



National History Museum

Exhibition Panels

Translation, August 2009

First Floor (Primer Piso)

Room 1: Chile's First Inhabitants

Around 15,000 years ago, long before the word 'Chile' had any significance for anyone, these lands experienced their first visit by human beings.

Today, a large number of scientists agree that Man arrived to America from Asia 50,000 years ago. When the last ice age produced a lower sea level, the extreme north of America - where we now find Alaska – was united to the Asian continent, leaving the ocean floor exposed in the Bering Strait.

Groups of humans began to cross this land bridge in small and successive waves, advancing south in pursuit of animals. Following the coast and routes that were free of ice, they slowly populated the continent.

The earliest periods of population in Chile are called Paleo-Indian and Archaic periods.

Paleo-Indian Period (15,000 to 8,000 BC)

In Monteverde, close to Puerto Montt, remains of small nomadic groups that lived in the area 12,500 years ago have been found. This finding is one of the earliest on the American continent and includes the remains of mastodons, an extinct mammal similar to a mammoth that formed part of the diet of the first inhabitants.

The Archaic Period (8,000 to 0 BC)

Since about 7,000 years ago, the climate, landscape and species of Chile slowly became similar to what we know today.

The inhabitants of the archaic period were hunters and gatherers. Those that lived in the interior of the continent would hunt guanacos and huemuls and gather plants, while those that inhabited the coasts fished for their food, hunted for marine mammals and, most importantly, collected crustaceans and mollusks. This last activity left its mark in the waste piles of shells or 'conchales' that are so common in the coast of our country.

Around 14 languages were spoken in this land

The Mapuche were not the only ones living in these lands before the arrival of the Spaniards at the beginning of the 16th century. A vast mix of indigenous peoples, of diverse characteristics and levels of development, maintained constant economic and cultural exchanges with each other.

Throughout what is now Chilean territory, each one of these peoples had adapted their way of life to the particularities of the geographic space in which they lived (climate,

available food, etc.). It's possible to find living traces from each one of these cultures in Chile today: in the Creole food, in the customs, in the family names and other words, etc.

In the coast of what is now called the Big North (Norte Grande), the **Chinchorro** culture stood out for its marked concern for the otherworldly and the afterlife, eventually developing a complex process of mummification that is now considered one of the most ancient in the West. In the valleys beneath this zone, the **Arica** culture developed, which was heavily influenced by the **Aymara** groups that inhabited the high plains.

The wealth of food in the north coast also supported the nomadic life of numerous fisher-gatherer groups, which today are given the general denomination of **Changos**. We know today about this group's production of bags made from the leather of sea lions.

Towards the interior, the presence of the **Atacameños** stands out. According to the chronicler Gerónimo de Vivar (1558), they "were accustomed to burying themselves with all of the clothes, jewels and weapons that they possessed while living." They lived in the oasis of San Pedro de Atacama, a location of innumerable occupations, confluences and cultural exchanges.

To the south of the river Copiapó lived a group of hunters that also developed agriculture and pottery: the culture **El Molle**. The transversal valleys were inhabited by the **Diaguitas**, for whom their well-known conserved pottery remains a testament.

The central zone, between the Choapa and Itata rivers, had a very multicultural character due to the confluence of diverse peoples. Early on, a number of groups with basic technological and organizational levels lived here, constructing complex cultures like **Llolleo** and **Aconagua**, renown for their works in ceramic. The new patrons of these settlements and the improvement of climatic conditions made possible the migration of new farmers and styles of agriculture and the homogenization of the area on the part of the **Picunches**, who were heavily influenced by the Diaguitas and the Incas.

To the south of the Bío-Bío lived groups of farmers known as Mapuches ('people of the land'). For the Mapuche, the land and their property – even today – meant much more than just a basis of their food; it constituted the basis of their unity: "the land had come from their ancestors, and from them through agriculture, they attain their sustenance."

The **Chonos** wandered between the Archipelago of Chiloé and the Gulf of Penas. According the writings of the chroniclers, they were "like fish in the water, in particular the women, who spent half the day in the center of the sea picking and searching for shellfish..."

Groups of canoeing people known as **Kaweshkar** (Alacalufes) lived further south, in the channels, fjords and islands of the Puerto Edén zone, while the **Yámanas** (Yaganes) lived in the extreme south of the Beagle Channel. The complicated ceremonies and rituals that both of these groups developed suggest a notable sense of religious-magic.

In the desolate Magellan steppes, the **Selknam** (Onas) men dedicated themselves to hunting guanacos and rodents, while the women collected shellfish, gathered food and watched the children.

On Easter Island, 3,600 km from the continent, the Rapa Nui culture, related to the collective Polynesian cultures, developed a system of writing that is lost today. They are known today around the world for their spectacular Moai, enormous ritual objects of volcanic rock.

Room 2: Discovery and Conquest

For a long time, the geographical limits of the world known to the Europeans remained practically intact. At the end of the 15th Century, however, Europe felt a strong need to expand. By that time, they had also already gained the economic and technical means to do so.

Starting from the 13th century, the accumulation of scientific and technical knowledge, the growth of population, and the economic dynamism of the merchant cities pushed Europe to expand.

The Spanish and Portuguese crowns, besieged for a long time by the Arabs, completed the *reconquista* of the Iberian Peninsula (the unification of Spain). Meanwhile, a series of technological innovations like the Caravel, the compass, the astrolabe and more detailed atlases made possible what until then had been a chimera in the West: navigation on the high seas.

Due to its geographic position, the ‘Atlantic privilege’ that both Spain and Portugal enjoyed led them to look for new commerce routes to the East, the exotic land of spices. Portugal at first beat Spain in the naval race for the Atlantic and obtained a decisive advantage in Africa. Upon the declaration of this monopoly on coastal navigation, Spain was forced to expand towards the eastern coast of our continent, leaving navigation westward as Spain’s only option. The capture of Grenada in 1492 put an end to the conquest of Spain and permitted the Castilian Crown to instead use its resources and energies in the exploration of these routes.

Columbus discovers a new continent

That the world was round had already been accepted by many geographers of the period. Under this context, Columbus firmly believed in the possibility of traveling to the Orient by traveling west.

Influenced by the Italian scientist Toscanelli, who estimated the proximity between the extremities of Western Europe and eastern Asia, Christopher Columbus began to prepare his trip. He underestimated the size of the Earth, however, convincing himself that the journey would be much shorter than it really was.

In 1492, Columbus finally obtained the patronage of the Spanish Queen Isabel the Catholic for his project, signing the Capitulations of Santa Fe, which conferred upon him the rank of Major Admiral and a long list of privileges.

Shortly before sunrise on 3 August of that year, the explorers set off on the westward route with two caravels, the Pinta and the Niña, and one carrack, the Santa María. After stopping in the Canary Islands, the flotilla continued into the ocean taking advantage of the power of the straight winds. By the end of 33 difficult days of sailing, when

hopelessness had gained hold of the sailors, Rodrigo de Triana saw land. It was at about 2:00 in the morning on 12 October 1492.

They disembarked on the small island of Guanahani, as the natives called it, and they baptized it with the name San Salvador, convinced that they had found Asia.

In the next 11 years, Columbus returned to America three times. In the end, he died without knowing that he had discovered a new continent. The various maritime explorations completed in between the end of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th, however, showed the Europeans that Columbus had not arrived in Asia but instead a new continent: America.

