions, the tribute, and payments to tax farmers for entertainment such as cockfights. Gradually, however, farmers faced an increasing need for money. Birth, marriage, illness, and death all came to require cash as the economy modernized. This led many small farmers into export crop production, which in turn made them dependent upon purchased rice to feed their families. At the same time, population growth—rising from perhaps 2.2 million in 1820 to 4 million in 1846 and 6.5 million in 1898¹⁶—

caused the successive subdivision of family farm plots. Combined, these forces led to significant turnover in agrarian holdings—land loss on the part of many families and accumulation on the part of others.

When they had a pressing need for money, peasants turned for a loan to those with capital to spare—usually an indio or mestizo member of the *principalia*, who was sometimes a relative. In a system called *pacto de retroventa* (agreement of repurchase), the land was “sold” to the lender, who agreed to sell it back at the same price within a specified period of time. The borrower continued to have usufruct rights on the land, but was now seriously indebted. *Pacto de retroventa* loans were difficult to repay and were usually renewed and increased until the amount owed was far more than the plot of land was worth. Eventually dispossessed of their land, most families stayed on as sharecroppers or tenants. In this way, the evolving colonial elite used the capital earned in retail trade to accumulate the best land for export crops and a labor force to which it was “linked by kinship or by networks of personal relationships.”¹⁷ (See box 4.2.)

Accumulation also occurred through land grabbing, often by the powerful religious orders. To expand their vast holdings, friar estates simply demanded rent on land they wanted or conducted fraudulent land surveys. Cultivators again stayed on the land as tenant labor, but didn’t deal directly with friar owners or lay managers. Instead, large tracts were rented to *principalia inquilinos* (renter-lessors), who sublet the small parcels to peasant cultivators

Box 4.2. Dependency circa the Nineteenth Century

“One factor kept village views of the elite from deteriorating to the point of outright hostility. For the most part, class relations retained personalistic qualities. Social distance grew, but physical and psychological proximity survived. Since production for export required close supervision to assure maximum output, many landowners maintained houses in the *barrios*. Regular visits enabled them to oversee tenant labor and keep in touch with village affairs. Peasant families who experienced misfortune took advantage of such occasions to request succor and sympathy, both of which were usually granted. In the final analysis, paternalism held the system together. Prominent men regarded their dependents as children and treated them accordingly, while tenants looked upon the landowner as a potential benefactor and usually addressed him as elder brother or father. In a changing world, the intimate nature of the unequal relationship gave villagers an illusion of permanence and a false sense of security. Face-to-face interactions, however, did not persist everywhere. Absentee ownership—which prevailed on many church estates, and appeared on some private holdings—destroyed the last vestiges of sentiment and compassion. Its emergence signaled the death of social reciprocity and the simultaneous birth of class antipathy.”

—David R. Sturtevant, *Popular Uprisings in the Philippines, 1840–1940* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1976), 40

and managed production. In this three-tiered system, the friars were the ultimate economic, spiritual, and political rulers of the countryside. The indio-mestizo elite gained considerable wealth—“without doing a stroke of work, they make more than the estate owners themselves.”¹⁸ And the cultivators descended into precarious, hand-to-mouth existence. As the population increased faster than land was opened for new cultivation, debt or inability to pay rent forced many families off land they had worked for generations. The dispossessed became seasonal wage laborers in export crop production, migrated to cities, or made their way into hill communities or banditry, a process generating new outsiders.

If the transition to commercial cropping was relatively swift, stagnant production methods constrained agrarian development. Collection and distribution networks evolved and landholders accumulated wealth, but planting, harvesting, and processing methods remained crude and no investment in technical improvement was forthcoming. According to economic historian O. D. Corpuz, agriculture “lagged behind all sectors, although it accounted for the major part of total output by value, land under cultivation, and labor force and number of families covered.” This was true for both staple and cash crops: “The foreign trade demand for unprocessed agricultural produce went hand in hand with little utilization of modern technology, and helped arrest progress in manufacturing and industry.”¹⁹

Underlying these problems was the fact that up until the end of the Spanish colonial era, the land was not *legally* owned by the producers. Unchanged since the conquest, all land in the Philippines, except the minority expressly granted by the king, still technically belonged to the Spanish crown or state. The government did not seriously attempt to rationalize land ownership and systematically issue land titles until 1880 (when the reform proposal was successfully opposed by the friars) and again in 1894.²⁰ This meant that no land transactions, real estate, or production from the land was subject to taxation, an anomaly that had consequences for state, economy, and society. First, the only significant new sources of state revenue were the tobacco monopoly and customs paid on largely unprocessed agricultural exports. By not updating its laws to accord with the reality of land alienation, the state effectively cut itself off from a growing revenue source. Second, lack of land title removed any incentive to invest in land improvement, and undertaxation of the export sector meant “little pressure to attain optimum efficiency through technology.”²¹ Third, the state’s reliance on a regressive head tax, rather than an earnings or property tax, taxed the peasantry disproportionately, contributing to increasing social stratification between the mass of poor indios and the indio-mestizo elite.

The uneven impact of these economic changes devastated rural populations. In the northern Luzon provinces supplying the tobacco monopoly, the government's strict prohibition on growing any other crop sparked revolts and population flight. The central plains of Luzon were transformed from a forested area into a rice-producing zone in a process that concentrated land ownership in the hands of the few and dispossessed original homesteaders.²² In the Western Visayas, the weaving industry collapsed after British firms imported cheap cotton, pushing the industry's female labor force into indebtedness and poverty. And though the shift to sugar production on the "Negros plantation frontier" absorbed these displaced workers, it didn't improve their lives. For the sugar industry grew by "depressing wages and constantly acquiring new land, rather than by investing capital in new technology for more intensive and efficient cultivation of existing plantations."²³ The end-of-century revolution against Spanish rule would have a strong basis in the woe-filled conditions accompanying economic transformation.

