

THE SPANISH PERIOD (1565-1898)

Historical Background

It is an accepted belief that the Spanish colonization of the Philippines started in 1565 during the time of Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, the first Spanish governor-general in the Philippines. Literature started to flourish during his time. This spurt continued unabated until the Cavite Revolt in 1872. The Spaniards colonized the Philippines for more than three centuries. During these times, many changes occurred in the lives of Filipinos. They embraced the Catholic religion, changed their names, and were baptized.

Their lifestyles changed too. They built houses made of stones and bricks, used beautiful furniture like the piano and used kitchen utensils. Carriages, trains and boats were used as means of travel. They held fiestas to honor the saints, the pope and the governors. They had cockfights, horse races and the theater as means of recreation.

This gave rise to the formation of the different classes of society like the rich and the landlords. Some Filipinos finished courses like medicine, law, agriculture and teaching. Many Filipinos finished their schooling already had been established.

Spanish Influences On Philippine Literature

Due to the long period of colonization of the Philippines by the Spaniards, they have exerted a strong influence on our literature.

1. The first Filipino alphabet called ALIBATA was replaced by the Roman alphabet.
2. The teaching of the Christian Doctrine became the basis of religious practices.
3. The Spanish language which became the literary language during this time lent many of its words to our language.
4. European legends and traditions brought here became assimilated in our songs, corridos, and moro-moros.
5. Ancient literature was collected and translated to Tagalog and other dialects.
6. Many grammar books were printed in Filipino, like Tagalog, Ilocano and Visayan
7. Our periodicals during these times gained a religious tone.

The First Books

1. Doctrina Cristiana (The Christian Doctrine). This was the first book printed in the Philippines in 1593 in xylography. It was written by Fr. Juan de Placencia and Fr. Domingo Nieva, in Tagalog and Spanish. It contained the Pater Noster (Our Father), Ave Maria (Hail Mary), Regina Coeli (Hail Holy Queen), the Ten Commandments of God, the Commandments of the Catholic Church, the Seven Mortal Sins, How to Confess, and the Catechism. Three old original copies of this book can still be found at the Vatican, at the Madrid Museum and at the US Congress. It contains only 87 pages but costs \$5,000.0.
2. Nuestra Señora del Rosario. The second book printed in the Philippines was written by Fr. Blancas de San Jose in 1602, and printed at the UST Printing Press with the help of Juan de Vera, a Chinese mestizo. It contains the biographies of saints, novenas, and questions and answers on religion.
3. Libro de los Cuatro Postprimeras de Hombre (in Spanish and Tagalog). This is the first book printed in typography.
4. Barlaan at Josephat. This is a Biblical story printed in the Philippines and translated to Tagalog from Greek by Fr. Antonio de Borja. It is believed to be the first Tagalog novel published in the Philippines even if it is only a translation. The printed translation has only 556 pages. The Ilocano translation in poetry was done by Fr. Agustin Mejia.
5. The Pasion. This is the book about the life and sufferings of Jesus Christ. It is read only during Lent. There were 4 versions of this in Tagalog and each version is according to the name of the writer. These are the Pilapil version (by Mariano Pilapil of Bulacan, 1814), the de Belen version (by Gaspar Aquino de Belen of Bat. in 1704), the de la Merced (by Aniceto de la Merced of Norzagaray, Bulacan in 1856) and the de Guia version (by Luis de Guia in 1750). Critics are not agreed whether it is the Pilapil or the de la Merced version which is the most popular.
6. Urbana at Felisa. A book by Modesto de Castro, the so called Father of Classic Prose in Tagalog. These are letters between two sisters Urbana at Felisa and have influenced greatly the behavior of people in society because the letters dealt with good behavior.
7. Ang Mga Dalit kay Maria (Psalms for Mary). A collection of songs praising the Virgin Mary. Fr. Mariano Sevilla, a Filipino priest, wrote this in 1865 and it was popular especially during the Maytime "Flores de Mayo" festival.

Literary Compositions

1. Arte y Reglas de la Lengua Tagala (Art and rules of the Tagalog language). Written by Fr. Blancas de San Jose and translated to Tagalog by Tomas Pinpin in 1610.
2. Compendio de la Lengua Tagala (Understanding the Tagalog language). Written by Fr. Gaspar de San Agustin in 1703.
3. Vocabulario de la Lengua Tagala (Tagalog vocabulary). The first Tagalog dictionary written by Fr. Pedro de San Buenaventura in 1613.
4. Vocabulario de la Lengua Pampanga (Pampanga vocabulary). The first book in Pampanga written by Fr. Diego in 1732.
5. Vocabulario de la Lengua Bisaya (Bisayan vocabulary). The best language book in Visayan by Mateo Sanchez in 1711
6. Arte de la Lengua Ilokana (The Art of the Ilocano language). The first Ilocano grammar book by Francisco Lopez.
7. Arte de la Lengua Bicolana (The Art of the Bicol language). The first book in the Bicol language and written by Fr. Marcos Lisbon in 1754.