Magellan's expedition around the world

With the advanced explorations in America, it became necessary to look for a passage that connected the Atlantic route with the Far East, more precisely with the Archipelago of las Molucas (in current day Indonesia).

The Portuguese explorer Hernando Magellan dreamed of reaching the Spice Islands by taking the western route and he was sure of the existence of an inter-oceanic passage that connected the Atlantic and the Pacific. In 1518, the capitulations that gave him the permission of the Spanish crown to navigate west and take control of the Indonesian islands were signed in Valladolid.

In 1519 and with a fleet of 5 ships and 241 crew-members, Magellan sailed from Sanlúcar de Barrameda, Spain. After several months of arduous travel, the expedition managed to cross the Atlantic and reach the Pacific through a channel that was baptized as Todos los Santos (All Saints), what is now called the Strait of Magellan. He had thus found the 'key to the Pacific'.

They subsequently arrived in the Indonesian Archipelago thanks to 18 survivors of the expedition, under the command of Juan Sebastián Elcano. They returned to Spain exhausted and fatigued in 1522, completing the heroic deed of the first trip around the world.

The members of the Magellan expedition were the first European navigators to see Chile, which was transformed into the southernmost border of the Spanish Crown's territories. However, the exploration of Chilean territory and the consequent conquest began 16 years later.

Room 3: The Church and State

The Spanish monarchs were able to exercise an absolute sovereignty by consolidating an immense judicial and administrative apparatus.

The Catholic Church was insolubly united to this power; all forms of Government were referred to religion and its dogmas, which pushed for the evangelization of America.

The Spanish colonies in America, together with Spain's Asian, African and European territories, formed under the command of the Spanish crown the largest Empire the world had seen. At the head was the king, whose power was limited only by the vastness of his territories, which impeded the crown from governing them in person and in the precepts of the Catholic Church, which had a strong influence on the crown's policies.

In order to govern America, the kings used the Royal and Supreme Council of the Indies, dedicated to the administration of political and judicial matters of these colonies. Working out of Seville, Spain, this organism made the most relevant decisions for the continent and supervised the functions of the colonial authorities in America.

In their territories, the monarchs took the church under their control, incorporating the Spanish clergy into the Crown. The kings could name archbishops and bishops; moreover, they could decide which religious orders could perform their ministry in which territory (if any at all), faculties known as the Regal Patronage. Unlike earlier, the monarchs compromised with Catholicism's most important missions, above all the evangelization of the indigenous people.

Financing the State

The Spanish Crown was very demanding of tributes from its American colonies; both the Spanish policy of intervention in Europe and the power to govern America depended on these resources.

In the 16th Century, Spain came to be the primary European power and there was practically no international issue in which Spain was not involved, be it in Flanders (what is now Holland and Belgium), Italy or the Mediterranean Sea. Furthermore, the Spanish Crown possessed a good number of colonies, which they needed to govern.

All of these enterprises, thus, had to be financed.

Due to this the crown set up a complex and varied system of taxes and tributes meant to charge commerce and other economic activities in America, a continent rich in precious metals and other raw materials.

Commercial traffic was charged primarily through the *Alcabaza*, a sales tax (similar in nature to today's VAT), and the *Almojarifazgo*, a tariff paid at the ports on imports and exports.

A tribute of great importance was the *Quinto Real*, which corresponded to 20% of the American production of gold and silver.

Other revenues came from judicial punishments, such as the *Penas de Cámaras*, fines imposed on transgressors of the laws and ordinances or on public functionaries when the Court of Residency gave its decision following negotiations, or the *Confiscaciones*, sums of money obtained through the sale of goods, primarily contraband, taken for crimes.

Funds were also obtained through the *Media Annata*, a tax that was paid by those who had received a grant of land or a public office from the king, or the *Servicios*, voluntary donations or sums derived from the sale of offices.

Furthermore, the crown received 11.11% of the *Diezmo* of the Church. It also received *Tributos*, which were sums paid by the indigenous people in service to a patron not already given as tribute to local authorities (usually for their instruction in Christianity) and *Rentas Estancadas*, certain specific taxes applied to those who secured a monopoly on the sale of cards, stamped and sealed paper, and tobacco.

Financing the Church

The church performed an endless work in America, the magnificence of which can be seen in many churches, convents and missions throughout the entire continent. Its financing came primarily from the Crown and the faithful.

The Spanish Church understood that, in order to impact and transform the indigenous beliefs, its work of evangelization should be supported with the maximum level of resources. Only in this way could they finance the presence of religious orders in all of America as well as the impressive artistic expression of the construction and decoration of churches, convents and missions, meant to represent the grandeur of Christian divinity.

In the beginning, the Church obtained many of its funds through the exploitation of its goods, both chattel and real property, many of which came from donations made by the Crown or the faithful that wanted to gain the grace of God.

The Crown bestowed upon the Church a lot of fertile lands, along with natives to work them. Moreover, it established the *Diezmo*, a tax of 10% on all agricultural activities, with the major portion going to the church, and the *Tributo Indígena*, which the natives used to finance the learned clergy of their towns.

Those already Christian found many instances to give economic support to their Church. Some were unavoidable, such as the *Estipendios*, which were payments for the rights of baptism, marriage, funerals, and interments.

Other funds received by the Church were the *Legados* and *Donaciones*, gifts written into wills; *Dotes de Novicias*, payments made for a woman to become a nun; and *Capellanías*, pious works financed by religious associations, fraternities or some individuals so that clergy or members of religious orders would hold masses and pray for their soul.

Room 4: The Colonial City

During the colonial period, the Spaniards worked and fought to transform America in the image of Europe, hoping to impose their dominance over the conquered territory.

Founding cities throughout the continent was essential in their work of establishing and implanting their lifestyle and culture.

From the beginning, cities were a key factor for securing the conquest, offering the protection and basic resources that allowed a handful of Spaniards to survive the conflicts with the larger indigenous population in the heat of war. The capital of Chile is a great example: its foundation as Santiago of New Extremo (named after Pedro de Valdivia's province in Spain) and its subsequent consolidation were indispensable in the advance of the conquest of the Southern lands.

The city was transformed early on into the economic axis of Spanish occupation. Within the city and its boundaries, the basic activities for assuring the inhabitants' sustenance were developed. With this, the implantation of the colonial political and administrative system, European culture, and the Catholic religion was made possible.

Throughout this period, the cities' influence radiated strongly within the rural areas. On one hand, the streets and plazas where commerce and artisan activity flourished attracted many from the countryside. On the other, the cities actively exerted their jurisdiction beyond the urban limits and boundaries, so that each city included ample agrarian space delineated from that of the neighboring city, thus incorporating all of the territory and different groups that lived there.

Urban plans as a reflection of the Spanish Colonial Order

The colonial city followed a model of urban design known as a "checkerboard" ('damero') plan, an allusion to the design of the board used to play checkers ('juego de damas').

The urban plan was based in a grid of streets positioned perpendicular to each other, creating blocks and plots around a central public space: the Main Plaza.

The Main Plaza was the centre of urban life. In its confines were rooted the most important institutions of Spanish colonial political and religious order: the Government, the Royal Audience (the highest judicial tribunal), and the civil and ecclesiastical councils.