Over the course of the century, then, a new economy took shape that utilized the Philippines' least exploited resource—land—to sell agricultural commodities on the world market. Was it the unified colonial economy that Governor-General Basco y Vargas tried to initiate one hundred years earlier? It did reward concentration of land ownership within the country and provided increased revenues to the colonial state. But it was an economy that had strikingly little connection to Spain itself. According to economic historian Benito Legarda, it was "never economically complementary to Spain and in this specific sense was not a colonial economy." From the middle of the century, the Philippines sent its primary exports, sugar and abaca, overwhelmingly to the United States and United Kingdom; only in leaf tobacco exports was Spain an important customer.²⁴

More importantly, it was far from being "a unitary economy." Historian Alfred McCoy argues that the archipelago "emerged as a series of separate societies that entered the world economic system at different times, under different terms of trade, and with different systems of production." McCoy attributes this fragmentation largely to the fact that individual foreign firms drove the transition to commercial agriculture. The Spanish supplied neither private capital for export production nor legal infrastructure to manage the key resource. As a result, different regions of the colony "developed separate ties to global markets through local branches of Anglo-American merchant houses [that] tolerated diversity in local production systems and made no attempt . . . to regularize patterns of production."²⁵

In short, the new economy unified the colony only in the formal sense that it produced Philippine products. In substance, this "patchwork of diversity"

prevented communities from finding unity based on shared exposure to the global capitalist market. Instead, regional or language group consciousness persisted, to which was added increasing class tension between growing rural poor and emergent rural elites, as well as general resentment toward Spanish arrogance and economic parasitism.

Would administrative reforms fare any better?

REFORMING THE STATE

System-Wide Reform

In the aftermath of the British invasion, Spain pursued reform throughout its empire to remove trade restrictions, improve revenue collection, and reorganize government administration.²⁶ We have seen that the colony was opened commercially and that revenues increased through the tobacco monopoly. To improve administrative performance, the state was to be centralized in accordance with the “Ordinances of Good Government” issued in 1768. In his study of the nineteenth-century Philippines, Eliodoro Robles explains that strengthening the central agencies of the state was considered the only way to improve governance, given the following liabilities and demands on local government:

1. the lack of technical and qualified personnel . . . ,
2. the inability of many communities and provinces isolated by geographical features to raise their own funds . . . ,
3. the unbridled use of power on the part of local officials, resulting in rampant abuse and miscarriage of justice . . . ,
4. the rise of brigandage and social restlessness (not to mention Muslim piracy) rendering local police ineffective . . . ,
5. the inadequacy of public improvements and general services . . . ,
6. the rationality of balancing ecclesiastical power . . . and of secularizing public instruction (including the teaching of Spanish) to make it more functional rather than dogmatic,
7. the need for more economy in administration,
8. the necessity of extending effective authority and control over “frontier” areas . . . , [and]
9. the need for promoting agriculture [and] industry. . . .²⁷

In short, the arbitrary rule of friars and systematic corruption of *alcaldes mayores*, *gobernadorcillos*, and *cabezas* was to be replaced by state objectives defined from above. This called for financial accountability through oversight and the separation of executive from judicial, not to mention secular from

clerical, functions—an enormous undertaking. Unfortunately, almost none of it was attempted until the governorship (1801–1806) of Rafael Maria de Aguilar, who republished the Ordinances and began implementing some of their provisions.

The most urgent problems facing reformers were social unrest rising from corruption in administration of the tribute, the *polos*, and justice; escalating Muslim raids, which destabilized communities and disrupted trade; and a government debt of 5.6 million pesos. In response, Aguilar attempted to institute accounting procedures for both secular and parish administration, improve local defenses, and develop provincial road links and public works to stimulate the economy. He faced serious opposition from the religious orders, however, especially in attempting to establish civil oversight of parish affairs. As long as the local priest was the sole Spaniard in most Philippine towns, progress would be slow. And as late as 1810, there were only four thousand Spaniards in the whole colony, including religious, in relation to a Christian population of almost 2.4 million.²⁸

As with economic measures, the pace of reform quickened as the century progressed. But unlike the economy, governance in the Philippines closely followed political events in Spain. In his work on Africa, Crawford Young discusses how modern state formation in colonies often paralleled developments in the colonial metropole.²⁹ In this case, a century of Spanish instability was reflected in its governance of the Philippines. In 1808, Napoleon invaded Spain, deposed the “enlightened despot” Fernando VII, and installed his own brother as king. As in other French-occupied territories in Europe, the ensuing war of independence gave voice to liberal opponents of absolutist monarchical rule and church power over civic life. Nineteenth-century liberalism, emerging from the Enlightenment ideals of rationality and progress, called for freedom in thought, politics, economics, and religion. Economic liberalism was exemplified by Britain’s free trade ideology, and political liberalism began to transform the world with the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars. Liberalism quickly developed moderate, radical-democratic, and socialist variants, while the reaction against it was upheld by monarchy, church, and aristocracy.³⁰ In Spain in 1810, liberal revolutionaries established the Cortes, the country’s first representative body, and declared the Constitution of Cádiz in 1812. These were abrogated by the return in 1814 of Fernando, who ruled absolutely until 1820 and again from 1823 to 1833. The rest of the century saw a succession of absolutist, military, and constitutional governments, punctuated by the liberal apotheosis of the Glorious Revolution and a brief republic in the years 1868 to 1873.

The appointment of twenty-four Philippine governors between 1800 and 1860 reflected the alternating factions in power in Madrid. When reformers

ruled, they hastily mandated changes in the colonies, often without considering local conditions. Officials in the Philippines then attempted to implement the changes in the same spirit. According to Robles, “the rather strict manner in which the laws were enforced by fearful and overzealous subordinates . . . [often] resulted in undue hardships on the part of the governed so as to render the laws oppressive and unpopular.” They were also “complicated, and far advanced of the available administrative machinery.”³¹ Box 4.3 lists some of the significant reforms enacted, though the gap between enactment and implementation was often considerable.

