

The philippine society under the american rule essay sample

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Having proclaimed that the Philippines will be kept by the United States, President McKinley started the task of governing the colony. In his address before the 4th session of the 76th U. S. Congress, McKinley stated America's aims concerning the Philippines. " The Philippines is ours not to exploit, but to develop, civilize, educate, and to train in the science of self-government." In his instructions to the First and Second Philippine Commissions, McKinley explained in effect that the U. S. came to the Philippines not to conquer the Filipinos, but to work for their benefit and welfare.

The Military Government

Following the surrender of Manila in August, 1898, President McKinley ordered the establishment of a military government here. Major General Wesley Merritt, the commander of U. S. forces in Manila, served as its first military governor. When Merritt left for Paris, France to brief the U. S. and Spanish peace commissioners on the conditions in the Philippines, he was succeeded by Major General Elwell Otis who served until May, 1900. The last American military governor was Major General Arthur MacArthur. He served until 1901.

During its brief existence from 1898 to 1901, the military government accomplished the following among other things:

1. It reorganized the courts in the country. It established a Supreme Court composed of six Filipinos and three Americans. A Filipino, Cayetano Arellano, was named as the first Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

2. It organized town and provincial governments in areas that had already been pacified by American troops. Elections were held to choose the local officials. The first town to hold elections under U. S. rule was Baliwag, Bulacan. The elections under were held on May 6, 1899.

3. The military government introduced the public school system in the Philippines.

One of the schools established by the Americans was Manila High School, the first public high school in the Philippines. It was established on June 11, 1906.

English was taught for the first time with America soldiers acting as the first English teachers of the Filipinos. Re. William McKinnon, a U. S. Army chaplain was assigned to supervise the first seven schools opened in Manila, after its regain by the Americans in August, 1898. McKinnon was replaced on June 1, 1899 by Lt. George P. Anderson as superintendent of schools in Manila.

The Schurman Commission

While the Philippine-American War was raging, President McKinley sent two commissions to the Philippines. The first of these commissions was the Schurman Commission which was headed by Dr. Jacob G. Schurman, President of Cornell University. Its members were Adm. George Dewey, Maj. Gen. Elwell Otis, former U. S. Minister to China, Charles Denby, and Prof. Dean C. Worcester of the University of Michigan. The Schurman group was officially known as the First Philippine Commission.

The Schurman Commission was given the primary task of looking into the situations in the Philippines and to recommend the kind of government that should be established in the Philippines. The Commission was also told to tell the Filipino people about the good intentions of the United States in coming to the Philippines.

The Commission arrived in Manila on March 4, 1899. After completing its survey of the existing conditions in the Philippines, the Commissions submitted its report to President McKinley on January 31, 1900.

The major recommendations of the Commission were the following:

1. The U. S. should remain in the Philippines inasmuch as the Filipinos were not ready for independence.
2. In areas already firmly under American control, military rule should be lifted and replaced by a civil government.
3. A territorial government should be put in the Philippines with a bicameral lawmaking body. The lower house would be elective while the upper house would be half elective and half appointive.
4. The organization of town and provincial governments.
5. The protection of the civil rights of the Filipinos and the promotion of their welfare.

The Schurman report and recommendations were set by President McKinley to the U. S. Congress.

The Taft Commission

As a follow up to the recommendations of the Schurman Commission, President McKinley created the Taft Commission (Second Philippine Commission) on March 16, 1900. The head of the Commission was Judge William Howard Taft, with the following as members: Luke E. Wright, Henry C. Ide, Dean C. Worcester, and Bernard Moses. Unlike the Schurman Commission, the Taft Commission came to the Philippines to stay. Its function was to establish a civil government in the Philippines and to train the Filipinos in self-government.

In the performance of its function, the Taft Commission followed a set of guidelines issued to it on April 7, 1900 by President McKinley. Those guidelines were drafted by Secretary of War Elihu Root. Under these guidelines, the Taft Commission was told to “ bear in mind that the government which they (the Commission) are establishing is designed not for selfish satisfaction- but for the happiness, peace, and prosperity of the people of the Philippine Islands, and the measures adopted should be made to conform to their customs, habits...”

The Taft Commission arrived in Manila on June 3, 1900 and began its legislative functions in September of the same year. The first law that it passed was an act setting aside \$1, 000, 000 for building and repairing roads and bridges. Up to August, 1902, the Taft Commission enacted more than 400 laws. These laws provided for the establishment of a number of bureaus in the government, the establishment of local governments, the formation of the civil service system, the creation of the Philippine Constabulary, and the organization of a public school system in the land.