In this central space the most important events of communal colonial life occurred, such as royal and religious festivals, autos de Fe (or trials of faith), public proclamations, political and ecclesiastical processions, executions, and the games of bullfighting and

juegos de cañas (a game in which horsemen simulate a battle in a circle or semicircle). Moreover, it was here that the Mercado de Abastos (literally the ‘market of abundance’), the most important commercial nucleus of the Colony where they sold the most diverse agricultural and manufactured goods, functioned.

Between the Main Plaza and the official city limits stood the plots where the ‘vecinos’ (literally the ‘neighbors’) lived, a term reserved to the select number of people with the right to participate in making decisions for the city through the Council (‘cabildo’).

Outside of these lines lived the ‘moradores’, a group of people of diverse jobs and races. The rural jurisdictions, beyond the city limits, were initially where the indigenous communities would live. As time passed, the peasants bound to working on haciendas and ranches and some bandits also lived here.

The urban plan of Santiago today retains strong traces of the city founded by Pedro de Valdivia in 1541 in honor of the warrior Apostle Santiago (St James), the patron of Spain. The modern city continued growing, conforming to perpendicular order of its streets. Even the names of important routes from the centre refer to the churches of the religious orders that were located there (Compañía de Jesús, Merced, Santo Domingo, and San Francisco). The old Main Plaza, now called the Plaza de Armas, is considered Kilometer 0 of the national territory.

The Social Power of the Council

The origin of the Council, one of the most important institutions of the Colonial Period, goes back to the middle ages in Castile. Its main functions were to govern urban life in its multiple expressions; fulfill military, judicial, financial, and health obligations; execute public works; provide basic necessities; and dispose of communal funds.

Furthermore, the Council politically represented the ‘vecinos’ in front of the Spanish Crown, expressing their diverse demands and opinions on how the city should be governed. Its influence was very important, exemplified by the right that the Council of Santiago obtained to administer, in the name of the King, the Oath of Loyalty of the new governors.

Only the most notable ‘vecinos’ could rise to the most important ranks of the Council, such as the mayor, who directed the institution; the sheriff, who was responsible for public order; and the royal alférez (a lower official, much like a color guard), who guarded the city’s symbols.

In order to attain the rank of ‘vecino’ and integrate into the Council, one was required to have a known and inhabited plot in the city (with servants), be descended from the conquistadors, be an ‘original’ Christian (in other words, there were no ‘vecinos’ of Jewish or Muslim faith or heritage), and be of nobility. Later, this rank became accessible to the wealthiest ‘moradores’, generally successful merchants.

The importance of the councils in all American cities is explained, in part, by the private character of the first period of the conquest and the weak presence of royal authority at that place and time. This allowed for the revitalization of this institution from medieval Castile that was in decadence in Spain due to the growing accumulation of power by the king and the Spanish unification.

Room 5: Colonial Society

Spaniards, Indigenous people and Africans all helped to form the Colonial Society. The mixture of people of different groups, and the heterogeneity of these groups, led to the creation of a complex society, whose stratification and hierarchy was based on the racial origin of its members.

Spaniards

The Spaniards, considered 'white', were at the top of the social pyramid. Although they were a minority, they enjoyed the best privileges. Nonetheless, within the group there were important differences based on their origin (if they were from the Iberian Peninsula and which region), on their social rank (nobles or 'vulgars'), and on their wealth. The Creoles (descendants of Spaniards born in America) were included in this group.

Of the Spaniards that arrived in Chile, the majority were from Andalusia. However, there were also many from Extremadura, Castile, and the Basque region.

Indigenous

Despite the great diversity within the native cultures, they were all grouped under one category: 'Indians'. This simplification was juxtaposed against the complexities of the judicial statutes that the Spaniards assigned to the indigenous populations. In this system, there were Indians of *encomiendas* (they were bound to service on a hacienda), of service or *yanacunas* (a personal servant), of war, and 'cobrizo' slaves (*cobrizo* translates to 'copper-colored'; these had been considered rebels). At first, most work hands were Indians, but the growth of the mestizo population, disease, and poor treatment diminished the natives' numbers.

Although the indigenous people generally lived in subordination, some indigenous nobles and caciques (local leaders) came to integrate themselves into high Spanish society, such as Beatriz Clara Coya, the noble Incan wife of the Governor of Chile, Martín García Oñez de Loyola.

Africans

The Africans, called 'black', arrived in America as slaves in a period when the Spanish Crown needed a great number of work hands. Transported in inhumane conditions from Africa (principally from the Congo and Angola), thousands were sold in fairs to fulfill hard tasks, bound to working on plantations.

Once on the continent, they adapted well to the climate and their population grew in number, although the majority did not escape their condition as slaves. Nonetheless, they were considered to have souls and thus were evangelized; a few were also freed.

The Africans that arrived in Chile were not numerous, but they were well-known. Generally, they were given domestic tasks, usually in the homes of 'vecinos' as the possession of slaves indicated prestige. With time, the 'blacks' mixed with other groups, forming new groups called mulatos and zambos.

Mestizos

The mestizos were the majority population of many American countries. Being children of Spaniards and natives, they did not have a clearly defined identity. Some, through connections with their Spanish father, were raised from birth in the 'white' society and received education and funds. Nonetheless, the majority were abandoned by their Spanish father, leaving them the option of attaching themselves culturally to the indigenous community of their mother or, simply, finding their destiny as a mestizo. The latter was more attractive, as they enjoyed liberty of movement and were not obligated to servile work.

In this group, not all the mestizos were of the same 'grade'. For example, there were *castizos*, children of Spaniards and mestizos, or *cholos*, mixes of mestizos and Indians.

In Chile, the mestizos quickly became the majority and a great number lived on ranches and haciendas as work hands. Many others lived in the cities, where they worked a variety of jobs. The case of the mestizos born in Mapuche territories was interesting, for they were often children of Mapuche men and kidnapped Spanish women. Despite their mestizo birth, they were not excluded from the society of their fathers and they were considered indigenous.

Daily Life

Although there were cycles that regulated the periodic timing of certain activities, colonial life was not a period of hibernation with a few monotonous events, the days passing without change.

Like today, the daily life of the people contained events that were perfectly predictable and recurring as well as ones that were unexpected and disruptive.

In the cities, the days were marked by the bells of the church and the religious calendar. Both of these set the lines of the ritual moments in which the city's inhabitants had to attend specific activities, like going to mass or celebrating a festival (such as the jubilant Corpus Christi). Nonetheless, at times unexpected events occurred that changed the daily order, such as large indigenous rebellions, pirate sieges, the arrival of a new governor or the announcement of the death of a king and the coronation of another.

In the countryside, time was governed by natural cycles, of day and night or of the changes of season. These imposed a certain rhythm to rural life, to work, and to harvest times.

In Chile, life was marked also by a relative isolation, both to the continent and between its own cities. For example, trips to Peru depended entirely on maritime transport and contact with the trans-Andes provinces could be totally interrupted by climactic factors that closed the mountain passes.

Second Floor (Segundo Piso)

Room 1: 18th Century Society

What is called the “Age of Enlightenment” was in Chile a period of profound social changes. Thanks to the wheat economy, the leading class acquired wealth, prestige and power as they had never before seen. Meanwhile, the lower classes became ‘peasants’ subordinated to the power of the hacienda.