A complicating factor was the increasing number of Spaniards arriving in the colony. Often in flight from changes at home, few of these *peninsulares* (born on the Iberian Peninsula) had commercial experience or administrative ability, yet their status entitled them to favorable positions. This pressure alone caused the central state to expand because local government posts were reserved for the *principalia*. An 1876 count found 13,264 *peninsulares* in Manila, and their numbers continued to rise until the end of the century. In appointments and politics, tension and competition increased between these Spaniards and the *criollos*, or creoles—Spaniards born in the Philippines or Americas. Spanish creoles in the Philippines were known through most of the century as “Filipinos”—just as Englishmen and women born in Britain’s American colonies had called themselves “American”—and they resented the assumed superiority of the come-lately *peninsulares*. Creoles tended to favor

Box 4.3. Selected Reforms of the Spanish Colonial Government, 1786–1894

- 1786 Office of *cabeza de barangay* made elective (by *principalia* voters)
- 1806 Bureau of Vaccination created to supervise efforts against smallpox
- 1836 Primary schools mandated at town level
- 1837 Postal services reorganized
- 1842 Office of General Administration of the Tribute created to oversee tax collection and tabulation of statistics
- 1844 Trading privileges of *alcaldes mayores* abolished
- 1847 Trading privileges of military governors abolished; office of *gobernadorcillo* made elective
- 1851 Tributary age lowered and amount of tribute raised
- 1860 Politico-military districts created for the Visayas and Mindanao
- 1861 Executive and judicial functions separated at the provincial and capital level (not fully implemented until 1885)
- 1863 Overseas Ministry created in Madrid to govern colonies
- 1863 Free primary education mandated at village level
- 1868 Guardia Civil established to suppress crime and insurrections
- 1884 Tribute replaced by *cédula personal* tax
- 1894 Executive and judicial functions separated at the local level

liberal governments in Spain and sometimes resisted the reimposition of monarchist governments, as in the 1823 and 1828 military mutinies led by Mexican-born and Philippine-born Spanish officers.

Reform efforts peaked from the 1860s to the 1880s. A Council of Administration was established as a cabinet for the governor-general. It also acted to check his power by representing the interests of the administration, treasury, judiciary, church, military, and commerce within the executive. Among other reforms, the Treasury was reorganized to separate the functions of finance, accounting, and auditing. A General Inspector of Public Works was appointed to supervise the *polos y servicios*. And a Board of Civil Administration was given extensive powers over everything related to local government, including education, the appointment of local officials, permits and patents, the subdivision and naming of towns, the authorization of local expenditures, statistics, prisons, public lighting, and emergency relief (though in practice, the board's personnel lacked technical expertise to carry out such extensive responsibilities).³²

The trend of these and other efforts was toward both accountability and centralization—through these measures it was expected that abuse of power would decline and the capacity to effect progress would increase. But centralized power and accountability are not natural bedfellows. One of the two most important obstacles to accountability was the simultaneous possession of executive and judicial authority in the same office, from governor-general down to *gubernadorcillo*. This transgression of the liberal principle of separation of powers was addressed in 1861, when the governor-general and provincial governors were divested of judicial responsibility. But the change was not fully implemented until the 1880s at the provincial level and was not applied locally until the 1890s. The other major impediment to accountable government was the power of the clergy at all levels. In Manila, the civil authorities tried to tame the friars and gain control of the justice system by incorporating the church into a judicial agency with two branches—one for clerical and one for civil affairs. But this reform was wholly unsuccessful because the church rejected limits on its judicial role and the state soon abandoned the attempt.

The overall aim of reform was to improve conditions in the country in order to forestall further social unrest. But this goal was often undercut by the autocratic imposition of new policy—a hazard of centrally imposed reform. The layers of authority that develop in a state each have their own interests (both public and private) and their own relationship with various social forces. Accommodation between two levels may be reached because of shared interests or orientations. Madrid and Manila, for example, when governed by reformers, shared an interest in centralizing and rationalizing power

in order to increase revenue and improve the standing of the state. Even though their implementation lacked continuity and their exchange of information was faulty, momentum toward these goals was discernable and backed by many criollos. But in the provinces, towns, and barrios, Manila's intermittent reform efforts were met by friar power, which dominated local state and society alike.

Provincial and Municipal Government

The highest provincial officeholder was the Spanish *alcalde mayor* (or a military governor in the case of unpacified territories, discussed below). In the early nineteenth century, there was much room for improvement in the quality of Spaniards appointed to provincial positions. Spanish historian Tomas Comyn wrote in 1820 that it was "common enough to see a hairdresser or a lackey converted into a governor; a sailor or a deserter, transformed into a district magistrate, a collector, or military commander of a populous province." According to Comyn, these officials were rapacious, using their appointments to "become chief consumers, purchasers, and exporters of everything produced and manufactured within the districts under their command, thus converting their licenses to trade in[to] a positive monopoly." Such an official often acted "with unbounded sway, without dread, and almost without risk, of his tyranny ever being denounced to the superior tribunals."³³

In the mid-nineteenth century, minimum qualifications for the post of *alcalde mayor* were introduced (lawyer with two years' experience) and then increased (judge with experience as lieutenant governor). From the 1850s, promotion to the highest rank required passing an examination in Tagalog. To liberalize the economy, Spanish provincial officials lost the right to use their office for commercial purposes in 1844, and as part of the separation of executive and judicial functions in the 1860s, the office of *alcalde mayor* was divided into a judicial *alcalde* and a civil executive. As noted above, however, implementation of this important reform was slow. Many provincial governors in the 1880s were still performing both executive and judicial functions, and miscarriages of justice were common.

