

The Definitive Timeline of Philippine History

Everything you've always wanted to know about the history of the Philippines, but were afraid to ask

By Kidlat Staff, Mon 25 Nov 2024

Colony of Spain for more than three hundred years and of America for another fifty, the Philippines has had less than a hundred years to put its house in order on its own.

Here is a comprehensive timeline of Philippine history to understand how we have come to this glorious mess.

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Pre-Colonial Period (Prehistory-1521)

- **50,000 BCE** Mrs. *Homo luzonensis*, a pygmy lady who lives in a muggy cave in northern Cagayan Valley, nags her husband incessantly for more fruits and nuts to eat, and a nice little bungalow to live in.
- **40,000 BCE** Escaping the tiger-infested jungles of southern China, Nognog and his Negrito clan arrive on the islands after paddling across the Batanes Strait. They find the islands' jungles relatively pleasant, with only giant pythons to deal with.
- **20,000 BCE** Mr. Tabon man prepares a tasty meal of roasted bats and tarsier head soup just outside his cave in southern Palawan while watching the spectacular sunset of the West Philippine Sea marred by Chinese Coast Guard boats on the horizon.
- **3,000 BCE** Standing on the coast of mainland Asia, Moana and her Austronesian kin

embark on a great journey to colonize each and every island of Southeast Asia and the Pacific Ocean. The laziest and least adventurous of them settle on the first islands they see: the Philippine archipelago.

- **800 CE** Hindu-Buddhist barangay of Tondo is founded on the northern shores of Pasig River in Luzon. The settlers later build the fabled Smokey Mountain, the biggest landfill in the Srivijayan Empire where territories near and far can dump their trash.
- **900 CE** Frustrated by the Filipino natives' propensity to forget their debts, moped-riding Bumbays introduce the Brahmic writing script Kawi to the islands to have a paper record of who owes what.
- **1240** Arabs introduce Islam to Sulu, where it spread throughout the archipelago. Native Filipinos who keep several wives and slaves now have a convenient religious justification for it.
- **1258** Muslim principality of Manila is founded on the southern shores of Pasig River. The name comes from the manila folders and envelopes which grow on manila trees abundant in the area, trade in which brings modest prosperity to the fledgling settlement.
- **1367** Bored with the Kawi alphabet, literary snobs in Luzon invent the Baybayin script so they can have nice, decorative letters to use for tattoos and logos that uncouth natives can't read.

Spanish Rule (1521-1898)

Uninvited, and with the help of cannons, guns and bayonets, the Spanish gently persuade the natives to abandon their heathen ways and embrace Jesus Christ. They also do some killing, stealing, land-grabbing, raping and torturing on the side when Jesus is not looking.

- **1521 March** Out of nowhere, explorer Ferdinand Magellan lands on Limasawa Island in Southern Leyte and invites the natives to a bible study. The natives have no idea what on Earth is going on but they join anyway because there are free snacks.
- **1521 April** Unaware of what nasty germs the Europeans carry and ignoring basic hygiene practices, Rajah Humabon of Cebu performs the blood compact with Magellan and promptly goes down with smallpox. In a fit of fever-induced delirium, he trades

two of his wives in return for some trinkets.

- **1521 April** Datu Lapulapu, fed up with Magellan's bullshit, hacks him to death when he lands on Mactan Island. Magellan's maggot-infested corpse makes the first circumnavigation of the globe when it reaches Spain on September the following year.
- **1565** Forty years after the Magellan debacle, Spain tries again and sends Miguel Lopez de Legazpi to Cebu with four ships and hundreds of men. Rajah Tupas surrenders his rajanate to the invaders for some vague promises of Christian afterlife.
- **1570** Legazpi sends men to Manila to get hold of manila folders for his files. They burn the city to the ground before returning to Cebu empty-handed.
- **1571** Raring to tour Europe, Rajah Sulayman, Rajah Matanda, and Lakandula welcomes Legazpi to Manila and proclaims themselves Spanish subjects, so they can have Spanish passports and apply for a Schengen visa.
- **1574** Famished after months of seafaring and pirating, Chinese corsair Limahong raids Manila for some decent fried rice and dim sum. He runs amok after finding nothing but *sinigang* and *pinakbet*.
- **1593** The Dominicans print the *Doctrina Christiana*, the first ever publication in the islands. Later, they also secretly print the country's first erotic novel *Biag ni Lam-ang* which they only share among themselves.
- **1600** The Igorots, who came to the islands when nobody was watching, begin building the rice terraces in the Cordilleras. They immediately apply for inclusion as UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- **1603** In what is now known as the Sangley Rebellion, the Spanish massacre some 20,000 Chinese residents of Manila because they all look suspiciously like Limahong and they hate that sonofabitch.
- **1611** Miguel de Benavides establishes the University of Santo Tomas, the first university in Asia where exorcism is taught. Other subjects include Latin, Astrology, Alchemy and Wet Nursing.
- **1615** The first batch of nurses graduate from the University of Santo Tomas. They board the first ship out of Manila to migrate to the UK.

