

# Philippines

## In brief



 **SPA** *Filipinas*

### **origins**

Archipelagic region of Southeast Asia, established as a political unit since 1571 with the beginning of the administration of the territory by Spain, and with the territorial extension that existed at the end of this dominion in 1898.

It is a patronymic toponym originated from the name of the Spanish prince who would reign as Philip II.

### **abstract**

Made up of more than seven thousand islands at a geographical crossroads between East Asia and the Pacific Ocean, the Philippine archipelago has historically been a zone of interaction between the world's major civilizations (Western Christian Humanism, Islam and

China) on an Austronesian substratum. Along with the major languages (Tagalog, Bisaya, Ilocano, Bicolano, Pampangueño, Pangasinan, Ibanag, Ibatan, Waray-Waray, Hiligaynon, Tausug, Maguindanao, Manarao, Sama or Kannadai) and dozens of minority languages and variants, the Filipino built his faith in Latin and his nation in Spanish, while English has determined the modernity of the first Republic of Asia, currently with more than one hundred million people. The current national language, Filipino, is the twenty-fifth language in the world by number of speakers. Along with the two most widespread Western languages, the archipelago has a centuries-old relationship with the Arabic and Chinese languages, and newly created languages such as the Hispanic creole Chabacano, with two million speakers. This Babylonian scenario has made the Philippines a privileged laboratory of multilingualism, translation and cultural transmission in Asia, a cosmopolis between East and West and a theater of the global world.



**record**

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# Entry



## SPA Filipinas

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### Ancient times

Writing was known in the Philippine archipelago upon the arrival of the Spaniards in 1521, with its own system developed with similar characteristics throughout its islands. Its origin is to be found in the [Brahmanic syllabaries](#) that came to Southeast Asia from India. The [Kawi script](#) will be used from about the 8th century AD to collect the ancient Malay and Javanese languages. The [Sri Vijaya](#) and [Majapahit](#) empires will employ Kawi in their cultural manifestations, and the script will reach the main Philippine trading ports: Butuan in Mindanao and Laguna de Bay in Luzon. The so-called "[Laguna Copperplate](#)" is a text in Kawi script that offers keys to understanding the protohistoric period of the islands (Postma

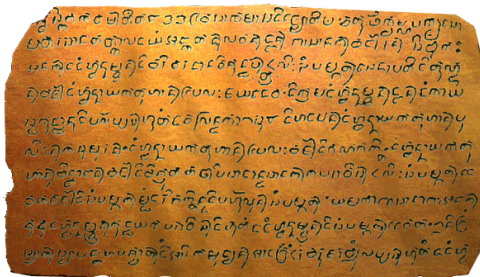


*Map of the Philippines [Source]*

1992). Dated around the 10<sup>th</sup> century and in the Malay language, it shows the incipient penetration of Malay as the lingua franca of trade, and the need for interpretation among Tagalog speakers.

From Kawi, very similar vernacular scripts develop variants, whose generic denomination is Baybayin, a syllabic system composed of three vowels and between twelve and fifteen consonants. Small texts in multiple languages began to be written on reed and clay, mainly used probably from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries (Marcilla 1895).

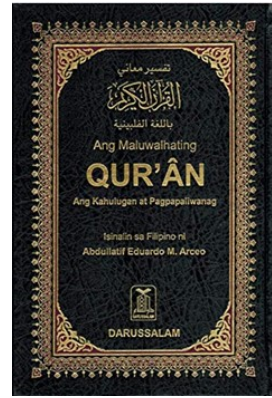
The process of Islamization introduced as an essential doctrine the reading of the Qur'an, a word written in Arabic to be interpreted by the makhdum, the saic, the pandita or the sarip, names given to the ulemas, alfaqis and sufis who began to preach Islam in the southern regions of the archipelago during the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and in Manila Bay since the end of the 15th century. In the *Relación del*



*descubrimiento y conquista de la isla de Luzón y Mindoro* (1572) it is noted that preachers from Borneo taught Islamic doctrine in the Tagalog regions, and that some Tagalogs began to read and translate the Qur'an upon the arrival of Laguna Copperplate [Source] the Spaniards in Manila (Retana 1898).

The famous Boxer Codex says more, as it points out that some *Tagapagbasa, nansulatana dios*, “those who read what is written by God”, are the interpreters of the word of God to the Tagalogs (Donoso 2016: 64).