Nevertheless, new parameters of governance had been articulated that spoke to changing economic and social realities, such as the sharp increase in crime in the 1830s. Provincial governments were expected to initiate public works and promote the local economy, issue permits for logging and mining, oversee public education and the election of local officials, and see to the overall moral and civic condition of the province. Their staffs gradually took on professionals in administration, customs, finance, security, and language interpretation. But while the performance of some governors stood out in

public works and agricultural development, most were considered successful as long as they excelled in revenue collection.³⁴ This was imperative, as the Philippines was expected to help the royal treasury recover from the ongoing instability of Spain's domestic politics. In practice, increased collection and stricter accounting of revenue were the highest reform priorities.

Tribute remained the paramount source of state revenue and *polos* labor the means of carrying out public works. These functions were in the hands of *principalia* officials—the *cabeza de barangay* collected the tribute and the *gobnadorcillo* mobilized villagers for *polos y servicios*. Collection of these taxes was the touchstone of interaction between state and society, yet the local officials who carried it out were no more accountable to society than they had been at the time of *reducción*. When the office of *cabeza* became “elective” in the 1780s and that of *gobnadorcillo* in 1847, the voting public consisted of the *principalia* alone—in the strict sense of current and former *gobnadorcillos* and *cabezas*. These men drew lots (only thirteen voting at any one time) to “write the names of their first and second choices for the office on their ballots.” This was done under the supervision of the provincial governor and parish priest, who did not hesitate to make their own preferences clear. From the result of the balloting, a list of three names was compiled for the provincial governor's final decision. As Glenn May writes, “The thirteen voters were not so much electing the *gobnadorcillo* as they were drawing up a short list for the post.”³⁵

Gobnadorcillos and *cabezas* were exempt from the tribute and labor service themselves and were known to extract “surplus” in the form of excessive tribute and bribes. On the other hand, they were *personally* liable for remitting the full amount of the official tribute, upon pain of imprisonment (see box 4.4). It is no exaggeration to say that in this realm of governance, the Spanish state functioned very badly. Further, the effort to maximize revenue collection exposed various dilemmas that aggravated state–society tensions.

First was the classification scheme on which the tax system was based: ethno-religious categories devised in the period of the conquest, when the state squeezed maximum revenue out of distrusted non-Christian Chinese merchants and taxed *indios* at a rate befitting sedentary peasants with little surplus. Socioeconomic transformations since that time—urbanization, the rise of a wealthy *indio principalia*, a growing Christian *mestizo* population, and the influx of new Chinese immigrants—made this classification scheme obsolete. The state started to adjust to new realities with an 1828 decree classifying Chinese residents according to occupation rather than religion. *Mestizos* (perhaps half a million by mid-century) were taxed less than the Chinese but twice as much as “rich, urbanized *indios* [who] were still paying a mild tribute as their only tax, as if they had never left the villages.”³⁶

Box 4.4. The Burdens of Office

"In the first place, there was the risk of financial ruin because the collection of taxes was becoming more and more difficult, due primarily to the continuously rising hatred of the masses against the tribute. This was intensified by the reform of 1851, which not only reduced the tributary ages but also raised the amount of tribute itself. Other immediate causes of the difficulty were the increasing geographic mobility of the people and number of mixed marriages, making census enumeration difficult and jurisdiction oftentimes conflicting. These conditions were a real difficulty for the *cabezas* but only superficial for the Superior Government, as represented in practice by the *alcalde mayor*, who, as a rule, was not interested in the reasons for failure to collect. Indeed, what was important was for the *cabeza* to fill his quota—it did not matter how—for otherwise, his own properties and goods might be confiscated. Moreover, as a debtor to the Royal Treasury, a *cabeza* was liable for imprisonment. Thus, in addition to financial ruin, there was the risk of degradation.

"The position of the *gobernadorcillo* was no better; in fact, it was worse. The tribute, as we noted, was payable in money or in kind. Such being the case, the *gobernadorcillo* often found himself with loads of goods to transport to the capital, including poultry and livestock. Since the law did not provide for the expenses in storage, packing, and transportation of the goods, he had to shoulder these burdens. . . . [There was also] the maintenance of prisoners [and] the *Casa Tribunal* itself, both as a government building and a lodging house, to look after. Although the law . . . did not intend that these burdens should be borne solely by the *gobernadorcillos* and *cabezas* . . . government appropriations were very inadequate. Moreover, a lot of documentation and formal details were required with which even Spanish officialdom found it difficult to comply. Because of these conditions, many native officials, either through limited administrative training or other causes—including honesty—found themselves actually emptying their own pockets in order to square accounts with the treasury, or provide for expenses necessary to maintain the [town]. In many instances, *gobernadorcillos* and *cabezas*, unless they were smart enough, were imprisoned for alleged debts to the treasury. Against this background, it is therefore not strange that internal abuses continued."

—Eliodoro Robles, *The Philippines in the Nineteenth Century*
(Quezon City: Malaya Books, 1969), 84–86

Second, the tribute lists upon which the collection was based were increasingly unreliable. Despite the evident importance of enumerating the growing population (estimated as exceeding 1.7 percent growth per annum),³⁷ it was not until 1887 that the Spanish attempted to conduct the first census of the population. The suggestion of a population count twenty-six years earlier nearly caused a panic in Manila, with rumors circulating that it would be used to conscript men for war in Africa or to send women to Spain. In the provinces, the announcement caused people to flee to the mountains. Tribute lists therefore continued to be prepared by *cabezas* and were made to conform to lists kept by parish friars. Names were entered when a person reached

tribute-paying age and crossed off (or perhaps not) upon Christian burial. As society became more mobile, the lists became less reliable. The *cabeza* could not cross off people who had died or moved away without the approval of the friar. But the friar might object because the church received its percentage based on the official number of tributes.