Elite

The 18th century was a golden age for the ruling class in Chile. Their rustic livestock estates – which had never been too profitable – came to be powerful agrarian haciendas, in which more and more people worked under a seigniorial and hierarchic system.

Slowly, these families diversified their sources of wealth and accepted in the heart of their class new groups of immigrants, such as the Basques, that arrived in Chile to make a fortune in commerce, finance or mining. Numerous marriage alliances within this group helped them consolidate their social position and avoid the appearance of other antagonistic groups that could dispute their preeminence.

This unprecedented position of power and prestige led these elites to see themselves as an ‘aristocracy’. In order to demonstrate this, many of them instituted primogeniture of titles, purchased titles of nobility, and became closer to the institutions of Spanish government in order to influence the public issues of the country.

At first, this did not clash with the interventionist style of the new Bourbon dynasty, especially since the monarchs opened space for participation in public life. Due to this, prominent Creoles occupied positions in institutions such as the Commercial Deputies (like guilds or chambers of commerce), the Mint, the University of San Felipe, the Treasury, Consulate Tribunal, and the Mining Tribunal.

This new institutionalism – in which the state was transformed into the new agent of power – helped the local elite to gain access to the networks of power in Lima and Madrid. The members of the honorable social class acquired important political experience, incorporating the ideas of the young Creoles that were educated outside of Chile and introducing new enlightened political and philosophical concepts.

By 1810, there was a certain co-government between the peninsular authorities and the Creole elite in Chile. With the crisis of the Spanish Empire, however, it became evident that this group had achieved a degree of social, economic and political maturity sufficient to create a new order.

The Peasantry

A significant number of people, mainly mestizos, lived in a vagabond state, outside of the reach of Spanish power, touring the countryside without residence and job, living off of small works of survival.

Due to this state, they were given the name ‘*malentretenido*’ (or lazy worker), and their lifestyle was considered potentially delinquent.

With the appearance of big haciendas and the wheat boom, Hispanic society seriously tried to discipline these groups by recruiting them for agricultural work. With time, the ‘*vagamundos malentretenido*’ (literally, lazy vagabonds), or their children, were transformed into a variety of workers: peons, *gañanes*, tenant farmers (*inquilinos*), and specialized farmers (called a variety of names, such as *huerteros* or *chacareros*). All of these labels demonstrated the diversity within the peasantry. There were important differences in how they gained access to land or to work, as well as in the grades of dependency on the patrons. For example, while *inquilinos* provisionally lived on a plot of land, the *gañanes* toured the countryside offering their work to different patrons and landlords.

In rural Chile, the peasant social structure formed in the 18th century survived without major change until the 1960s, when a program of Agrarian Reform was begun.

Room 2: The Imperial Collapse

At the beginning of the 19th Century, the Spanish colonists in America experienced unexpected and accelerated changes. The dilapidation of the monarchy and the vacuum of power provoked by the capture of Ferdinand VII allowed the American subjects to improvise a system of auto-government, opening the path to Independence.

The imprisonment of Ferdinand VII and the surprising fall of the Spanish Monarchy after Napoleon's invasion in 1808 only aggravated the problems that already existed between Colony and Crown. The events in Spain produced uncertainty, fear and confusion, which gave rise to emergency methods and circumstantial trial and error.

In the Chilean case, the monarchical crisis led to a period of political and judicial autonomy. In 1810, the first Governmental Junta was established and in 1811, the first National Congress. Despite this fact, those who led this process did not intend to unleash a revolution, but rather defend and consolidate the de facto autonomy they had achieved during the last century.

With time, conflicts arose periodically between the alliances of powerful family clans, the regional forces, and the ascendant power of a few military leaders. These hostilities, in Chile as in other parts of the continent, eventually resulted in the appearance of charismatic and prominent military figures that attempted to impose their will in the face of an absence of political consensus: the *caudillos*.

The *caudillismo* phenomenon initiated a generational shift in the political leadership and military traditions in Chile, pushed through by men like José Miguel Carrera, which conjoined an openly emancipated position with a personalist twist. During his time in Europe he was inundated with the Napoleon Model. Upon his return, he tried to join together the republican ideal with a new military power. Under his government, *La Aurora de Chile* (the first national newspaper, with the aim of giving support to the diffusion of political ideas) was founded, patriotic symbols were created and a Constitutional Ruling was promulgated. Although this recognized the legitimacy of prisoner Ferdinand VII, it still established autonomy in the government of the newborn Republic.

The War of Independence in Chile

The development of the Independence process generated serious conflicts with Peru, where the Viceroy decided to begin military action in order to conquer Chile again. The news of the invasion of Chile forced Carrera to abandon his political labours and concentrate on the armed fight as the Commander in Chief of the Army.

In 1813, the first military campaigns of the period now known as the '*Patria Vieja*' (Old Nation) began.

The Peruvian forces were able to conquer the territory and restore Spanish rule in 1814. In the Creoles' perspective, this fact did not slow the degradation of their support for the Spanish cause. If initially their actions that distanced themselves from the monarchy had been accidental, this war heightened the fever and became a mechanism to consolidate the process of independence.

Within the patriot forces, strong debates emerged between José Miguel Carrera and Bernardo O'Higgins. This was eventually resolved by the Argentine military leader José de San Martín, a key figure in the independence of Argentina, Chile and Peru, who decided to ally himself with O'Higgins. Following this, Carrera was involved in the inter-*caudillo* fights in Rio de la Plata (what is now Argentina), disassociated from Chile, and executed in Mendoza in 1821.

After the victory of the Liberating Army in the Battle of Chacabuco (February 1817), an Open Council in Santiago offered José de San Martín the government of Chile with full faculties. He renounced this offer, however, in favor of O'Higgins, who had been on San Martín's right hand. O'Higgins' assumption of the Supreme Directorship started the period of the New Nation (*Patria Nueva*).

In the meantime, the conflict shifted to the South and ended definitively with the Capitulation of Chiloé in 1826.

Room 3: The Idea of Liberty

From the darkness of the conscience they passed into the light and the aurora of enlightenment.

In order to legitimize Independence, the new leaders invoked the grand idea of *Liberty*. With a little bit of work, they also linked the concepts of *Nation* and *Republic*, which played an essential role in the construction of the new political order.

For centuries, the Americans had accepted the symbols of the power of the King as legitimate, even sacred. With Independence, this support structure was destroyed and replaced by other symbols of the republican-liberal ideal, meant to legitimise the capture of power by the elite Creoles.

Favouring new ideas, the new governments found in the concept of liberty the symbol of their political ideal. For this reason, those who led the Independence movements praised themselves as *liberators*, propagandizing their image as guardians of the light of reason that would make the Hispanic-American people the owners of their own destiny.

The Nation

Before Independence, the Chilean identity as an expression was neither defined nor politically relevant. It was not until after this event that a new identity emerged for all those who lived in Chile, constructed as the concept of nationalism surged forth from the French Revolution.

The political notion of a nation allowed the inhabitants of the territory to integrate, gain cohesion, and homogenize. It also offered an ample base to erect symbols of common identity and foundation, such as the anthem or the flag. In this period, these appealed to enlightened and modern values. Moreover, they integrated nations in a political and philosophical current that was perceived as civilized and universal.