- **1763** Gabriela Silang founds the first feminist and LGBTQ+ movement in the Philippines. The Spanish, who are very conservative, have her permanently cancelled.
- **1814** Mount Mayon violently erupts, disrupting hiking activities in the Bicol Region. The resulting ashfall buries thousands of Bicolanos, who are notoriously slow walkers.
- **1829** Dagohoy Revolt in Bohol, the longest rebellion against Spanish rule in Philippine history, ends after the rebels get lost inside the Chocolate Hills.
- **1838** Francisco Balagtas publishes the epic *Florante at Laura*. It is panned by critics who don't have the slightest idea where the country of Albania is, but the steamy movie adaptation starring Leopoldo Salcedo and Celia Flor is a big hit.
- **1861** A complete set of Kapre skeleton is unearthed in Bambang, Nueva Viscaya, prompting a rethinking of evolutionary biology.

Filipino Nationalist Movement (1872-1898)

After 300 years under Spanish yoke, Filipinos come to realize that they can probably do the oppression of their fellow Filipinos just as well as the Spanish, maybe even better.

Illustration: Filipino priests Mariano Gomez, Jose Burgos and Jacinto Zamora, who are almost never seen apart.

- **1872** Petty Spanish authorities execute the Filipino priests Gomburza (Gomez, Burgos, Zamora) for having a memorable portmanteau, which Filipino schoolchildren use as mnemonic for pop quizzes.
- **1878** The Sultan of Sulu leases Sabah to the British North Borneo Company, who assured him they will return the territory after “just a couple of years, cross our hearts and hope to die.”
- **1887** Jose Rizal publishes the subversive novel *Noli Me Tangere*, earning him the ire of Spanish authorities, and of high school students everywhere who are then required to submit a book report about it.
- **1891** Ignoring the universally bad reviews of his earlier novel, Rizal tries again and publishes its equally bad but more action-packed sequel *El Filibusterismo*, featuring more sexy scenes and car chases.

- **1892** Andres Bonifacio and other Ilustrados found the Katipunan, a secret organization whose aim is to overthrow the ruling Spanish and take their place in oppressing the Indios.
- **1892** Rizal returns to the Philippines from Spain and is immediately exiled to Dapitan, just behind the Thomas Aquinas building of UST.
- **1893** Tiburcio Kidlat publishes the first Philippine newspaper *Ang Kidlat*, aiming to shine a spotlight on the vices, follies and abuses of the ruling Spanish. He is promptly arrested and shot.
- **1896 August** Bonifacio, Emilio Jacinto and other Katipuneros horribly realize that they have torn up their *cedula* by mistake instead of their grocery receipts, prompting the Cry of Pugadlawin. (Or maybe it was the Cry of Balintawak, we don't know for sure. There was so much wailing and crying, they forgot to make a note of where exactly it happened.)
- **1896 December** Spanish authorities finally execute Rizal by firing squad at Bagumbayan for writing exceedingly bad novels that everybody hated.
- **1897 March** Emilio Aguinaldo, the original *Trapo*, hijacks the Katipunan at the Tejeros Convention by bribing everyone in attendance, setting the tone of Philippine politics for the next hundred years.
- **1897 December** The Katipunan and Spanish authorities sign the Pact of Biak-na-Bato, rewarding the Filipinos' revolutionary efforts with an all-expense-paid holiday to Hong Kong.
- **1898 April** The Americans, feeling left out of the European-led conquering and colonizing activities and casting covetous eyes on Cuba, Guam and Philippines, declares war on Spain.
- **1898 May** Freshly rested, Aguinaldo and his men return to Cavite with a new flag which they bought from Alibaba for 10 yuan and a shipful of stuffed toys from Hong Kong Disneyland.