Some people managed to evade being listed by moving from their parish of birth, while others were listed twice, an occurrence caused by the prevalence of nicknames in addition to baptismal names. In 1849, Governor Narciso Claveria, determined to eliminate “confusion” caused by “the general lack of individual surnames” in “the administration of justice, government, finance and public order,” decreed that Filipinos be assigned permanent family names.³⁸ The government then issued the *Catalogo de Apellidos* (Catalogue of Family Names), from which names were assigned in the following peculiar manner:

A town would choose the names of one letter of the alphabet, a second chose the names of another letter, and so on. Until recently, one could tell the hometown of an individual by his or her surname. This was true, for example, in Albay province. Those with family names beginning with “R” were almost certainly from the town of Oas, those with “O” from Guinobatan, and those with “B” from Tiwi. This also explains why many Filipinos today bear Spanish family names although they may not have Spanish blood.³⁹

The assignment of surnames, an ambitious directive of the central state, was carried out fairly quickly and thoroughly in the settled parts of the country. How was this possible, given the weak capacity of local state offices? Simply put, the civil state did not even attempt it; the governor-general entrusted the task to the parish friars. It is telling that this seminal episode in state building *and* state–society relations should depend entirely on the mediation of the clergy. The full range of tasks the parish priest supervised by the end of the century speaks to the continuing weakness of the local state (see box 4.5).

Unfortunately, surnames alone could not rationalize the tax system. This was only begun in 1884, when the tribute was replaced by a new tax levied equally on all, based upon the issuance of a *cédula personal* (identification card) to every adult. It was accompanied by a *contribución industrial* (tax on earnings), with which the state finally began to capture some of the colony’s economic growth. But even a rationalized drive for revenues caught officeholders between increasing responsibilities and inadequate infrastructure for their implementation, a situation that promoted rather than curbed corruption.

The failure of reform to penetrate to the local level had two consequences. Weak local officials were still dominated by the clergy in all areas of governance and even relied on their interpretation of the complicated regulations

Box 4.5. The Parish Priest at the Turn of the Century

"He was inspector of primary schools; president of the health board and board of charities; president of the board of urban taxation . . . ; inspector of taxation; previously he was the actual president, but lately the honorary president of the board of public works.

"He certified to the correctness of the cédulas [taxpayer identity papers], seeing that they conformed to the entries in the parish books. They did not have civil registration here, and so they had to depend upon the books of the parish priests. These books were sent in for the purpose of this cédula taxation, but were not received by the authorities unless vised [stamped] by the priest.

". . . Under the Spanish law every man had to be furnished with a certificate of character. If a man was imprisoned and he was from another town, they would send to that other town for his antecedents, and the court would examine whether they were good or bad. They would not be received, however, unless the parish priest had his vise on them. The priest also certified as to the civil status of persons. Every year they drew lots for those who were to serve in the army, every fifth man drawn being taken. The parish priest would certify to that man's condition. . . .

"By law the priest had to be present when there were elections for municipal duties. . . . He was the censor of the municipal budgets before they were sent to the provincial governor.

"He was the president of the prison board and inspector (in turn) of the food provided by the prisoners. He was a member of the provincial board. . . . Before the provincial board came all matters relating to public works and other cognate matters. All estimates for public buildings in the municipalities were submitted to this board.

"He was also a member of the board for partitioning Crown lands. . . . In some cases the parish priests in the capitals of the provinces would act as auditors. . . . He was also counselor for the municipal council when that body met. . . . The priest was the supervisor of the election of the police force. He was the examiner of the scholars attending the first and second grades in the public schools. He was the censor of the plays, comedies, and dramas in the language of the country, deciding whether they were against the public peace or the public morals."

—Testimony of Father Juan Villegas, provincial of the Franciscan Order, before the Philippine Commission of 1900, in *Report of the Philippine Commission* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1900), 25–26

and legislation handed down in Spanish. Second, the alienation of well-off principalia from government service led them to search for other avenues of social advancement.

Education

The state's interest in educating the population was left to the religious orders until very late in the colonial period. Primary education, where it existed, was overseen by parish friars, who tolerated only religious topics to be taught. They were especially hostile to indios learning to speak and read Spanish, an

ability that would give them access to the same body of knowledge the friar had. Secular education was wholly neglected; even Manila in 1830 had but one public primary school. A royal decree of 1714 creating a secular university was never implemented, and a 1702 decree creating seminaries for natives was implemented only in 1772.

In 1836, government policy called for all towns to have primary schools and to teach Spanish, but a lack of qualified teachers with Spanish language skills and the opposition of local priests made this impossible. In the 1840s, it was still common Spanish opinion that the *indios* should be kept ignorant. As a consequence, “prayer schools” rather than secular primary schools were the norm, and only diocesan capitals had seminaries where sons of the elite studied Spanish to prepare for higher education in Manila.⁴⁰

The participation of the Philippines in the global economy naturally demanded that all this change in order to produce a trained workforce for the public and private bureaucracies, supporting industries, and professions. It was necessary to expand the school system with institutions in Manila and the provinces, to bring women into the educational system, and to modernize curricula that were excessively religion-focused. An 1863 decree, with backing from the central state, mandated free primary education at the village level. The comprehensive reforms called for a primary curriculum that introduced secular topics and Spanish, but was still heavily religious. The decree also called for the creation of a men’s normal school (teacher training academy) to produce teachers of Spanish. The *Escuela Normal* was duly established in 1865 by the Jesuits, an order that did not share the hostility of the other orders to this mission. Two years later, literacy became a requirement for officeholders.⁴¹ By 1886, there were 2,143 primary schools throughout the country.⁴² By the 1890s, public secondary schools were opening outside of Manila, including ten normal schools for women.