The Chilean national project surged in opposition to the ‘Spanish’ nation and favoured the utopian ideal of the birth of a new, free community. In order to promote this, various institutions were created such as the National Institute (est.1813) in order to educate the new citizens of the nation; the Order of Merit of Chile, similar to the titles of nobility that were previously given by the King; and patriotic festivals, whose celebrations helped to legitimize the new political order.

At first, Chilean identity was exclusively for the elite. Only during the following century did other social strata accede to this identity, especially through the diverse wars of the 19th century, in which the dispossessed classes participated as soldiers and, in doing so, felt part of a national project. The national concept eventually made ‘Chileans’ out of all the inhabitants of the country, where the subordinated groups felt included and did not question the new order.

The idea of a *Chilean nation* was thus projected as a superior and sacred sentiment, with accompanying myths.

The Republic

With the Monarchy thrown out and the Republic as the new legitimate order, the elite government controlled access to political power. All Chileans would become citizens with full rights only after a long and arduous process.

Liberal radicalism suggested that the legitimacy of power centred on popular sovereignty, in which the people freely chose the style of government that they wanted for themselves. The Chilean elite, however, were careful to include only their members in this sovereignty. Thus, the only citizens of the Republic (that is, people with political rights) were Chilean men who were able to prove their education or property. These were exactly what had sustained the positions of privilege in the colonial system.

Initially, the Republic maintained the hierarchical and stratified colonial social structure, which suited the elite government. At the same time, it gave them new credentials of legitimacy as a modern republic in the French style.

In the following periods, the arguments for popular sovereignty and citizenship in addition to the pressure for participation exercised by new social groups opened room for all Chileans to share the same political rights. This process, however, was long and arduous. Only in 1949 were women given the right to participate in a presidential election.

Room 4: Re-establishing Order

After Independence, the search for a viable governmental regimen that would balance the civic and military forces was a great concern of the American elites. This process was marked by trial and error.

After celebrating the military victories of the independence forces, a new historic period was started that was perhaps even more complicated than the last: the organization of new States.

Inspired by republicanism, the values of the French Revolution, and the experience of the independence of the United States, the Latin American nations planned to erect virtuous states based on the designs of political ideals. This strategy quickly clashed with the political and social reality in each country. For example, Simón Bolívar's dream of a Grand Colombia – composed of today's Ecuador, Venezuela and Colombia – fell apart due to the differences between the elites and local caudillos of all the cities within that state. In Chile, the elite were more practical.

Bernardo O'Higgins tried to impose order through a politically autocratic and liberal system, typical of the governments led by military caudillos triumphant in the wars of independence. To legalize his regime, this eminent gentleman promulgated two constitutions: one in 1818 and the other in 1822.

Afterwards, with O'Higgins out of power, the civil elite reconstructed the State and tried a political regime that limited the power of the caudillos and weakened the strength of the executive in comparison to Congress. Under this logic, it was thought that the ruling class would retain power in its hands and that its differences would remain well-represented. With these aims, the elite promulgated the constitutions of 1823, 1826, and 1828. That of 1826 had a federalist style analogous to the US model that was created by the elite of Concepción in order to equalise their power with that of the Santiago elite.

The equilibrium collapsed in 1829, sparking a civil war between the conservative party with a strong and personalist executive, under the command of José Joaquín Prieto, and the liberals who, with Ramón Freire at the head, were eventually routed in the decisive Battle of Lircay.

The victors promulgated the Constitution of 1833, the most emblematic and technically perfect of the period, which remained in place until 1925 (although it was reformed various times throughout the second half of the 19th century).

A Portrait of the Elite

At the beginning of this period, the Chilean elite began to affirm their social and political pre-eminence. The art of the period reflects this fact.

The art of the portrait flourished during this period, suggesting a nascent republican elite that not only secured their social position inherited from the colonial past, but also searched to be recognised as an actor in the political process. Thanks to the growth of their wealth, they commissioned many portraits showing the high level of self-esteem they had achieved and representing themselves as the honoured class that held Chile's destiny.

The social and political configuration of the Chilean republican elite was accompanied by a strong suspicion towards the uprooted Imperial Spanish order. This, in addition to a degree of uncertainty inherent in the post-independence vacuums of power, led the elite to redouble their efforts to make their power and prestige visible.

Room 5: Consolidating the Republican Order

In their first century of independent life, the Latin American countries suffered great political disturbances and social conflicts. Although Chile did not completely escape these disturbances, it was able to quickly achieve an institutional order that was relatively stable.

Those directing Chilean politics did not delay in coming to an agreement in regards to the constitutional republican institutionalism that guaranteed public liberties and gave form to the three powers of the State: the Executive, the Legislative, and the Judicial.

This political rationality was possible largely due to the fact that Chilean Independence had not altered the existing social structure, maintaining a dominant oligarchy and a subordinate popular class of a rural-seigniorial order. In the majority of Hispanic-American countries, however, the elite divided themselves into factions, and the popular classes chose sides, adding social demands to political conflicts.

The Constitution of 1833 gave Chile a mature institutionalism, capable of framing a political atmosphere adjusted to the right. Paradoxically, at the beginning, this legal body served to establish authoritarian governments. Eventually, this institutionalism allowed presidential authoritarianism to recede in favour of Parliament.

In this period, the influence of military caudillos and the Church was greatly reduced. The Church, watching as the idea of secularizing important aspects of public life gained ground, was slowly replaced by the authority of the State. Political participation also grew, though very gradually, with the right to vote granted to all literate Chilean men over 21 years of age.

Manuel Montt and the Civil Wars

While Montt's government affirmed the Chilean institutionalism with works like the Civil Code and the appearance of the first political party system, it also had to face two bloody Civil Wars. The first was in 1851, upon assuming office, and the other was close to the end of Montt's ten year period in office, in 1859.

Despite the fact that Manuel Montt was a conservative president, who guided the country with force and determination, he also had to face a series of problems whose solution demanded more complex actions than merely a simple exercise of authority.

A curious and heterogeneous group joined together in 1851 in order to prevent Montt's ascendancy to the Presidency. This group consisted of a belligerent liberal alliance, who aspired to end the conservative order by force; some military sectors, who wished to put one of their own in power; and the elite of Concepción, tired of seeing Santiago impose its political pre-eminence. The revolt was crushed in the bloody Battle of Loncomilla.

Once in power, Montt was witness to the fractioning of the Conservatives. While a few supported him in his attempt to impose his authority over the clergy in the so-called 'Sacristan Question', others allied with the Church. During this episode, these forces organized themselves as political parties, or entities that competed to gain power in the framework of the existing institutional order.

At the end of his term, Montt faced a new military plot against the excessive authoritarianism he used to lead the country. This time he was opposed by the most conservative sectors of the elite, offended by his opposition to the Church, who united with the most liberal sectors of the country, led by Manuel A Matta and Ángel Custodio Gallo (rich mining businessmen of Copiapó and the founders of the Radical Party)

Although Montt fared respectably in the belligerent aspect of the conflict, he was forced to cede in the political. He thus established a moderate liberal order in which he could not impose his choice of successor to the Presidency, his minister Antonio Varas. An epoch of major political competition was inaugurated, that ended in reinforcing the liberal sectors and allowing for the appearance of new advanced political groups.

Room 6: Means of Transportation

The appearance of revolutionary and rapid machines of transport at the beginning of the 19th Century shortened travel times radically. Trains and steamships powered by coal made the world smaller and the economy more dynamic.