American Rule (1898-1946)

Americans muscle in and assume the role of mentoring their Little Brown Brothers—after

they massacre some of them first.

- **1898 June** Aguinaldo elects himself President and declares independence from Spain, except that Spain has already sold the Philippines to the US just the day before.
- **1898 June** The last fifty Spanish soldiers in the country barricade themselves in a church in Baler, Quezon to shoot the movie *Our Last Men in the Philippines*, which will later win the Goya Awards for best costume.
- **1898 October** *Manila Times* publishes its first issue. Columnist [Rigoberto Tiglao](#) lambasts the Spanish and Americans and urge the Katipuneros to throw their lot with the Chinese.
- **1899 June** Men loyal to Aguinaldo assassinate Antonio Luna in Cabanatuan City. Rumor has it that Luna is loathed by Aguinaldo, who has always wanted to grow a bushy mustache but can't.
- **1899 December** Boy General Gregorio Del Pilar, who is only seven at the time, is killed in the Battle of Tirad Pass against the Americans.

Photo: Boy General Gregorio del Pilar, 7, riding a wooden horse at Tirad Pass.

- **1901 March** Through an elaborate ruse involving dancing clowns from Macabebe, Pampanga, US forces capture Aguinaldo, who proclaims he was on the Americans' side all along.
- **1907** Americans trick Macario Sakay and his heavy metal band Tagalog Republic to perform in Cavite, and arrest all members when they can't play kundiman songs. Sakay is eventually hanged and buried with his beloved Kirk Hammett signature ESP guitar.
- **1908** University of the Philippines is established in Manila. The first batch of students cut classes and stage demonstrations on Taft Avenue shouting "Down with the US-Aguinaldo dictatorship! Asia for Asians!"
- **1939** Anticipating the likes of such brilliant leaders as Marcos, Estrada and Duterte, strangely prescient President Manuel Quezon declares "I would rather have a government run like hell by Filipinos than a government run like heaven by Americans."

Japanese Occupation (1941-1945)

Japan entice the Filipinos to join its glorious Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere by bayonetting everyone to submission.

- **1941** Japanese troops land in the Philippines, giving the Filipinos their first taste of *kawaii* Hello Kitty toys and hentai porn. Filipinos opposed to deviant pornography retreat to Corregidor Island to make a last stand.
- **1942** General Douglas MacArthur evades his ninja assassins and escapes to Australia, uttering the iconic words “Sayonara, bitches.”
- **1942** The Fall of Bataan is followed by the gruelling Takeshi’s Death March, during which Filipino and American prisoners march nonstop on their way to Takeshi’s Castle while avoiding obstacles and dodging bayonets. Those who get stabbed are eliminated.
- **1944** General Tomoyuki Yamashita buries 10,000 Pokéballs all over the country and dares the Filipinos to try find them all. Those who can’t are bayoneted on the spot.
- **1945** Awakened by the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, a disoriented Godzilla mistakenly lumbers to Manila and reduces the city to rubble instead of Tokyo.

Photo: Godzilla destroys downtown Quiapo in Manila.

- **1945** Yamashita is hanged by the American weaboos occupying Manila after he fails to locate the Pokéballs buried under the enormous piles of debris covering the city.

Independence (1946-present)

Unshackled from foreign intervention, Filipinos finally get free rein to run the country like hell.

- **1946** The US dumps the Philippines and buggers off to Japan, leaving the Filipinos alone to clean up their gigantic mess. Japan donates 100,000 brooms and 50,000 mops as war reparation.
- **1950** Hundreds of Philippine soldiers join the American-led forces in the Korean War. They return home later with PTSD and a severe addiction to Korean dramas.