The Islamic chanceries of Malacca and Brunei developed an aljamiado script following the model of the Indian sultanates. Thus, a new written system, called Jawi, was formed. Its name comes from the toponym Jawa, the Sumatra-Java region and, by extension, the whole Malay world. If both Persian and Arabic had served as *lingua franca* on the Islamic



Filipino

Qu'ran [Source]

route to China since the 7<sup>th</sup> century, from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards Malay in Jawi script would be the main koine for the literate world of the region, including Manila. Significantly, the oldest surviving Jawi document shows one of the most common cultural practices that, since the arrival of the Europeans, will be recurrent in primary sources: the reproduction of the vernacular text with its parallel translation. Indeed, the “Carta del rey de Borneo a Tello escrita en árabe” of 1599 (AGI: Philippines, 18 B,R.9, N.132), is accompanied by a translation made by the Borneo Miguel Yaat with the help of Constantino Xuárez. Thus, once the text is received from the Sultan of Brunei, it will be delivered to these two individuals who, together with the assistance of the *alcalde mayor* of Tondo, Esteban de Marquina, will report its contents to the Governor General of the Philippines. Miguel Yaat (supposedly ignorant of the Latin script) will even sign in Jawi:

**Carta original del Rey de Burney escrita a Don Francisco Tello Gobernador de las Filipinas traducida de lengua burney en castellana. Lo que contiene esta**

**casta del Rey de Burney escrita este año de mil y quinientos y noventa y nueve al Ilustrísimo Señor Don Francisco Tello caballero de la orden de Santiago Gobernador y Capitán General de las Islas Filipinas por el Rey nuestro y presidente de la audiencia y cancillería real que en ella reside es lo siguiente traducida por lengua fiel y verdadera. [...]**  
**El cual trasunto se hizo y sacó por lengua e interpretación de Constantino Xuárez y Miguel Yaat, natural de Burney, que dijeron y juran, y fielmente sacado sin mudar sustancia y lo firman ante mí Esteban de Marquina Alcalde mayor de Tondo y su partido por el Rey Nuestro Señor y siete de julio del año de mil quinientos noventa y nueve:**

**Esteban de Marquina      ميكل جهت [Mīkel Ŷahat]  
 Constantino Xuárez**

**(Donoso 2012: 190)**

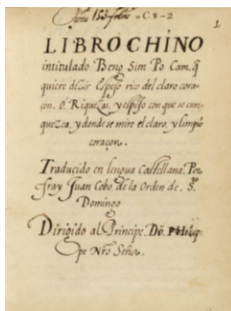
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## **→ Early Modern Era**

The Spanish political administration of the main areas of the archipelago from 1571 to 1898 promoted Latin and Spanish as languages of culture, at the same time that linguistics was developed by missionaries for the preparation of arts and vocabularies of the numerous Philippine languages. A 'Manila School of Translators' was established for the writing of doctrines in Tagalog and Chinese, and figures such as the Dominican [Juan Cobo](#) made the first Western translations to and from Chinese (Borao 2012). The first direct translation of a Chinese work into a Western language took place in



this context. It was the Spanish translation of the Chinese book *Libro chino intitulado Beng Sim Po Cam, que quiere decir Espejo rico del claro corazón o Riquezas y espejo con que se enriquezca y donde se mire el claro y límpido corazón. Traducido en lengua castellana por fray Juan Cobo, de la orden de Santo Domingo. Dirigido al príncipe Don Felipe nuestro Señor* (c. 1592) (Sanz 1959; Limei 2005). Also the first translation of a Western work into Chinese took place in this period - the *Pien Cheng-chiao chen-ch'uan Shih-lu. Apologia de la verdadera religión* by Juan Cobo, O.P., published in Manila in 1593 (Villarroel 1986).



From this point on, numerous efforts were made to learn more about Chinese culture, which led to the creation of a classic work, the *Historia de las cosas más notables, ritos y costumbres del Gran Reino de la China* (1585), by [González de Mendoza](#) (Sola 2018), and the Boxer Codex, whose second part is the translation and illumination of a Chinese bestiary (Ollé and Rubiés 2019). With the development of this incipient process of translation and scholarship, the creation of a first xylographic printing press in Manila in 1593 later typographic in 1602, became necessary (Retana 1899).

**First Chinese translation of a Western work [Source]**

This brought about the first printed works -translated works-: *Doctrina Cristiana en lengua española y tagala, corregida por los Religiosos de las ordenes. Impresa con licencia, en S. gabriel, de la orden de S. Domingo En Manila, 1593* (Wolf), y la *Doctrina Cristiana en letra y lengua china, compuesta por los padres ministros de los sangleyes, de la Orden de Sancto Domingo. Con licencia, por Keng yong, china, en el parian de Manila, no date* (Gayo).

