

History

The history of the Philippines is believed to have begun with the arrival of the first humans via land bridges at least 30,000 years ago. The first recorded visit from the West is the arrival of Ferdinand Magellan on Homonhon Island, southeast of Samar on March 16, 1521.

Prior to Magellan's arrival, there were several established kingdoms and sultanates present in the Philippines, such as the Buddhist Kingdom of Butuan, the Indianized kingdoms of Tondo and Maysapan, some of which flourished from as early as the 10th century AD, as well as the Muslim Sultanates of Sulu, Maynila, and Maguindanao. Despite these kingdoms attaining complex political and social orders, as well as enjoying trade with areas now called China, India, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia, none encompassed the whole archipelago which was to become the unified Philippines of the twentieth century. The remainder of settlements were independent Barangays allied with one of the larger kingdoms.

Spanish colonization and settlement began with the arrival of Miguel López de Legazpi's expedition in 1565 and established the first permanent settlement of San Miguel on the island of Cebu, and more settlements continued northward reaching the bay of Manila on the island of Luzon in 1571. In Manila, they established a new town and thus began an era of Spanish colonization that lasted for more than three centuries.

Spanish rule unsuccessfully attempted to achieve the political unification of the whole archipelago of previously independent kingdoms and communities. Unification of the Philippines was not achieved until the twentieth century. The Spanish introduced the western European version of printing and the Gregorian calendar. The Spanish East Indies was ruled as a territory of the Viceroyalty of New Spain and administered from Mexico City, Mexico from 1565 to 1821, and administered directly from Madrid, Spain from 1821 until the end of the Spanish–American War in 1898, with a brief interlude from 1762 to 1764 when it was ruled by Great Britain. During the Spanish period, numerous towns were founded, infrastructures built, new crops and livestock introduced. The Chinese, British, Portuguese, Dutch, Japanese, and indigenous traders, complained that the Spanish reduced trade by attempting to enforce a Spanish monopoly. Spanish missionaries attempted to convert the population to Christianity and were eventually generally successful in the northern and central lowlands. They founded schools, a university, and some hospitals, principally in Manila and the largest Spanish fort settlements. Universal education and universal medical assistance were never Spanish objectives in the Philippines.

The Philippine Revolution against Spain began in April 1896, culminating two years later with a proclamation of independence and the establishment of the First Philippine Republic. However, the Treaty of Paris, at the end of the Spanish–American War, transferred control of the Philippines to the United States. This agreement was not recognized by the Philippine Government which, on June 2, 1899, proclaimed a Declaration of War against the United States. The Philippine–American War that ensued resulted in massive casualties. Philippine president Emilio Aguinaldo was captured in 1901 and the U.S. government declared the conflict officially over in 1902. The Filipino leaders, for the most part, accepted that the Americans had won, but hostilities continued and only began to decline in 1913. U.S. colonial rule of the Philippines started in 1905 with very limited local rule. Partial autonomy (commonwealth status) was granted in 1935, preparatory to a planned full

independence from the United States in 1946. Preparation for a fully sovereign state was interrupted by the Japanese occupation of the islands during World War II.

With a promising economy in the 1950s and 1960s, the Philippines in the late 1960s and early 1970s saw a rise of student activism and civil unrest against the corrupt dictatorship of President Ferdinand Marcos who declared martial law in 1972. Because of close ties between United States and President Marcos, the U.S. government continued to support Marcos even though his administration was well-known for massive corruption and extensive human rights abuse. The peaceful and bloodless People Power Revolution of 1986, however, brought about the ousting of Marcos and a return to democracy for the country.

Geography

The Philippines constitutes an archipelago of 7,107 islands with a total land area of approximately 300,000 square kilometres (116,000 square miles). It is located between 116° 40' and 126° 34' E. longitude and 4° 40' and 21° 10' N. latitude and borders the Philippine Sea on the east, the South China Sea on the west, and the Celebes Sea on the south. The island of Borneo is located a few hundred kilometres southwest and Taiwan is located directly to the north. The Moluccas and Sulawesi are located to the southsouthwest and Palau is located to the east of the islands.

Climate

The Philippines has a tropical climate and is usually hot and humid. The average yearly temperature is around 26.5°C (79.7°F). There are three recognized seasons: "Tag-init" or "Tag-araw" (the hot season or summer from March to May), "Tag-ulang" (the rainy season from June to November), and "Tag-lamig" (the cold season from December to February).

Economy

The Philippines is a newly industrialized country, with an economy anchored on agriculture but with substantial contributions from manufacturing, mining, remittances from overseas Filipinos and service industries such as tourism, and business process outsourcing. It is also listed in the roster of the "Next Eleven" economies.

Demographics

As of 2009, the Philippines is the world's 12th most populous nation, with a population of over 92 million. In 2009, 11% of Filipinos are living abroad as migrant laborers. An estimated figure of half of the population resides on the island of Luzon. Manila, the capital city, is the eleventh most populous metropolitan area in the world. Life expectancy is 71.09 years, with 74.15 years for females and 68.17 years for males. Population growth rate between 1995 to 2000 was 3.21% but has decreased to an estimated 1.95% for the 2005 to 2010 period.

Languages

Two official languages - Filipino and English. Filipino which is based on Tagalog, is the national language. English is also widely used and is the medium of instruction in higher education. Eight (8) major dialects spoken by majority of the Filipinos: Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon or Ilonggo, Bicol, Waray, Pampango, and Pangasinense. Filipino is that native language which is used nationally as the language of communication among ethnic groups. Like any living language, Filipino is in a process of development through loans from Philippine languages and non-native languages for various situations, among speakers of different social backgrounds, and for topics for conversation and scholarly discourse. There are about 76 to 78 major language groups, with more than 500 dialects.

Religions

Some 83% of Filipinos are Catholic. About 5% are Moslem. The rest are made up of smaller Christian denominations and Buddhist.

Transportation

In spite of the mountainous terrain, approximately 14 percent of the 158,810 kilometres (98,110 miles) of roads in the Philippines are paved. Buses, jeepneys, taxis, tricycles and motorcycles are available when getting around the major cities and towns. In 2007, there are about 5.53 million registered motor vehicles and an average annual registration rate of 4.55%.

Communication

The Philippines has one of the most sophisticated cellular phone industries in the world and one of the highest concentrations of users. Telecommunications are dominated by the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Company, which is also the largest company in the country. Globe Telecom, Smart Communications and Sun Cellular on the other hand, are three of its largest cellular service providers.