

Philippine literature during spanish period the indigenous literature of the phil...

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Philippine Literature during Spanish Period The indigenous literature of the Philippines developed primarily in the oral tradition in poetic and narrative forms. Epic poems, legends, proverbs, songs, and riddles were passed from generation to generation through oral recitation and incantation in the various languages and dialects of the islands. The epics were the most complex of these early literary forms. Most of the major tribal groups developed an original epic that was chanted in episodic segments during a variety of social rituals. One common theme of the epics is a hero who is aided by benevolent spirits. The epics that have survived are important records of the ancient customs of tribal society before the arrival of Islam and Christianity. After the arrival of the Spanish, Catholic missionaries employed indigenous peoples as translators, creating a bilingual class known as *ladinos*. These individuals, notably poet-translator Gaspar Aquino de Belen, produced devotional poetry written in the Roman script, primarily in the Tagalog language. Later, the Spanish ballad of chivalry, the *corridor*, provided a model for secular (nonreligious) literature. Verse narratives, or *komedya*, were performed in the regional languages for the illiterate majority. They were also written in the Roman alphabet in the principal languages and widely circulated. Francisco "Balagtas" Baltazar, generally considered the first major Filipino poet, wrote poems in Tagalog. His best-known work, *Florante at Laura* (*Florante and Laura*), probably written between 1835 and 1842, is an epic poem that subversively criticizes Spanish tyranny. This poem inspired a generation of young Filipino writers of the new educated class, or *ilustrados*, who used their literary talents to call for

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political and social reform under the colonial system. These writers, most notably José Rizal, produced a small but high-quality body of Philippine literature in Spanish. Rizal's novel *Noli Me Tangere* (Touch Me Not), published in 1886, and its sequel, *El Filibusterismo* (The Subversive), published in 1891, helped to shape a new, nationalist identity during the last years of the 19th century.