- **1957** Popular President Ramon Magsaysay dies in a plane crash. Investigations reveal that the pilot was playing Manhole on a Nintendo Game & Watch while manning the plane's controls.
- **1965** Ferdinand Marcos, descendant of Ferdinand Magellan, is elected president.
- **1967** Finally caving in to the Philippines' nonstop badgering, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia agree to form the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) just to shut her up. The Philippines immediately proposes *paluwagan* to her new best friends.
- **1968** Jose Maria Sison founds the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP) whose aim is to distribute the growing misery equally among the Filipino bourgeoisie and proletariat alike.
- **1969** Bernabe Buscayno organizes the New People's Army (NPA), the CPP's armed wing, to give their message of communist dystopia more bite.
- **1971** Nur Misuari and Muslim leaders in Mindanao establish the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), aiming to create a separate Islamic country in southern Philippines where they can do the exploiting of their fellow Muslims instead of the Christian leaders in Manila.
- **1972** Super Robots Voltes V and Mazinger Z attack Manila with the help of local Filipino communist cadres; President Marcos declares Martial Law to repel the invaders.
- **1973** First Lady Imelda Marcos buys her 37th pair of Hermes shoes in Paris, telling her husband "This is the last, dear, I promise."
- **1974** Philippines discovers a virtually inexhaustible commodity for trade: Filipinos. Marcos creates government agencies to select the most suitable varieties for export, first to the Middle East, then to the rest of the world.

Photo: Filipinos selected for export to Vietnam aboard Philippine Airlines.

- **1974** Hiroo Onoda, the first-ever *hikikomori*, comes out of his cave and surrenders in Lubang Island, Mindoro. His hideout reveals World War II-era rifles, discarded cups

of instant ramen, and a massive collection of manga.

- **1976** Imelda Marcos and Muammar Gaddafi stage a week-long bed-in in Libya to protest the ongoing conflict in Muslim Mindanao, resulting in the Tripoli Agreement, whereby they encourage the feuding parties to “Make love, not war.”
- **1977** Mae Anne Padolina, the first Japayuki, departs for the Land of the Rising Sun to perform *tinikling* and *maglalatik* for cultural events. Tens of thousand others enroll in folk dance classes.
- **1978** Folk-singer Freddie Aguilar releases the iconic song “Anak Ka Ng Ina Mo” which is then shortened to “Anak” for marketing purposes. It is eventually translated and sung to a billion languages.
- **1980** Action-fantasy film *Ang Panday* starring Fernando Poe, Jr. debuts on IMAX theaters, sporting cutting-edge CGI and 4D-surround sound.
- **1981** Giant mechs and communist rebels successfully repelled, President Marcos lifts Martial Law.
- **1983** A motley crue of NPA hitmen, military SWAT soldiers and CIA operatives assassinate Senator Benigno “Ninoy” Aquino Jr. from fifty different angles after the deducing the airport where his plane will land from his name.
- **1986** Marcos ally General Favian Fer erupts with jealousy after he discovers racy love letters between Defense Secretary Juan Ponce Enrile and RAM leader Gregorio Honasan and orders them arrested. The lovers elope to Camp Crame on EDSA.
- **1986** Trapped in a massive traffic in EDSA highway, tens of thousands of commuters decide to leave their buses and walk home, clogging the highway and accidentally triggering the People Power Revolution that drive President Marcos from power. Corazon “Heart” Aquino becomes president.
- **1991** Using their highly advanced observation and deduction skills, scientists at the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (PHILVOCS) accurately predict the imminent eruption of Mt. Pinatubo after observing the volcano shoot a massive ash column 20km into the atmosphere.

Photo: Mount Pinatubo shoots massive ash column, prompting PHILVOCS

scientists to declare imminent eruption.

- **1994** Philippines makes its first connection to the Internet when an employee of the Philippine Network Foundation downloads a topless photo of Tracy Lords from a server in CERN.
- **2006** Filipino mountaineer Leo Oracion makes history as the 1,874th person to climb Mount Everest.
- **2010** The Manila Hostage Crisis inside a tourist bus comes to a successful end when members of an elite SWAT team shoot the hostage-taker and all other hostages that are not already dead.
- **2012** Philippines lodges strong protest to China after it discovers several Chinese Coast Guard ships dragging Scarborough Shoal from its usual location near Zambales to a site just 10km from Hainan Island.
- **2013** The Department of Education introduces the K-12 Program through which basic education that can be taught in 10 years is stretched to 12 to enable Filipino schoolchildren to have more time each day for Facebook.
- **2015** The National Mapping and Resource Information Authority announces it has finally located the 400 islands that the country feared were lost after they were blown away by typhoon Yolanda.
- **2016** President Rodrigo Duterte announces an all-out War on Drugs and orders the police to shoot on sight all kinds of illicit substances wherever they see them, even while being smoked, injected or snorted by users. Tens of thousands of Filipino bystanders die from stray bullets.