The Taft Commission was expanded in September, 1901 to include three pro-American Filipinos as members. They were Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera, Bebito Legarda and Jose Luzurriaga.

The Establishment of the Civil Government

The military government in the Philippines was terminated when the U. S. Congress enacted the Army Appropriations Act on March 2, 1901. This law provided for the establishment of civil government in the Philippines as per an amendment to the act authored by Senator John Spooner of Wisconsin. The Spooner Amendment required that all military civil and judicial powers needed to govern the Philippines “ shall, until otherwise provided by congress is vested in such person or persons... as the President of the United States shall direct...”

The Spooner Amendment removed from the U. S. President the final authority to govern the Philippines. This power was transferred to the U. S. Congress through the President.

Consequently, the civil government was set up and inaugurated on July 4, 1901 with Judge William H. Taft as the first civil governor. In 1905, the U. S. Congress changed the title to that of governor-general. Governor Taft exercised both executive and legislative functions because he was the head of the Taft Commission that served as the law-making body.

Taft did his best to promote the welfare of the Filipinos during his more than two years of service. His policy of “ the Philippines for the Filipinos” became

known. Many of the foundations of a stable and democratic government were laid during his administration. One of his greatest achievements was the purchase of a big tract of friar lands (410, 000 acres) which he distributed to landless Filipino tenants on easy installments terms.

The Philippine Bill of 1902

An important stage in the development of civil government in the Philippines was the passage of the Cooper Act on July 1, 1902, otherwise known as the Philippines Bill of 1902. It was sponsored by U. S Representative Henry A. Cooper of Wisconsin, and was also the first organic law for the Philippines enacted by the U. S Congress.

The key provisions of the Philippine Bill of 1902 were the following:

1. A bill of rights for the Filipinos.
2. The appointment of two Filipino resident commissioners to represent the Philippines in the U. S Congress but without voting rights.
3. The establishment of the Philippine assembly to be elected by the Filipinos two years after the publication of a census and only after the peace has been completely restored in the country. The Philippine Assembly would be the lower house of the legislature while the Philippine Commission would be the upper house.
4. Executive power would be exercised by the Civil Governor who would have several executive departments such as Interior, Public Instruction, Finance and Justice, and Commerce and Police.
5. Conservation of the country's natural resources for the Filipinos.

The First Philippine Assembly

Upon the recommendation of Governor Taft, President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed on July 4, 1902 the existence of peace and end of the war in the Philippines. On the basis of this proclamation, Governor Taft ordered the taking of a census on March 2, 1903. It was the first census in the Philippine history. The census which was published in 1905, showed that the Philippines' population was 7, 635, 426.

After the publication of the census, the election for the Philippine Assembly was conducted on July 30, 1907.

There were two contending parties in the elections, the Nacionalista Party and the Progressive Party. The pro-Filipino Nacionalista Party won 59 out 80 elective seats in the Assembly. The pro-American Progressive Party won only 16 seats. Independent candidates won five seats.

The First Philippine Assembly was formally inaugurated at the Manila Grand Opera House on October 16, 1907. Sergio Osmeña of Cebu was elected speaker. Manuel L. Quezon was chosen Majority Floor Leader. The first law enacted by the Philippine Assembly was the Gabaldon Act which appropriated P1, 000, 000 for the establishment of barrio schools in the country.

Under the provinces of the Philippine Bill of 1902, the Philippine Assembly shared legislative power with the Philippine Commission. For the first time

under the American rule, the Filipinos participated in the making of laws that affect them.

The two legislative bodies had some differences in interest. The all-Filipino Assembly worked for the interests of the Filipinos. The American-dominated commission upheld American interests. The conflicts between the two chambers and replaced by an all-Filipino elective Philippine Senate.

Resident Commissioners

The Philippine Bill of 1902 gave the Filipinos the right to be represented by two Filipino resident commissioners in the United States Congress. These commissioners could speak out for or against any bill in Congress affecting the Philippines. However, they had no right to vote.

The first two resident commissioners were Pablo Ocampo and Benito Legarda. Considered one of the greatest Filipino resident commissioners was Manuel L. Quezon who served from 1909 to 1916. He became well-known for his eloquence and brilliance. Quezon, like the other Filipinos who served as resident commissioner, defended the interests of the Filipinos.

