

# A cultural perspective

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The Philippines is part of South East Asia but in many ways it is different from the rest of the region. For one, almost every Filipino (that is how they are called) can speak English aside from their indigenous dialects (Erickson, 1982, p. 19).

While Filipinos possess distinct Malay features such as black hair, eyes and brown skin, there are also a multitude of which has brown hair and eyes, alabaster skin and carry Spanish names. This is due to the long Spanish colonization the country underwent, starting in the 16th century and lasting for more than 300 years (Borlaza and Wurfel, 2002, p. 545). The Spanish influence is also responsible for the dominance of the Roman Catholic religion in the country.

However, it is the countryside of the Philippines, with its rice fields, tropical setting and beautiful beaches that seems to connect the country with the rest of its neighbors. The country is a magnet for tourists during summer vacation with its endless beaches and temperate weather. Furthermore, the Spanish heritage, along with the brief American and Japanese colonization has contributed to the shaping of the Filipino culture- different languages and dialects, food, dance and music, and societal order.

The country's contact with China cannot also be discounted. Starting in the 10th century, the Philippines had engaged contact with the Chinese, resulting in people with Filipino-Chinese descent (p. 540). Filipinos are said to have an "uncommon warmth and courtesy" (p. 19).

The country has also weathered some of the most colorful incidents in politics- from the Martial Law era during the 70s to the EDSA revolution and

People Power in the 80s , impeachment trial of former president Joseph Estrada and the impeachment attempts against its current president Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo( Steinberg, 2009). Truly, the island world of the Philippines offers a unique cultural perspective.

The Republic of the Philippines, as it is properly know, is an archipelago made up of 7, 100 islands lying some 500 miles off Asia' south-eastern coast ( Borlaza and Wurfel, 2002, p. 537). The country has three main islands- Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao (p. 537).

According to archaeologists, there have been prehistoric tribes existing in the Philippines when the country was still attached to the Asian mainland (Erickson, 1982, p. 20). Furthermore, the first people were said to be primitive Negritos or small Negroes who resided inthe forestof the islands (p. 200. These people, described as pygmy like were themselves descendants from the great migration in Asia during the Stone Age (p. 20).

Indonesians, Malaysians and Chinese also settled in the Philippines. In 1521, Portuguese navigator Ferdinand Magellan landed in Leyte Gulf and claimed the island for Spain (p. 20) . Thus began the 333 years of Spanish colonization of the country (p. 20). In 1896, the Philippines started its efforts to relinquish Spanish control on them, organizing movements and revolts (p. 20). During this time, Spain was also in the midst of battle with America.

The Spanish-American War broke out and continued in the Philippines, another Spanish territory (Davidson, Lytle, Heyrman, Gienapp and Stoff, 1998, pp. 750). The Treat of Paris granted America control of the Philippines (p. 20). This was greeted with mixed reactions from Filipinos. Some Filipinos

viewed the United States as liberators while others labelled them as “ new colonizers” (p. 751).

Under the leadership of William Howard Taft, the Philippines was transformed- building American schools, roads, factories and even introducing new farming methods to guide the country as it becomes independence (p. 753).

During the American regime, the Philippines benefited socially, politically and economically. In 1935, the Commonwealth of the Philippines was formed with Manuel L. Quezon as its first president (p. 20). The celebration was cut short due to the explosion of the Second World War. When war broke out, the Philippine was occupied by the Japanese.