These machines arrived promptly to Chile and fostered territorial integration and connections to the rest of the world, from which more and more novel technologies, news and ideas arrived.

Moreover, the integration of national and international markets – through trains and steamships – introduced major dynamism to commerce. The cost of circulation of merchant goods was quickly reduced by 50 percent.

These means of transport were also a relevant factor in the development of production.

The train workshops and offices initially dedicated to maintenance and repair of machines soon began manufacturing other equipment, from tools to steam engines and even – during the War of the Pacific – cannons and their bases. Construction and operation of trains contributed to the exodus of the rural population, when thousands of peasants abandoned the haciendas to enrol themselves as salaried workers in the rail and road works, which pushed forward the development of a modern and urban labour market.

CONSTRUCTING CHILE'S LOCOMOTIVE SPINE

In 1829, *The Rocket*, the modern locomotive created by the Englishman George Stephenson, completed the trip between Liverpool and Manchester, thus initiating the era of rapid transport of passengers.

22 years later, in July 1857, *La Copiapó* ran the 41 kilometres of the first locomotive track constructed in Chile, between the cities of Copiapó and Caldera. The US engineer William Wheelwright, the man behind the project, thus completed the third train route in South America. There after, other private businesses ran train lines between the centres of nitrate production and the ports.

The example of *La Copiapó* initiated state action in the Construction of trains. In 1861, it completed tracks that united Valparaíso with Quillota and Santiago with Requinoa. A bit afterwards, in 1863, the tracks between Valparaíso and Santiago were inaugurated, allowing people to travel the 187 kilometres separating the cities in only six hours.

In 1877 the extension of the state railroad network brought the total length of tracks to 952 kilometres, reaching Los Ángeles and beyond towards the south, including tracks to Talcahuano and Angol. Moreover, two branches were also constructed connecting Los Andes, San Fernando, and Palmilla.

Between 1886 and 1913, service was extended to Antilhue, Osorno and Puerto Montt, thus completing nearly 1,276 kilometres of train lines. Furthermore, in this period many branches running east to west were constructed, linking localities that had previously been isolated.

They also started construction on a railroad network towards the north, starting from the station of Caldera on the line between Santiago and Valparaíso. This stretched a length of 471 kilometres, with eight branches of a total extension of 214 kilometres.

STEAMSHIPS

A little more than 30 years after the steamship's first navigation (the *Clermont* up the Hudson River, connecting the cities of New York and Albany), the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, known by its abbreviation PNC, began its services in 1840, establishing the first steamboat route in the Pacific Ocean.

Its first boats were the *Chile* and the *Perú*, both of 700 tons and both dedicated to running the route between Valparaíso and El Callao. This business, which operated until 1960, quickly achieved great success and its fleet grew rapidly, equalling the tonnage of the US Navy in 1874.

In the beginning, the steamships operated normally between the Chilean coast and Panama, arriving in Europe only sporadically. In the 1860s, with the increased need of international transport, trans-Atlantic navigation was regularized, and regular services between Valparaíso and some ports of Great Britain and France were established. In 1868, the trip from the English ports of Plymouth and Southampton to Valparaíso required only 28 days and not 72, as was the case before the age of steamships.

Room 7: Education

Since the beginning of the 19th century, it was believed that education was fundamental for the Republic and that the state should assume an important and proactive role in it. With time, primary, secondary, technical and university education extended its coverage of the population, eventually incorporating a major percentage of women.

Primary Instruction

Since the time of Independence, the state began to concern itself with the extension of education to increasing amounts of people. This implied developing a system of instruction that included the popular classes, with the purpose of supporting their integration into the nation giving them those tools with which they could improve and discipline themselves, bettering their habits.

In the 1850s, a strong foundational policy for primary schools was enforced, quadrupling the school numbers by 1861, with 500 establishments for 23,000 boys and 139 for 6,400 girls. This, in addition to the 1860 law that stipulated free access (though not obligatory) to primary education for all Chilean children, led to a literacy level of 23 percent in 1875, almost double that of 21 years before.

Secondary Instruction

There was also notable progress in secondary education. By the time the National Institution was created in 1813, the foundations of secondary schools for boys had been laid in all of the important cities: La Serena, San Felipe, Rancagua, San Fernando, Talca, Cauquenes, Chillán, Concepción and Valdivia. At the end of the century, moreover, two secondary schools for girls had been created, opening the doors to university education for women.

Secondary education had a selective character, due to the thought that education was for the elites. Despite this, the secondary schools took in some students from the popular classes, who opened pathways for the advancement of this group despite the many difficulties they had to face, including economic issues and the threat of exclusion.

Higher Education

Since its foundation, the National Institute trained Chilean professionals. This role, however, was soon assumed by the University of Chile. In this way, both entities were specialised; the National Institute was the premier reference for state-run secondary education (even until today), while the University of Chile focused on higher education.

In this period, university training was also oriented exclusively to the elite, despite this – as had occurred in secondary education – some people of popular origin were able to become professionals. Through this, a middle class slowly emerged that would eventually play a principle role in the State, especially as professors.

Regarding higher technical education, several different institutions such as the School of Arts and Skills and the School of Mining in Copiapó were established, allowing for the development of important economic activities.

Private Institutions

The institutions created by the Catholic Church, whose congregations established important schools of both primary and secondary education, were very significant. By 1854, almost a third of the secondary students in the country were taught in ecclesiastical institutions. This effort culminated with the establishment of the Catholic University (Universidad Católica) in 1888, founded by the Archbishop of Santiago, Mariano Casanova, in order to counteract the push for lay education experienced up until then. The University's first courses were law and mathematics.

The efforts made by the immigrant colonies were also important. They established schools for secondary students, with particular styles of teaching that gave a great diversity to the Chilean education system, allowing for the cultivation of foreign languages and the practice of religions different to Catholicism.

Room 8: The Liberal Order

The French Revolution, the independence of the United States of America, and the Industrial Revolution transformed the Western world during the 19th Century. Chile was not immune to these influences.

The French Revolution and the independence of the United States empowered a new political order based on national republics, in which a series of public liberties were guaranteed and the State was dedicated to political and cultural leadership. The Industrial Revolution, for its part, developed unprecedented forms of production, which profoundly changed material life and economic and social relations.

These novelties arrived quickly to Chile, configuring the characteristics that defined Chilean history during the 19th and 20th centuries. The most perceptible changes were at first political, followed later by economic changes.

The Laicisation of the State

At the end of the 18th century, two important ideas were consolidated in the West: reason's triumph over mystery and the lack of absolute truth through revelation (rather truth should be discovered through critical reflection and discussion).

In this context, a sector of the leading class began to consider creating a lay state that guaranteed the conditions for the development of free thought, prioritising this over personal religious creeds.

In Catholic countries like Chile, these new ideas clashed head-on with the Church, becoming the axis of rough confrontations between liberals and conservatives. While the papacy condemned liberalism and lay states, the liberals grew increasingly anticlerical.

The great conflict between Church and Chilean state occurred in the middle of the nineteenth century, in the episode known as “the Sacristan Question”. This started as a small dispute (if the bishop of Santiago could dismiss a Sacristan or not without consulting the President), but erupted into a crude political battle that divided the elite and gave birth to the first system of political parties.

At the beginning of conflict, various rivalries flourished over topics including the right of members of other faiths to publicly practice their religion, the confessional or lay character of education, or the naming of bishops to vacant seats.