Political Parties under the American Regime

During the first few years of U. S. rule, any political party that educated nationalism found it very difficult to survive for long. Because of this, the first political party to be formed in the Philippines in the early years of American rule was a pro-American party which was known as the Federal Party. It was founded by a group of pro-American Filipinos headed by Trinidad H. Pardo de

Tavera in December, 1900. The Federal Party wanted the Philippines to be a state of the American union. It was from the ranks of this party that the Americans recruited many of the Filipinos who were given high positions in the government during the early days of U. S. occupation of the Philippines. The Federal Party, because of its pro-American platform, never gained wide acceptance among the Filipinos. To win popular acceptance, the Federal Party changed its name to Progressive Party and its platform. It advocated eventual independence for the Philippines. Despite this change, it won only 16 seats in the 1907 Assembly elections while the pro-Filipino Nacionalista Party won 59 seats.

The Nacionalista Party was formed out of a union in March, 1907 of two nacionalista Union parties – the Immediate Independence Party and the Nacionalista Union. Both groups were formed shortly after Governor General Henry C. Ide lifted in 1906 the ban on political parties advocating Philippine Independence. Sergio Osmeña and Manuel L. Quezon were among the leading members of party favoring immediate independence. The two parties merged so that they could better fight the well-organized Progressive Party.

The Filipinization of the Government

Corollary to her aim to train the Filipinos in self-government, American Government appointed qualified Filipinos to government positions. Cayetano Arellano was named Chief Justice of the Philippine Supreme Court. Florentino Torres became the first Attorney General. By 1908, there were four Filipinos in the Philippine Commission. In the same year, Gregorio Araneta was

appointed Secretary of Finance and Justice. He was the first Filipino to head an executive department.

In the lower levels of management, Filipinos were also being appointed to vacant position provided they were qualified to do the job. In 1903, there were more Americans (2, 777) in the government than Filipinos (2, 697). But in 1904, the Filipinos working in the government service outnumbered the Americans. By 1921, there were only 614 Americans in the government service compared to 13, 240 Filipinos.

On the local government level, the position was occupied mainly by Filipinos. The municipal officials- the town president, vice-president and councilors- were elected directly by the town residents. The councilors of all municipalities in turn elected the governor of the province. But beginning in 1907, the provincial governor was elected directly by the people together with one of the three-man provincial board. The other member, the provincial treasurer, was an appointive official usually an American. In 1916, the provincial government became exclusively Filipino when the provincial governor and all members of the provincial board were made elective officials.

The Philippine Autonomy Act (Jones Law of 1916)

The biggest step toward the ultimate independence of the Philippines was the Jones Law signed by President Woodrow Wilson on August 29, 1916. It was also known as the Philippine Autonomy Act and was sponsored by U. S.

The Jones Law is historically meaningful to the Filipinos. It contained the promise of the Americans to give independence to the Philippines. The Jones Law also gave the Filipinos greater participation in the government.

Under the Jones Law, the executive power was vested in the governor-general (an American) who was appointed by the President of the U. S. with the advice and consent of the U. S. Senate. The governor-general was assisted by a cabinet composed of department secretaries whom he appointed with the consent of the Philippine Senate. The cabinet would be composed of Filipinos except for the Secretary of Public Instruction who was concurrently the vice-governor and had to be an American.

Under the Jones Law, the legislative power was finally entrusted exclusively to the Filipinos. The law created the House of Representative (lower house) and a Philippine Senate (upper house) much like the way the U. S. Congress was organized. The members of the two houses were to be elected by the Filipinos.

The judicial power was vested in a Supreme Court to be composed of a Filipino chief justice and associate justices, Filipino and American; in courts of first instance and justice of the peace courts. The Supreme Courts members would be appointed by the U. S. President with the consent of the U. S. Senate.

Elections were held for the new Philippine Legislature on October 3, 1916. The Nacionalista Party won decisively over the Progressive Party. The new Legislature was formally inaugurated on October 16, 1916. Sergio Osmeña

was elected Speaker of the House of Representatives while Manuel L. Quezon became President of the Senate.

Governor General Harrison created the Council of State on October 16, 1918 upon the recommendation of Speaker Osmeña to ensure closer cooperation between the legislative and executive branches of the government. Its principal function was to advise the Governor-General on matters of national importance. It was composed of all cabinet secretaries and the presiding officers of both houses of the legislature. The chairman of the Council of State was the governor-general. Since the governor-general and vice-governor were the only Americans in the Council, the Filipinos dominated this advisory body, thus giving them a greater participation in running the government.