Like other government reforms, these were strongly opposed by the religious orders, which viewed them as infringements on their monopoly of education. In 1868, for example, a review of colonial education conducted by the revolutionary government in Spain resulted in an order for *Intramuros’s* *Universidad de Santo Tomas*—established by the Dominicans in 1611—to be secularized and renamed the University of the Philippines. This order was successfully resisted until it became moot with the restoration of the monarchy.⁴³ Reformist pressures nevertheless forced the university to revise an antiquated curriculum centered on theology, canon law, and scholastic philosophy. In 1870, university officials added medicine, pharmacy, midwifery, and surgical medicine, although as Peter Stanley notes, they “still ignored sciences, technology, engineering, business and civil administration”—crucial disciplines needed by the new economy.⁴⁴ (See box 4.6.) The Jesuits, however, did embrace reform in their schools, introducing a comprehensive program that included Spanish,

Box 4.6. The Physics Laboratory: A Satire of the Universidad Santo Tomas de Manila

“The classroom was a broad rectangular space with large grilled windows which gave abundant access to air and light. Along the walls could be seen three wide seats of stone covered with wood, filled with students arranged in alphabetical order. At the end, opposite the entrance under a portrait of Saint Thomas of Aquinas, rose the chair of the professor, elevated, with a small stairway on each side. Except for a beautiful narra-framed blackboard hardly used, since on it still remained written the *viva* which appeared on the first day, nothing was to be seen there by way of furniture, useful or useless. The walls, painted white and protected in part by glazed tiles to prevent abrasions, were totally bare; not a sketch, not an engraving, not even a diagram of an instrument of Physics.

“The students had no need for more; no one missed the practical instruction of a science eminently experimental. For years and years, it had been taught that way, and the Philippines was not disturbed; on the contrary it continued as always. Now and then, a little instrument would drop from heaven which would be shown to the class from afar, like the Holy Sacrament to the prostrated faithful: look at me and touch me not. From time to time, when some professor wanted to please, a day of the year was set aside to visit the mysterious laboratory and to admire from outside the enigmatic apparatuses placed inside the cabinets; no one could complain; on that day could be seen much brass, much glass, many tubes, discs, wheels, bells, etc.; and the bazaar did not go beyond that, nor was the Philippines disturbed. Besides, the students were convinced that those instruments had not been bought for them; the friars would be real fools. The laboratory had been set up to be shown to the guests and the high officials who came from the Peninsula, so that upon seeing it they could shake their heads with satisfaction while he who guided them smiled as if to say:

““You thought that you were going to encounter some backward monks, eh? Well, we are on top of the century, we have a laboratory!””

—José Rizal, *El Filibusterismo*, trans. Ma. Soledad Lacson-Locsin (Manila: Bookmark, 1996), 98–99

Latin, Greek, basic mathematics, literature, history, rhetoric, and philosophy, in addition to Christian teachings.

It would be noted by American colonizers at the turn of the century that instruction in village primary schools remained poor and that little of the mandated curriculum was actually taught. Education conducted by the state still aimed to “produce good wards, both for the colonial and church regimes, and not to develop learned minds.”⁴⁵ But government schools had in any case ceased to be the most important sites of learning from the 1860s onward. Sparked by mandated reforms and social frustration, a flood of private institutions began to open—trade schools, night schools, art schools, schools of commerce. In the 1860s and 1870s, Philippine society essentially educated itself.

It was not only the elite that benefited from greater access to education. In 1900, U.S. officials counted 1,914 teachers (almost half of whom were women)

in a population of 6,709,810—a ratio of one teacher per 3,500 inhabitants. This is very low, of course, but literacy—the basic ability to read and write in one’s native language—was considered “comparatively common” (in Spanish, only 2 percent).⁴⁶ By comparison, in mid-1920s French-ruled Vietnam, only about 5 percent of the population “could read a newspaper, proclamation or letter in any language”; in Dutch-ruled Indonesia, the 1930 “literacy rate for adult Indonesians throughout the archipelago was only 7.4 per cent” (in Dutch, 0.32 percent); and in about 1950, only 30 percent of Malays in British Malaya were literate in any language (in English, 2 percent).⁴⁷

Mapping the Peripheries

Like administrative reforms, military modernization must be judged a mixed success. The army, which had fared badly against British invaders and Muslim raiders, expanded and modernized quite a bit in the nineteenth century, and Manila’s fortifications were somewhat improved. In the first half of the century, though, the expansion of state authority into the Gran Cordilleras still depended on the religious orders, which sent missions to convert “mountain tribes” to Christianity and settled agrarian life. They had more success than in past centuries, but a British observer in the 1850s noted that “there were still at large in the island of Luzon alone, some 200,000 inhabitants, who, like the Muslims, absolutely refused to be subjected under Spanish authorities.”⁴⁸

An increased French and British presence in the southern waters also worried the Spanish, who had occupied and Christianized only the coasts of Mindanao and Sulu. In fact, the initiative was rather the other way around, with incessant Muslim “slave raids” haunting the colony. (The Sulu sultanate was a major supplier of slaves in the declining Southeast Asian maritime trade.) Spain’s slow-moving warships were no match for fast-moving Muslim raiding vessels, and the efficacy of Spanish forts in protecting strategic coastal towns was uneven.

By the second half of the century, centralizing reforms and technology gave the state’s coercive agencies more backbone. The military’s presence on the governor-general’s Council of Administration increased its influence and the colonial state’s determination to make state power coterminous with state boundaries. One method of accomplishing this goal combined bureaucratic and military means—the creation of new provinces. The state began to surround the Gran Cordillera with special military provinces and to launch continuous punitive expeditions against areas that resisted its authority. The military took advantage of recurring internal rivalries within the mountain communities to weaken their opposition and was aided greatly by missionary friars who turned converted communities against defiant ones. While some new provinces

represented territory the Spanish had not previously commanded, population growth also encouraged administrative subdivision for purposes of greater control. The number of provinces increased from twenty-seven in 1810 to fifty in 1859, of which thirty-one were military. In 1860, two major administrative districts were put under the authority of military governors, one in the Visayas and one in Mindanao, in order to increase central authority.⁴⁹

In Muslim Mindanao, the acquisition of steam-powered gunboats in the 1840s gave the Spanish, like other colonial powers, an edge over unconquered polities. Over the next thirty years, the sultanates were repeatedly attacked by Spanish forces, beginning with the destruction of Sulu's major trading towns, Balangiga and Jolo, in major engagements in the late 1840s and early 1850s. As the Sulu sultanate's power fragmented, the Maguindanao sultanate went into terminal decline. Long blocked by the Spanish navy from direct international access, it had depended on Sulu as a conduit of trade. By the end of the century, the Spanish had destroyed nearly all Muslim shipping in the Sulu archipelago, in parallel development with British and Dutch domination of Malay shipping and piracy in the region. Spain finally won "capitulation" from Sulu on the question of sovereignty in 1878 (see box 4.7). Still, there was little conversion and local Muslim control of the hinterlands was not eliminated, due to Spain's inability to penetrate the interior, especially of Mindanao. The further incorporation of the "outsider" Muslims would have to await the next state incarnation.