The critical point of the conflict was reached in the 1880s, when the so-called ‘Lay Laws’ were approved that took from the Church its monopoly on marriage, birth and death registries as well as the cemeteries.

Public Liberties

The political plain was interrupted with the force of liberalism. It limited some of the power of the President of the Republic by counterbalancing it with the power of Congress. Moreover, it guaranteed many individual and personal liberties.

Through various successive reforms to the Constitution of 1833, presidential re-election was eliminated, the extraordinary faculties of the president were limited, and the freedoms of assembly, association and education were guaranteed.

This political opening brought with it ample liberty of expression and a great wealth of creativity, making for a flourishing press industry that recognized the diversity of ideas and sentiments of the country.

Among the papers founded were *El Mercurio* of Valparaíso, *El Ferrocarril*, *La Libertad Electoral*, *El Progreso*, *La Ley*, *El Independiente*, and a multitude of provincial publications. There were also – in the hands of figures like Juan Rafael Allende – tremendously satirical and irreverent publications, such as “El Padre Cobos”, pioneer of the national humorist press. The workers also developed their own means of press, which recognized and divulged the ideas of the nascent Democratic Party and the different anarchist and socialist currents.

The National Liberal Project

During the 19th century, the construction of the country was early transformed into a political and ideological project, filling the Chileans with a sentiment of belonging to the nation and inculcating them with the principled policies of the French Revolution.

The state came to be the most suitable agent to foster a sense of community “from above”. To do this, the state used diverse methods, such as laws, schools and government newspapers that would fortify the ‘national identity’.

Through the celebrations of patriotic festivals, the authorities fostered patriotic feelings, transferring these feelings of belonging and loyalty to the state. Simultaneously, the study of the history of Chile in primary and secondary schools was stimulated, consecrating civic education as a pedagogic model to foment national and political consciousness.

Room 9: Parliamentary System

At the end of the 19th century, the Chilean elite had diversified their economic interests, enriching themselves and profoundly modifying their life style. In politics, they were represented by both liberals and conservatives and they began banding together openly in support of a parliamentary system as the best system to express their different interests.

Presidential versus Parliamentary System

The presidential system that had ruled during a great part of the 19th century had, by the end of the century, stopped serving the interests of the Chilean elite. This situation was made increasingly complicated as more members, especially the nouveau riche of commerce, banking and mining, were added to this group.

During this period, the presidents governed without giving much notice to the diverse intentions of the elite, bringing to fruition their own projects that, while having conservative or liberal inspiration, were not planned in consultation with these political groups. Eventually, the elite viewed the presidential power as excessive and dictatorial and began working to lesson it and support Parliament.

Under the presidency of José Manuel Balmaceda, who assumed office in 1886, the rivalry between the Executive and Legislature reached a crisis. The nitrate bonanza had filled the Presidential coffers and permitted the Executive to develop an ambitious modernizing project focused on public works and education.

This wealth threatened to increase the attributions of the administrative apparatus, generating the risk that the Executive would make itself independent of the institution most representative of the political power of the elite: Parliament.

Finally, the conflict devolved into a civil war in 1891, which resulted in nearly 15,000 casualties and numerous abuses. The army allied in favour of the President, while the navy defended Parliament. After the Battles of Concón and Placilla, the presidential system's defeat was evident. Balmaceda handed over his office on 29 August 1891 and on 19 September, one day before he was to finish the legal period of his term, he committed suicide.

Power rooted in Congress

After the war, the elite decided to govern through a consensus that was forged in Parliament, leaving the President of the Republic and his council to merely execute these decisions.

The Parliamentarians acquired the ability to dismiss cabinets that lost the confidence of both houses, what is known as 'Rotating Ministries'. In this system, ministers did not last an average of 8 months. During the presidency of Germán Riesco (1901-06), for example, there were 17 cabinets and 73 ministers.

Congress transformed itself into a sort of club that only the wealthiest could enter (known as a plutocracy), in which the wealthy of old and new connections monopolised the state's power, reducing the nation's political life to a game of personal and family interests that failed to take full advantage of, among other things, the bonanza of the nitrate cycle.

During this period, the practice of electoral fraud through buying votes (known as bribing), bribing electors, falsifying votes and stealing registries became common. It also became common to form alliances and coalitions with the goal of designating candidates to the presidency and innocuous ministries, resulting in irresolute and impotent governments, with little difference if they were conservative or liberal.

THE ELITE AT THE END OF THE 19th CENTURY

In general, the elite of this period continued as the same, but with much more power. Behind this accumulation of power and wealth was their ability to incorporate new members through marriage, business or the alignment of economic and political interests with certain individuals of other social classes. Due to this, they began to perceive themselves as progressive, tolerant and liberal.

Thanks to their capitalized wealth, they were able to emulate their peers in Europe in their homes and lifestyles. They renovated their houses (both their Santiago and vacation homes), their dress, and their reading preferences, giving them a more modern and cosmopolitan style. They took to new spaces like theatres, cafés and reading rooms in the purest Parisian style. Definitively, through a process of major sophistication, refinement and conspicuous consumption, they boasted of their civilized image.

All of this raised many critics that reproached the elite for their irresponsibility, frivolity and social insensibility.

Room 10: Society in the Early 20th Century

The firm belief in an indefinite progress based on science generated great optimism in the Chilean elite and, in general, Western society. However, the wars and the revolutions of that time made the 20th century the most violent in history.

From its beginnings, the 20th century was a disconcerting and contradictory period. On one hand, the wars that rocked Europe and the rest of the world cost 64 million lives, revealing the unlimited destructive power of Man. On the other hand, the scientific and technological revolutions made possible the conquest of space, the cure of numerous diseases, the advance towards eradication of hunger, and the improvement in the quality of life for everyone. The explosive demographic growth and the elevation of life expectancy is a testament to these improvements.

Until the First World War, during the period named the “armed peace”, international equilibrium rested on a fragile foundation. A complex network of secret pacts between different European powers ended in forming power blocs. The clash of interests between these nations unravelled into an accelerated arms race.

This century also saw the rise and fall of certain world powers. Since the start of the 15th century, the world had been dominated by European powers, first by Spain and then by England. The 20th century brought with it the rise of extra-European powers, the United States of America and the Soviet Union, determined to fight over hegemony in the international system.

Chile and the Contribution of Nitrates

During the period before the First World War, Chile experienced a time of great boom, due to the export of nitrates.

After the War of the Pacific and thanks to large deposits of nitrates in the provinces incorporated into the national territory, Chile transformed itself into the major world producer of nitrates. Chileans and foreigners alike flocked in great number to Antofagasta and Tarapacá to exploit this mineral, a fundamental ingredient for the manufacture of explosives and also a fertilizer in high-demand by international markets.

Between 1881 and 1915, nitrate represented 61 percent of the value of exports of the country and 43 percent of the normal public revenues. These resources allowed the state to substantially improve the fiscal and social infrastructure of the country, in transportation and communications as well as in education.

The high rate of taxes on nitrates, a resource primarily exploited by British businesses, brought with it the substitution and reduction of many existing state taxes, which made Chilean society accustomed to low levels of taxation. The existing wealth allowed for high luxury consumerism in the wealthy sectors, which translated in a great dilapidation of resources due to the elite’s deteriorated productive orientation.

