

Spanish Colonial Caste System in the Philippines

When Spain came to the Philippines they instituted a racial caste system. Similar to what they instituted in Latin America.

The history of racial mixture in Filipinas (the Philippines) occurred mostly during the Spanish colonial era from the 16th to 19th century.

The same Spanish racial caste system enforced in Latin America existed in the Philippines, with a few differences.

The indigenous Malay population of the Philippines were referred to as Indios

Term- Definition:

Indio- persons of pure Filipino ancestry

Negrito- persons of pure Aeta ancestry

Sangley- person of pure Chinese ancestry

Mestizo de Sangley- person of mixed Chinese and Malay ancestry; also called chino and/or chino-mestizo

Mestizo de Bombay- person of mixed Indian and Malay ancestry

Mestizo de Espanol- person of mixed Spanish and Malay ancestry

Tornatrás- person of mixed Spanish, Malay, and Chinese ancestry

Filipinos- persons of pure Spanish descent born in the Philippines ("from Las Filipinas"); also called Insulares ("from the islands") or Criollos (Creoles)

Americanos- persons of pure Spanish descent born in Spanish America ("from the Americas")

Peninsulares- persons of pure Spanish descent born in Spain ("from the peninsula")

Mulato-50% spanish and 50% black

Morisco-25%black and 75 percent spanish

Albino- white pigmented black

Negro-full blooded black person

Persons classified as 'blancos' (whites) were the filipinos (persons born in the Philippines of pure Spanish descent), peninsulares (persons born in Spain of pure Spanish descent), Español mestizos (persons born in the Philippines of mixed Malay and Spanish ancestry), and tornatrás (persons born in the Philippines of mixed Malay, Chinese, and Spanish ancestry). Manila was racially segregated, with blancos living in the walled city Intramuros, un-Christianized sangleys in Parían, Christianized sangleys and mestizos de sangley in Binondo, and the rest of the 7,000 islands for the indios, with the exception of Cebu and several other Spanish posts. Only mestizos de sangley were allowed to enter Intramuros to work for whites (including mestizos de espanol) as servants and various occupations needed for the colony.

Indio was a general term applied to native Malays, but as a legal classification, it was only applied to Christianized Malays who lived in proximity to the Spanish colonies.

Persons who lived outside of Manila, Cebu, and the major Spanish posts were classified as such: 'Naturales' were Christianized Malays of the lowland and coastal towns. The un-Christianized Aetas and Malays who lived in the towns were classified as 'salvajes' (savages) or 'infiel' (the unfaithful). 'Remontados' (Spanish for 'situated in the mountains') and 'tulisanes' (bandits) were Malays and Aetas who refused to live in towns and took to the hills, all of whom were considered to live outside the social order as Catholicism was a driving force in everyday life, as well as determining social class in the colony.

Persons of pure Spanish descent living in the Philippines who were born in Spanish America were classified as 'americanos'. Mestizos and mulatos born in Spanish America living in the Philippines kept their legal classification as such, and usually came as indentured servants to the 'americanos'. The Philippine-born children of 'americanos' were classified as 'filipinos'. The Philippine-born children of mestizos and mulatos from Spanish America were classified based on patrilineal descent.

The Spanish legally classified the Aetas as 'negritos' based on their appearance. The word 'negrito' would be misinterpreted and used by future European scholars as an ethnracial term in and of itself. Both Christianized Aetas who lived in the colony and un-Christianized Aetas who lived in tribes outside of the colony were classified as 'negritos'. Christianized Aetas who lived in Manila were not allowed to enter Intramuros and lived in areas designated for Indios.

Persons of mixed Aeta and Malay ancestry were classified based on patrilineal descent; the father's ancestry determined a child's legal classification. If the father was 'negrito' (Aeta) and the mother was 'india' (Malay), the child was classified as 'negrito'. If the father was 'indio' and the mother was 'negrita', the child was classified as 'indio'. Persons of Aeta descent were viewed as being outside of the social order as they usually lived in tribes outside of the colony and resisted conversion to Christianity.

This legal system of racial classification based on patrilineal descent had no parallel anywhere in the Spanish-ruled colonies in the Americas. In general, a son born of a sangley male and an indio or mestizo de sangley female was classified as mestizo de sangley; all subsequent male descendants were mestizos de sangley regardless of whether they married an india or a mestiza de sangley. A daughter born in such a manner, however, acquired the legal classification of her husband, i.e., she became an india if she married an indio but remained a mestiza de sangley if she married a mestizo de sangley or a sangley. In this way, a chino mestizo male descendant of a paternal sangley ancestor never lost his legal status as a mestizo de sangley no matter how little

percentage of Chinese blood he had in his veins or how many generations had passed since his first Chinese ancestor; he was thus a mestizo de sangley in perpetuity.

However, a 'mestiza de sangley' who married a blanco ('filipino', 'mestizo de espanol', 'peninsular', or 'americano') kept her status as 'mestiza de sangley'. But her children were classified as tornatrás. An 'india' who married a blanco also kept her status as india, but her children were classified as mestizo de espanol.

A mestiza de espanol who married another blanco would keep her status as mestiza, but became an india if she married an indio (which would force her to pay the indio tax rate). But her status will never change from mestiza de espanol if she married a mestizo de espanol, filipino, or peninsular.

On the contrast, a mestizo (de sangley or espanol) man's status stayed the same regardless of who he married. If a mestizo (de sangley or espanol) married a filipina (woman of pure Spanish descent), she would lose her status as a 'filipina' and would acquire the legal status of her husband and become a mestiza de espanol or sangley. If a 'filipina' married an 'indio', her legal status would change to 'india', despite being of pure Spanish descent.

The social stratification system based on class that continues to this day in the Philippines has its beginnings in the Spanish colonial area with this caste system.

They put this on Birth Certificates during Spanish Colonial Era, This is how they describe which race they belong e.g. Mestizo de Frances & Mother is Mestiza de Espanola/Espanoles so this is how they actually identify people during Spanish Colonial time. It also related to taxation & status. The system was used for tax purposes. Indios paid a base tax, mestizos de sangley paid twice the base tax, sangleys paid four times the base tax, and the blancos or whites (comprised of filipinos, peninsulares, mestizos de espanol, and tornatrás) paid no tax. Negritos who lived within the colony paid the same tax rate as the indios.

The Spanish caste system based on race was abolished after the Philippines' independence from Spain in 1898, and the word 'Filipino' expanded to include the entire population of the Philippines regardless of racial ancestry.

Ref.:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filipino_mestizo

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Filipino_people_of_Spanish_ancestry

<http://www.asiafinest.com/forum/index.php?showtopic=189539>

<http://www.forumbiodiversity.com/showthread.php?t=7640>