Progress Under America

Immediately after implementing her sovereignty in the Philippines, America opened the gates of the Archipelago to progress. Under the new regime, agriculture developed rapidly, commerce and trade soared to unprecedented levels, transportation and communication were modernized, banking and currency were improved, and the manufacturing industries were given impetus. The greatest single factor that caused the phenomenal development of Philippine economy was the free trade relations with the United States. American exports were admitted free duty into the Philippines without quota limits.

Education

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The United States considered education as one of their top priorities in the Philippines. The Americans made it a point to teach English to the Filipinos. The American soldiers were the first English teachers of the Filipinos.

In January, 1901, the Taft Commission enacted Act. No. 74 which established the Philippine public school system. It provided for free primary education and the establishment of a school to train Filipino Teachers. It abolished compulsory religious instruction.

Trained American teachers were hired and brought to the Philippines. The first group of 600 teachers from U. S. arrived in Manila on August 23, 1901 on board the transport ship Thomas. These teachers came to be known as Thomasites. From the Thomasites, the Filipino learned the English language. They also developed an admiration and appreciation of American things.

The public school system that the U. S. set up in the Philippines started with the elementary schools that offered a seven-year course. Graduates of this course could go on to a four-year high school course. Those who finished high school could take up higher education in a public junior college or at the University of the Philippines which was created in 1908 by virtue of Act No. 1870 enacted by the Philippine Assembly and the Philippine Commission.

The Americans gave bright young Filipino students an opportunity to take up higher education in American universities and colleges. These students were called as Filipino pensionados because their education in the United States was financed by the government in the Philippines. Hundreds of Filipino pensionados were able to study in U. S. from 1903 up to 1928 when the

pensionado system was abolished. From the ranks of these pensionados came the future civic, business, and political leaders of the Philippines.

Private education also prospered during the American regime. New private schools, colleges and universities were established. Siliman University, a Protestant school was founded in Negros Oriental in 1901. Centro Escolar University was founded by Librada Avelino in 1907. The Philippine Women's University was established by Francisca T. Benitez in 1919.

The Filipinos were highly motivated to finish a degree. They flocked to the private and public schools in large numbers. By 1935, there were 1, 229, 242 students enrolled in 7, 330 public schools throughout the country. The private schools which numbered about 400 had a total student population of 97, 500.

The Introduction of Protestantism

Protestantism was introduced in the Philippines by the Americans. The Protestants sought to win the Filipinos through friendly persuasion and by means of good examples. The Protestant sects came to the Philippines during the early years of American rule. They were the Presbyterians in 1899, the Baptists in 1900, the Disciples of Christ in 1901, the Seventh-day Adventists in 1905 and the Methodist Episcopalians in 1908.

The various Protestant groups sent missionaries to the remote areas of the archipelago. They taught religion to the Filipinos and did humanitarian work. They established schools, churches and hospitals.

The number of Protestants in the Philippines grew from about 4, 000 in 1903 to about 131, 000 in 1928.

Cultural Influence

In her nearly 50 years of rule in the Philippines, America was able to influence Filipino culture tremendously. One of the greatest contributions to Filipino culture was the English language. English was made the medium of instruction from the elementary grade to college. In business and in government, English was the medium of communication.

Newspapers helped propagate the language. The first newspapers in English appeared in Manila in the closing months of 1898. They were published by Americans. Among them were the American Soldier and the Manila Times. Other newspapers were published – the Manila Daily Bulletin (1900), the Cablenews (1902), Cablenews-American (1907), and the Philippine Free Press (1907).

As Filipino gained mastery of English, they, too, published their own newspapers. Vicente Sotto founded the Independent in 1915. It was the first Filipino weekly. The first Filipino daily newspapers, The Philippine Herald, came out in August, 1920. In 1925, Alejandro Roces founded the The Tribune. It became one of the most popular English language newspapers in the Philippines.

The Americans propagated among the Filipinos their ideas on democracy. The principles of democracy such as equality, due process of law, freedom of

speech, and separation of powers became part of the political thoughts of the Filipinos.

The Filipinos also adopted and imitated many American customs and traditions. Traditional American holidays like Halloween, the Fourth of July, and Thanksgiving Day became a part of Filipino celebrations. The singing of carols, the Christmas tree, Santa Claus, and the hanging of stocking became a part of the Filipino Christmas celebration.

With the unprecedented prosperity as a result of the economic boom, many Filipinos were able to buy the things that Americans were used to, such as radios, refrigerators, electric fans, phonographs, automobiles, etc. the Filipinos acquired a taste for American food, style of clothes, American music and recreation. In sports, two American games – basketball and baseball – became widely popular among the Filipinos.