Room 11: Hoping for Change

As the 20th century progressed, Chilean politics were imbued with an increasingly anti-oligarchic character.

The entrance of charismatic Arturo Alessandri, the 'Lion of Tarapacá', onto the political scene was a hard hit to the interests of the leading class. At the beginning of 1920, this led to the surge in the long-held and underappreciated desire for participation of the middle and popular classes. Under the slogan "I am a threat to the reactionary spirit", Alessandri's time in office destabilized the worn-out parliamentary regimen.

The 1925 Constitution ended the parliamentary system and allowed for a more harmonious relationship between the Church and State as well as the Church's more active participation in political chores. In fact, the ecclesiastical authorities recognized the triumph of the Popular Front in 1938 and looked for an understanding with President Pedro Aguirre Cerda.

The military, worn-out after an active political intervention between 1924 and 1932, returned to their professional lives. However, unlike the 19th century, these military men were not absent from the Government's actions and were incorporated on many occasions into the ministries.

At the end of the 1930s, the melding of all of the ideological, economic and social sectors was achieved behind the common project of industrialization. A dynamic development was initiated that led to improved living conditions of workers, fortified the middle classes, and allowed businesses to expand and diversify economically.

The Rise of the Middle Sectors

Between 1920 and 1930 the country experienced the constant rise of the middle sectors, which were linked to the political and economic activities of an increasingly urban society.

Although the middle sectors consolidated to an increasing extent during this period, they were neither homogenous nor cohesive. Rather, they formed multiple groups. The most numerous consisted of state employees, an unequivocal sign of the global tendency towards interventionism of the state. The rest were composed of private employees, professionals, military men, professors, businessmen, students, intellectuals, 'chileanized' immigrants and foreign colonies.

This sector did not make up the majority of society, either. In the first half of the century, they barely represented 15 percent of the population, while the popular sectors claimed 75 percent. The members of the middle sectors began to assume high public offices and to direct the state, generally through political parties. In their attempt to displace the old elite in political and economic power, they searched for support in the workers' movement.

Room 12: The Great Crisis

The crash of the New York stock market caused a severe global economic crisis. Chile entered a period of harsh depression, the worst of its history, with a series of political and social repercussions.

Toward the end of the 1920s, which had been a time of economic splendour, there was an unexpected collapse of the US economy and, with it, of the majority of capitalist economies. In 1929, the speculation of many businesses had caused prices to rise superficially above their real value. On Thursday, 24 October, a stampede on the stock market began that ended in a generalized crisis in the financial and productive systems, provoking multiple fevers, lack of redeemable credit, and unemployment on levels never before seen.

In Chile, the effects were devastating. According to a report of the League of Nations, the Chilean economy was the most affected in the world. While global commerce fell 26 percent between 1929 and 1932, the Chilean economy registered a loss close to 75 percent. The real value of exports was reduced to a sixth of the 1929 levels and export volume plummeted a quarter. In June 1931, Chile suspended payments on its foreign debt for the first time in its history.

The mining sector was the hardest hit; in 1932 the decrease in production value, as compared to 1929, was 74 percent. The collapse of the copper and nitrate export industries provoked an abrupt fall in fiscal revenues and reserves.

The most painful and visible face of the crisis was homelessness. The major cities of the country became the shelter of thousands of workers who lived in the most absolute forms of misery. In Santiago, the authorities improvised Help for the Homeless Committees with the goal of housing and feeding these people.

Unstable Politics

The great economic crisis of 1929 also had political repercussions. In June 1931, as the country found itself in a catastrophic state, a student and professional rebellion succeeded in removing Carlos Ibáñez del Campo from power.

The period that followed the fall of General Ibáñez was extremely unstable. During this lapse, the country experienced an uprising of a naval crew consisting of an attempted assault on the arsenals of the Army in Copiapó. Another disturbance occurred in the middle of 1932, installing a brief Socialist Republic led by Marmaduke Grove and sparking a reaction from a group of men linked to the radical Right. These men created Republican militias, paramilitary organizations meant to defend the institutional order.

During this period, new political groups with strong ideological convictions emerged and began to coexist with the traditional Conservative, Liberal and Radical parties. The political spectrum was widened with the establishment of the Socialist and Communist

Parties. Their insertion into the political system was paralleled by the recognition of the legitimacy of urban syndicates and of the strike as an instrument to press for wage increases.

Other groups that were born in the 1930s included the National Phalanx, emanating from a division of the Conservative Youth and inspired by the social circles of the Catholic Church, and the National Socialist Movement inspired by the German Third Reich of Adolph Hitler.

The political instability ended in 1932 when presidential elections were called and Arturo Alessandri Palma triumphed with the support of the liberals, democrats and radicals. He eventually achieved legitimacy in government as well as stability in the economy.

By 1936 the strong, cohesive opposition to the authoritarianism of Alessandri led to a political alliance between the Radical, Socialist and Communist parties and the Chilean Workers' Confederation with the goal of winning the presidency.

In 1938, Radical Pedro Aguirre Cerda won the presidency with a narrow margin and started the only Popular Front government outside of Europe.

Room 13: From Popular Front to Popular Unity

Between 1937 and 1973, the Chilean state became the great protagonist of social changes. Like a variety of European countries, Chile adopted a model based on the increased fiscal spending aimed at extending social benefits to large sectors of society.

Throughout this period, the “Benefactor State” (as it was known) made a great effort to improve the living conditions of Chileans, principally in the areas of education, health, savings, insurance, and shelter. Nonetheless, the crude social reality of the time imposed enormous demands and left vast sectors outside of the benefits, including many farmers and workers that were not linked to industrial production.

Education had been, since the 19th century, one of the state’s primary concerns and during this period it received even more resources. From Pedro Aguirre Cerda’s official declaration that “to educate is to govern” until the military overthrow of 1973, Chile lowered its level of literacy considerably. Between 1925 and 1965, the number of primary school students grew from 500,000 to one million, while university student numbers rose from 6,000 to nearly 40,000.

In this period, the largest increase of public spending was in precautionary funds. For example pensions were significantly increased, especially for employees and workers in syndicates of the industrial sector. The efforts of the state to guarantee health services for all also registered important advances.

During the 1930s, the urban population grew larger than the rural, which caused grave housing deficit problems. In response, the state’s actions and energies were also directed towards the construction of housing and the creation of certain organisms with this goal. Examples include the Collection Box for Popular Housing and the Emergency Housing Committee.

Society since the middle of the century

By 1950, urban society in Chile had diversified and evolved considerably. Among the great transformations was that of the condition of Chilean women, demonstrated by the numbers of women among university students (by that date the number had reached 36 percent).

The middle sector saw the largest growth rates and consolidated themselves as an energetic and forceful social class with their own characteristics, strongly identified with the state, their primary employer. From these groups emerged new accommodated sectors, which reached a status that, linked them with the old privileged class.

For the popular sectors, however, progress came asymmetrically. While the industrial workers in syndicates improved their standard of living and ability to participate in politics, the agrarian workers often remained outside of this progress, with a median

salary 300 percent lower than their industrial counterparts. Informal workers and the marginal inhabitants of the cities also failed to significantly improve their condition.

For the poor of the country, it remained clear that the manner to improve their situation was to organise in syndicates and guilds that wielded the capacity of political pressure. This reached its maximum expression during the government of the Popular Unity at the end of the period.