Folk Songs

Folk songs became widespread in the Philippines. Each region had its national song from the lowlands to the mountains of Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Folk songs truly manifest the artistic feelings of the Filipinos. They show the Filipinos' innate appreciation for and love of beauty. The examples are Leron-Leron Sinta, Pamulinawen, Dandansoy, Sarong Banggi and Atin Cu Pung Singsing.

Recreational Plays.

There are many recreational plays performed by Filipinos during the Spanish times. Almost all of them were in poetic form. Here are examples:

1. Tibag – the word tibag means to excavate. This ritual was brought here by the Spaniard to remind the people about the search of St. Helena for the Cross on which Jesus died.
2. Lagaylay – this is a special occasion for the Pilareños of Sorsogon during Maytime to get together.

As early as April, the participating ladies are chosen and sometimes, mothers volunteer their girls in order to fulfill a vow made during an illness or for a favor received.

In some parts of Bicol, a different presentation is made but the objective is the same – praise, respect and offering of love to the Blessed Cross by St. Helen on the mound she had dug in.

3. The Cenaculo – this is a dramatic performance to commemorate the passion and death of Jesus Christ. There are two kinds: the Cantada and Hablada . In the Hablada the lines are spoken in a more deliberate manner showing the rhythmic measure of each verse and the rhyming in each stanza and is more dignified in theme; the Cantada is chanted like the Pasion.
4. The Cenaculo - written in octosyllabic verse, with 8 verses to the stanza. The full length versions take about 3 nights of staging. Performers come in costumes with wigs and performers are carefully chosen for their virtuous life. One performs the role of Jesus Christ and another the role of the Virgin Mary. Many famous Cenaculo players come from the Tagalog regions although there are also those from Ilocos, Pampanga, Bicol and both Sibulanon and Hiligaynon.
5. Panunuluyan – this is presented before 12:00 on Christmas Eve. This is a presentation of the search of the Virgin Mary and St. Joseph for an inn wherein to deliver the baby Jesus.
6. The Salubong (or Panubong) - The Salubong is an Easter play that dramatizes the meeting of the Risen Christ and his Mother. It is still presented in many Philippine towns.
7. Carillo (Shadow Play) – this is a form of dramatic entertainment performed on a moonless night during a town fiesta or on dark nights after a harvest. This shadow play is made by projecting cardboard figures before a lamp against a white sheet. The figures are moved like marionettes whose dialogues are produced by some experts. The dialogues are drawn from a Corrido or Awit or some religious play interspersed with songs. These are called by various names in different places:
8. Carillo in Manila, Rizal and Batangas and Laguan; TITRES in Ilocos Norte, Pangasinan, Bataa, Capiz and Negros; TITIRI in Zambales; GAGALO or KIKIMUT in Pampanga and Tarlac; and ALIALA in La Union.

9. The Zarzuela – considered the father of the drama; it is a musical comedy or melodrama three acts which dealt with man's passions and emotions like love, hate, revenge, cruelty, avarice or some social or political problem.

10. The Sainete – this was a short musical comedy popular during the 18th century. They were exaggerated comedies shown between acts of long plays and were mostly performed by characters from the lower classes. Themes were taken from everyday life scenarios.

The Moro-Moro

Like the Cenaculo, the Moro-moro is presented also on a special stage. This is performed during town fiestas to entertain the people and to remind them of their Christian religion. The plot is usually the same that of a Christian princess or a nobleman's daughter who is captured by the Mohammedans. The father organizes a rescue party where fighting between the Moros and the Christians ensue.

The Mohammedans are defeated by some miracle or Divine Intercession and the Mohammedans are converted to Christianity. In some instances, the whole kingdom is baptized and converted. One example of this is Prinsipe Rodante.

Karagatan

This is a poetic vehicle of a socio-religious nature celebrated during the death of a person. In this contest, more or less formal, a ritual is performed based on a legend about a princess who dropped her ring into the middle of the sea and who offered her hand in marriage to anyone who can retrieve it.

A leader starts off with an extemporaneous poem announcing the purpose. He then spins a "lumbo" or "tabo" marked with a white line. Whoever comes in the direction of the white line when the spinning stops gets his turn to "go into the sea to look for the ring." This means a girl will ask him a riddle and if he is able to answer, he will offer the ring to the girl.

Duplo

The Duplo replace the Karagatan. This is a poetic joust in speaking and reasoning. The roles are taken from the Bible and from proverbs and sayings. It is usually played during wakes for the dead.

Balagtasan

This is a poetic joust or a contest of skills in debate on a particular topic or issue. This is replaced the DUPLO and is held to honor Francisco “Balagtas” Baltazar.

The Dung-Aw

This is a chant in free verse by a bereaved person or his representative beside the corpse of the dead. No definite meter or rhyming scheme is used. The person chanting it freely recites in poetic rhythm according to his feelings, emotions and thoughts. It is personalized and usually deals with the life, sufferings and sacrifices of the dead and includes apologies for his misdeeds.

The Awit And The Corrido

Some use these two interchangeably because distinction is not clear.