The introduction of a missionary education system brought about the so-called "ladinos" in the 17th century, a Filipino population with knowledge of Latin and Spanish, who produced poetry in Spanish which was immediately translated into Tagalog:

**Salamat nang ualang hanga/ gracias se den  
sempiternas,/ sa nagmasilang nang tala/ al que hizo  
salir la estrella:/ macapagpanao nang dilim/ que  
destierre las tinieblas/ sa lahat na bayan natin/ de  
toda esta nuestra tierra (Lumbera 1986: 241; Sales  
2018).**

Hispanic literature begins to decisively determine the transformation of vernacular traditions, with the introduction of new genres, forms and themes. In poetry, the different cycles of the Hispanic *romancero*, from the Carolingian topics to Bernardo Carpio, are adapted to local languages in long metrical forms known as *awit* and *corridos*. In theater, cloak-and-dagger dramas and the tradition of Moors and Christians also developed plays called *komedya* or *moro-moro*. In prose, the first novel in the Tagalog language, *Baarlán at Josaphat* appears in 1712 (Almario 2003), a translation of the same work made in Spanish by Baltasar de Santa Cruz in 1692, in turn a translation of the Latin version. One final religious-literary genre created in this period was the Bible-based poetry describing the passion of Christ. Along with chamber plays, the Passion of Christ will also be declaimed and written in verse under the inspiration of Castilian and Latin models. In this line, [Gaspar Aquino de Belén](#) wrote at the beginning of the 18th century one of the great works of Tagalog literature: *Mahal na Passion ni Jesu Christong Panginoon Natin na tola*.

While the Hispanic exotic and chivalric narrations consolidate a classicism for Philippine literature, there is an enlightened interest in



recovering the pre-Hispanic oral traditions, that is, the epics of the different ethno-linguistic groups of the archipelago. On the one hand, we find the epic Ibalon of Bicol, whose text is collected by Jose Castaño in “Breve noticia acerca del origen, religión, creencias y supersticiones de los antiguos indios del Bicol” (Retana 1895-1905: vol. 1); and on the other hand, the Ilocano epic *Vida de Lam-ang* by Pedro Bucaneg (1592-c.1630), translated in the volume *El folklore filipino* by [Isabelo de los Reyes](#).

The Filipino *ilustrados* of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century certainly possessed a cosmopolitan background, spoke several languages and made transcontinental journeys. The commercial and economic expansion of the archipelago after the opening of the Suez Canal will motivate a greater national consciousness, and the appearance of a nationalist movement in Spanish language, the Propaganda, whose written organ will be *La Solidaridad*. [José Rizal](#) leads this revolt, one of his aims being that the Filipino people should access Western culture beyond the Spanish mediation, which is the reason why he translates directly from German into Tagalog the Friedrich Schiller’s play *William Tell* (Guillermo 2009).

In political terms, the need to delimit the southern borders of the Philippines makes the Spanish administration undertake a constant campaign of diplomatic and cultural attraction of the Muslim population throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The mestizo Spanish-Filipino population of the Zamboanga region would end up being the most suitable to hold the position of mediator with the sultans, and many would not only work as translators, but also as secretaries to the sultan. Knowledgeable in several languages (from Spanish to the Moro languages, together with other Philippine indigenous languages), familiar with the terrain, the customs and habits of the southern region of the Philippines, and accustomed to dealing with the Muslim population, the mestizos of the city of Zamboanga would be

the true architects of nineteenth-century Spanish-Moorish diplomacy. Names such as Cipriano Enrile, Pedro Ortuoste, Plácido Alberto de Saavedra, Vicente Narciso and, above all, Alejo Álvarez, are repeated in official documents, both Philippine Government and the Sultanates (as officials of both institutions: translators of the Government and secretaries of the Sultan). This is how the Office of Interpretation of the Moro Language was created in 1876 (ANF 1876).