As a complement to the army, a paramilitary police was established in 1868 to replace a variety of provincial and local militias. The Guardia Civil, with Spanish officers and locally recruited troops, had the authority to operate throughout the Philippines suppressing "banditry," rebellion, criminality, and petty civil indiscretions. Its presence and brutality in civilian settings became a major grievance against Spanish rule and "created a collective Filipino memory of military abuse that inspired a later commitment to civil supremacy."⁵⁰ The unified and relatively pacified archipelago the Spanish long envisioned had finally become a reality, but, according to Robles, "It was difficult to determine to what extent Spain realized that centralization would engender Filipino unity, which could endanger her sovereignty—particularly if conditions in the Philippines were not sufficiently improved."⁵¹

SOCIAL FORMATION AND STATE RESPONSE

Philippine "Societies"

The Philippine polity at the beginning of the nineteenth century was based upon the many rural communities ruled by Spanish friars with assistance by

Box 4.7. The Subjugation of Sulu**Excerpts from the Treaty of Peace and Commerce between Spain and Sulu***Signed at Sulu, 23 September 1836*

ART. I. The Captain-General doth assure to the most Excellent Sultan and the Dattos of Joló . . . Peace on the part of the Spaniards, and of the Natives of all the Islands subject to the Crown of Spain, with the Tributaries in the Lands subject to the Sultan and his Dattos; and he offers the protection of his Government and Naval and Military assistance . . . against the enemies who may attack him, or in order to subject the Towns which may revolt in any of the Islands situated within the limits of the Spanish jurisdiction. . . .

The Sultan of Joló . . . engages also to preserve peace with all the subjects of Her Catholic Majesty, and to consider as Enemies all those who may henceforward be such to the Spanish Nation, and to concur with armed forces for the wars which may arise, in the same manner as if they were Spaniards.

ART. II. . . . Joloan ships may sail and trade freely in the open Ports of Mañila and Zamboanga, and the Spanish in that of Joló. . . . Joloanos who carry a cargo of goods from those Islands, are to pay in Mañila and Zamboanga less than Foreign ships, and the Spaniards are not to pay in Joló so much as is exacted from the vessels of other Nations.

Excerpts from the Bases of Peace and Capitulation*Signed at Jolo, 22 July 1878*

ART. I. We [the Sultan of Sulu] declare as beyond discussion the sovereignty of Spain over all the Archipelago of Sulu and the dependencies thereof. . . .

ART. III. Spain assumes the right to occupy such points of the Sulu Archipelago and its dependencies as she may desire. . . .

ART. VIII. We shall endeavour to put a stop to the evil doings of pirates and malefactors. . . .

ART. IX. We shall be allowed the free exercise of our religion and customs; Catholic missionaries will have the liberty to reside in and visit any point of Sulu and its dependencies. . . .

Raphael Perpetuo M. Lotilla, ed., *The Philippine National Territory: A Collection of Related Documents* (Quezon City: Institute of International Legal Studies, University of the Philippines Law Center and Foreign Service Institute, Department of Foreign Affairs, 1995), 1–2, 27–28

indio and mestizo principalia, who collected taxes and mobilized labor for the needs of the colonial state and church. In Manila and a few other cities, Chinese and Chinese mestizos were organized into self-governing municipal corporations under the rule of a provincial governor. These communities remained segmented by language, distance, and lack of mobility. The limited nature of the state–“societies” relationship had been adequate for much of the colonial era. As long as tributes were collected, the galleon trade was profitable, and retail networks of “necessary” Chinese provisioned the cities,

there was no perceived need to create a more unified society, nor for residents to be touched by more representatives of the state.

As we have seen in this chapter, however, over the course of the nineteenth century the economy was transformed and the state was reformed, albeit in fits and starts and against the bitter opposition of the religious orders. These developments had a profound effect on the composition of colonial society, as commerce, land ownership, and professional status slowly supplanted religion and ethnicity as the basis of social identity. The importance of Chinese mestizos to this process cannot be underestimated: A foreign observer in Manila described them as “rich, active and intelligent.”⁵² By 1876, they “comprised about 23 percent of the combined total of Malay Filipinos [indios] and mestizos.”⁵³ These two groups intermarried, and the old structure of local government weakened as they spurned political office and moved beyond the influence of the local friar. Their rise was a major challenge to the colonial state.

Meanwhile, newer Chinese immigrants were more identifiable as outsiders and were easily associated with foreign capital. They attracted a rising indio hostility that, in combination with overseas Chinese nationalism, slowed their assimilation and intermarriage. Instead, this community turned inward, tried to “reclaim” its mestizo children, and established its own newspapers, schools, cemeteries, and hospitals. Such separateness was problematic in a society where the Chinese were so economically prominent. In addition to their traditional roles as wholesalers and retailers, they were producers of abaca and tobacco; processors of rice, sugar, and timber; urban artisans; rural laborers; and monopoly contractors.

