

「フィリピン」とくしゅう特集 vol.3 A Special Feature on the Philippines, Vol.3

Following the 1st and 2nd issues from last school year, this is another special feature on "Things you might think you know, but might not actually know about the Philippines." This school year, we also have 8 friends with Filipino roots at Nakai Junior High School!

In the previous two issues, we focused on the geography and language of the Philippines, but starting this time, we will cover its history!

*If you are interested in reading the previous two issues, they are posted in front of the International Classroom, so please check them out..

フィリピンの歴史「4つの区切り」れきし History of the Philippines: "4 Main Periods"くぎ

The history of the Philippines is easiest to understand when divided into these 4 periods:

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|--|----------------|
| 1. The Era of "Barangay" Villages: | — 1565 |
| 2. Spanish Rule: | 1565 – 1898 |
| 3. American Rule and World War II (The Pacific War): | 1898 – 1945 |
| 4. Independence to the Present Day: | 1945 – Present |

1. 「バランガイ」の時代じだい The Era of "Barangay"

Before Islam arrived, there was no unified nation or central government in the Philippines; instead, small settlements called "barangay" were scattered across the region. A single barangay consisted of 30 to 100 households, ranging in size from a few hundred to tens of thousands of people. The name "barangay" comes from balangay バランガイ, the wooden sailboat used by the people of the Philippines at the time for migration and travel. Inside a barangay, there was a social class system like this:



Datu (Chief):

The supreme leader, holding military, judicial, and administrative power.

Maharlika (Nobles/Warriors):

The privileged class supporting the Datu; exempt from taxes, with military service duties in times of war.

Timawa (Freemen):

Common citizens. They could own land, choose their occupation, and had labor service obligations.

Alipin (Dependents/Slaves): People who lost their status due to debt, crimes, or being captured in war.

Barangays were by no means isolated settlements; they had a maritime nation aspect, trading with places like China and the Arab world. To make trade with other countries go smoothly, they carved their own writing system called "Baybayin" into bamboo, palm leaves, and tree bark to keep contracts and records. It is also said that they had their own weighing scales. Originally, animism (spirit worship) was the base belief, but from the 14th to 15th century, Islam spread via Brunei and the Malay Peninsula. Islamization progressed from the southern island of Mindanao to around Manila,

and Islamic kingdoms came to be established in Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago.

Even today, the smallest local administrative unit (similar to a neighborhood association or local community council in Japan) is called a "barangay." There are over 40,000 of them nationwide, each having its own barangay captain (district head), police functions, and community center.

2. スペイン^{とうちじだい}統治時代^{ねんいじょう} (なんと300年以上!) The Spanish Colonial Era (For over 300 years!)

Ever since the fleet of Ferdinand Magellan arrived in Cebu in the central Philippines in 1521, Spain began aiming to claim ownership of the Philippines. In 1543, an expedition led by Villalobos reached the central region. Wishing to present the two islands of Samar and Leyte to the Spanish Crown Prince Felipe (later King Philip II of Spain), Villalobos named them the "Philippine Islands" (Las Islas Filipinas) after Felipe. This is the origin of the country's current name, "Philippines".

【1543 is also the year firearms were introduced to Tanegashima Island in Japan!】

Spain at the time sought overseas expansion under the pretext of spreading Christianity (Roman Catholicism), and from this point onward, many missionaries came to the Philippines, spreading Catholicism. As mentioned in the 1st issue, this is the origin of why the Philippines is currently the only Christian-majority nation in ASEAN.

Spain's expansion started from the central region. However, due to conflicts with Portugal, which was advancing into the East Indies (Indonesia) further south at the time, Spain shifted its main bases northward. Legazpi, the first Governor-General of the Philippines, set his sights on Manila on Luzon Island—a location with a fine natural harbor that was already a trading hub with China and surrounding regions. After pushing out local forces, he established Manila as the capital in 1571. This was the birth of Manila, the current capital! 【The name "Manila" comes from the local Tagalog word "Maynila," which means "a place where nilad plants grow abundantly."】

Furthermore, by connecting Acapulco and Manila, a regular trade route was established across the Pacific, linking the Spanish homeland with Acapulco in Mexico. Asian luxury goods—such as Chinese raw silk, silk textiles, and porcelain—began to be brought into Spain. Silver from Latin America was used for these luxury purchases. At that time, while 1g of gold had to be exchanged for 13g of silver in Spain, 1g of gold could be exchanged for just 7g of silver in China. Against this backdrop, immense profits could be made simply by taking silver produced in Latin America and exchanging it cheaply for gold in China. Thus, Manila grew as an important hub port (a transit point) connecting trade between Asia and Spain. Because large sailing ships called "Galleons" were used during this era, this grand trade connecting Spain and Asia is called the "Manila Galleon Trade." The fact that the modern Philippine languages contain many words of Spanish origin, and that many people in the Philippines have Spanish-style surnames, comes from this history. (To be continued...)



にほんじんしょうにん るそんすけざえもん ほんみょう なやすけざえもん
日本人商人 呂宋助左衛門 (本名: 納屋助左衛門)

Japanese Merchant: Ruson Sukezaemon (Real name: Naya Sukezaemon)

During the early period of Spanish rule, one merchant who promoted trade between Japan and the Philippines was Naya Sukezaemon. A merchant from Sakai, Izumi Province (present-day Sakai City,

Osaka Prefecture), he traveled to Manila on Luzon Island around 1593. When he brought back inexpensive pottery he bought there, it caught the attention of Sen no Rikyu, a famous tea master of the time, and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the ruler of Japan.

The pottery he brought back consisted of simple containers used in daily life in the Philippines to store food, alcohol, and oil to protect them from moisture. In Japan, however, they were treated as top-grade tea utensils for storing matcha, an essential item for the tea ceremony. Unlike the fancy Chinese tea utensils (Karamono), these jars were plain and slightly uneven in shape, which perfectly matched the aesthetic of "Wabi-sabi" (finding beauty in simplicity) pursued by Rikyu. Hideyoshi named these jars "Luzon Jars" (Ruson Tsubo). Sukezaemon sold them for extremely high prices to Hideyoshi and feudal lords (Sengoku Daimyo) across Japan, gaining massive wealth and fame as a merchant. (It is said that a single jar was worth as much as building a castle!)

However, his lavish lifestyle became too conspicuous, and in 1598, Hideyoshi ordered his mansion and property to be confiscated. But right before the punishment, Sukezaemon acted fast, donating his mansion and wealth to temples and shrines before escaping Sakai. He traveled back to Luzon Island, later moved to Cambodia where he was trusted by the king, achieved further success as a merchant, and lived out the rest of his life there.