The Spanish government translators will live between two worlds, between the rigor required by the Spanish official documents and the fidelity to the message written in the Moro languages. The result could not be satisfactory with either; there was no other possible outcome than the formation of a mestizo culture that would participate in both. Thus, there was no one better than the mestizo population from Zamboanga to carry out the development of the sultan chancelleries towards a new culture: the Chabacano. As an example of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Spanish-Moro diplomacy and the Chabacano culture, we copy below a transcription of the “Letter of Pangiyán Ynchi Chamila to Governor Rafael González de Rivera and to Captain Panoy on the death of the Sultan,” written with some twists of this emerging creole:

### **[Dando cuenta del fallecimiento del Sultán]**

**Atenta carta del corazón blanco, puro y limpio de vuestra hermana, el Paduca Pangiyán Ynchi Chamila y de vuestro hijo, el Paduca Rachidiamuna, Dattô Mujamad Badarudin llegará á sus padres y hermanos, el Gobernador D.<sup>n</sup> Rafael González de Rivera y el Capitán Panoy, como también a todos nuestros hermanos ahí en el Tiangué.**

**Os participamos que a las once horas y setenta y cinco segundos de la noche Dios le ha sacado de**

**esta vida a vtro. Hermano el Sultán, y el Cielo le haya acogido en su Santo Seno.**

**Después de todo queremos estéis todos aquí, hermano, hermano mío, o cuando menos Panoy.**

**Reciban nuestros más lúgubres sentimientos.**

**Escrita el Viernes de la Madrugada a las 3 horas y siete días de la Luna del Mes Chdia Kaida del año 1298.**

**Traducida p. el Yntérprete.**

**Cipriano Enrile (ANF 1881)**

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## **¶ Late Modern Era**

The U.S. military intervention in 1898 and the war against the First Philippine Republic in 1899 produced one of the most ambitious language replacement operations ever undertaken. Thousands of English teachers were brought to the islands on military vessels, the so-called **Thomasites** (Karnow 1989). **Nick Joaquín** explained the process eloquently: “A people that had got as far as Baudelaire in one language was being returned to the ABC's of another language” (Joaquín 2005: 170-171). The Filipino youth would be condemned to read the fathers of their fatherland in translations:

**Porque sería trágico que llegase el día que para leer a Rizal, a del Pilar, a Mabini, a Adriático, a Palma, a Arellano, a Mapa y a Osmeña, los filipinos tuviéramos que hacerlo a través de**

**traducciones bastardas; en fin, porque el español es una tradición patria que si tiene raíces en nuestra historia también las tiene en las entrañas de nuestra alma (Recto 1990: 725-726).**

Along with the degradation of Spanish as a language of culture, its replacement as the language of historical sources was also planned. To this end, a mammoth undertaking was also performed: the translation into English of thousands of archival documents. The result of this political operation was the fifty-five volumes edited by Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson, *The Philippine Islands. 1493-1898*, Cleveland, A. H. Clark, 1903-1919 (Cano 2008).

Religious proselytizing has been especially fruitful during the twentieth century in a Philippines where the dominance of Catholic ecclesiastical power has been weakening. Philippine linguistic diversity has facilitated the emergence of real translation hubs, such as those fostered by the Summer School of Linguistics or the Jehovah's Witnesses. The first complete Tagalog Bible was published by Jose C. Abriol in 1962, *Ang Banal na Bibliya*. The New Testament was translated into Tagalog by the Claretian missionaries. The Qur'an was completely translated into Tagalog by Roberto Abdul Rakman Bruce in 1982, *Ang Banal na Kuran*. At the same time the Maranao translation was being done by Shaikh Abdulaziz Gurualim Saromantang.



*Tirant lo Blanch in Filipino. [Source]*

*As for great classics of world literature, the first part of Don Quixote appeared in 1940 by several translators, with the title *Ang palaisip na maharlikang si Don Quixote de la Mancha*. Unang aklat, a version that was reprinted by the Instituto Cervantes in 1999. In 2010, the first complete translation of *Tirant lo Blanch* into a Southeastern Asian language was published, *Tirante el Blanco. Ang Maputing Kabalyero*.*

The fact is that the Philippines has enjoyed two of the languages with the world's greatest bibliographic heritage. Practically everything is translated into English and Spanish, so few translations have been done outside these two languages in the Philippines. Hence the significant work of *Virgilio Almarino* and the *Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino* (Commission on the Filipino Language) in promoting the translation of the great world classics into Filipino. At a professional level, there are translators' organizations such as the National Society of Filipino Translators (*Pambansang Samahan ng mga Filipinong Tagasalin*) and the Translators Association of the Philippines. However, specific higher education in Translation and Interpreting is rare and hardly has any tradition.

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## **Research potential**

Given its huge historical tradition and being one of the most polyglot countries in the world and a crossroads for its main civilizations, there is little doubt that the Philippines feature a field of study full of challenges, although still scarcely addressed by modern translation and interpreting studies.

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# Credits



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