Spaniards—a late addition to the social mix—were no longer restricted to Manila or the few garrison cities. Inevitably, they mixed with the local and Chinese population, creating another mestizo population. (Earlier Spanish mestizos in the countryside were illicit offspring of friars and were absorbed into indio communities. Many Filipino families today claim a friar on their family tree.) Confusingly, Spanish mestizos often referred to themselves as criollos, wanting to claim “pure” Spanish blood and fearing descent on the colonial social ladder. But their status would never again rise on the prestige of the old empire; they tended to be as striving as the *principalia* and Chinese mestizos and thus constituted competition for the ruling Spaniards.

In short, the old socioeconomic network of “Spanish” at the top and “indios” at the base with “Chinese” providing an economic link between the two was steadily displaced by a more dynamic social hierarchy.

Filipinos

The economy’s new wealth was mainly land related, and the income derived allowed the indio-mestizo *principalia* to expand its cultural wealth as well.

After obtaining basic education, sons were sent to Manila and often to Europe to acquire professional training and a cultural patina rivaling the peninsulares. In contrast to earlier hispanization in the rural areas, which was mediated through friars and further localized as “folk Catholicism,” this urban flowering of “filipinized Hispanic culture” was “a more sophisticated version of Spanish culture than any hitherto available in the Philippines.”⁵⁴ And it was available strictly on the basis of wealth, not ethnicity (or “race,” the increasingly common way of expressing ethnic difference).

With wealth and higher education came a quest for social recognition. In town, elites were proud to display their prosperity, purchasing huge houses, sponsoring church activities, demanding more say in local decision making, and flaunting “European tastes” they had acquired in travel abroad. By the last decade of the century, ethnic distinctions between Chinese and Spanish mestizos and indio elites had become anachronistic and were replaced by class-, culture-, and profession-based identities. The three groups gravitated toward a common identity and found it in the evolving meaning of “Filipino,” a term appropriated from Spanish criollos by those with new claims to leadership. Although small relative to the mass of rural peasantry, the new Filipino elite had a budding internal class structure. Below the *caciques* (mostly absentee landlords residing in Manila) and a middle stratum of inquilinos and merchants was an “urban wing” of professionals (doctors, lawyers, journalists, priests) and workers (accountants and clerks, factory workers and stevedores). From this urban wing emerged intellectuals who would articulate the demands of the Filipinos for social recognition and a place in society.

But the colonial state—both secular and clerical—regarded the new elites as threats, calling them “brutes laden with gold.” The reforms they had introduced to cope with economic and social change had not been total failures, but were increasingly inadequate to maintain Spain’s hold on the Philippines as a “colony.” In fact, where reform most succeeded—as in the economy and education—it seemed only to highlight Spanish lack of leadership and dynamism. After a period of reform, the Spanish closed ranks rather than admit the new groups and retreated behind friar power.

NOTES

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3. Legarda, *After the Galleons*, 82–83.

4. Luis Alonso, "Financing the Empire: The Nature of the Tax System in the Philippines, 1565–1804," *Philippine Studies* 51, no. 1 (2003): 88.
5. Legarda, *After the Galleons*, 99.
6. Edgar Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life, 1850–1898* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1965), 48.
7. Wickberg, *The Chinese in Philippine Life*, 47–49, 62–63, 70–71.
8. Corpuz, *Economic History*, 108.
9. Corpuz, *Economic History*, 132.
10. Legarda, *After the Galleons*, 101–45; Corpuz, *Economic History*, 109–11.
11. See Alfred W. McCoy, "A Queen Dies Slowly: The Rise and Decline of Iloilo City," 307–26, and Michael Cullinane, "The Changing Nature of the Cebu Urban Elite in the Nineteenth Century," 271–76, both in *Philippine Social History: Global Trade and Local Transformations*, ed. Alfred W. McCoy and Ed. C. de Jesus (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1982).
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13. Doeppers, "Migration to Manila," 171.
14. Quoted in Legarda, *After the Galleons*, 100.
15. Dennis Morrow Roth, "Church Lands in the Agrarian History of the Tagalog Regions," in McCoy and Jesus, *Philippine Social History*, 131.
16. Estimates of the population under Spain's control in the Philippines. See the appendix to vol. 1 of O. D. Corpuz's *The Roots of the Filipino Nation* (Quezon City: Aklahi Foundation, 1989) for an analysis of population estimates during Spanish colonial rule.
17. Corpuz, *Economic History*, 112.
18. Joaquin Martinez de Zuniga, *Historia de las Islas Pilipinas* (1803), in Horacio de la Costa, *Readings in Philippine History: Selected Historical Texts Presented with a Commentary by H. de la Costa* (Makati City: Bookmark, 1992), 112–13.
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20. Marshall S. McLennan, "Changing Human Ecology on the Central Luzon Plain: Nueva Ecija, 1705–1939," in McCoy and Jesus, *Philippine Social History*, 70.
21. Corpuz, *Economic History*, 195.
22. Ed. C. de Jesus, "Control and Compromise in the Cagayan Valley," in McCoy and Jesus, *Philippine Social History*, 28–29; McLennan, "Changing Human Ecology," 77.
23. McCoy, "A Queen Dies Slowly," 311.
24. Legarda, *After the Galleons*, 4, 126–35.
25. Alfred W. McCoy, "The Social History of an Archipelago: Introduction," in McCoy and Jesus, *Philippine Social History*, 8.
26. Alonso, "Financing the Empire," 87.
27. Eliodoro Robles, *The Philippines in the Nineteenth Century* (Quezon City: Malaya Books, 1969), 290.
28. Robles, *Philippines in the Nineteenth Century*, 31–33.

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30. Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution, 1789–1848* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 112–13.
31. Robles, *Philippines in the Nineteenth Century*, 292.
32. Robles, *Philippines in the Nineteenth Century*, chap. 8.
33. Tomas Comyn, *Estado de las Islas Filipinas en 1810* (1820), quoted in Robles, *Philippines in the Nineteenth Century*, 111–12.
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