

FREEMASONRY IN THE PHILIPPINES

Introduction

In Masonic terms the Philippines is a success story, despite its early Spanish history. Yet much of this Spanish influence remains, particularly in the sugar plantations on the Islands where feudal concepts still remain. Filipinos suffered greatly in winning their independence from Spain, the United States of America and from Japan but they have taken the best from their various years of foreign occupation.

Education has been a Philippine priority for many years and this has helped the nation progress culturally and economically yet much of the Philippine Balance of Payments is stabilized by payments from Philippine workers overseas – particularly in Maritime services but also in many other professional services.

History of the Philippines



The history of the Philippines¹ 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, who sighted Samar on March 16, 1521 and landed on Homonhon Island southeast of Samar the next day.

Before Magellan arrived, Negrito tribes roamed the isles, but they were later supplanted by Austronesians. These groups then stratified into: hunter-gatherer tribes, warrior societies, petty plutocracies and maritime-oriented harbor principalities which eventually grew into kingdoms, rajahnates, principalities, confederations and sultanates. States such as the Indianized Rajahnate of Butuan and Cebu, the dynasty of Tondo, the august kingdoms of Maysapan and Maynila, the Confederation of Madyaas, the sinified Country of Mai, as well as the Muslim Sultanates of Sulu and Maguindanao. These small maritime states flourished from as early as the 1st Millennium. These kingdoms traded with what are now called China, India, Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, and Indonesia. The remainder of the settlements were independent Barangays allied with one of the larger nations. The “balangay” or “barangay” represented an independent community in the Archipelago ruled by a “Datu”. There were, however,

instances where a Datu of a certain barangay was aided by a council of elders in running the affairs of the barangay similar to privy councils of European monarchs. In that patriarchal society, the Datu and his family constituted the highest authority in the barangay and were therefore considered the equivalent of European monarchs. His rule was absolute. He dispensed justice and declared war against other barangays. Therefore, at the apex of pre-Spanish nobility in the Philippine Archipelago, was the Datu – the term commonly used by the Tagalogs. In Mindanao, ‘Sultan’ and ‘Rajah’ were used accordingly for the highest chief of their respective communities.

Spanish colonization and settlement began with the arrival of Miguel López de Legazpi's expedition on February 13, 1565 who established the first permanent settlement of San Miguel on the island of Cebu. The expedition continued northward reaching the bay of Manila on the island of Luzon on June 24, 1571, where they established a new town and thus began an era of Spanish colonization that lasted for more than three centuries.

¹Wikipedia

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Spanish rule achieved the political unification of almost the whole archipelago that previously had been composed of independent kingdoms and communities, by pushing back to the south the advancing Islamic forces and creating the first draft of the nation that was to be known as the Philippines. Spain also introduced Christianity, the code of law, the oldest Universities and the first public education system in Asia, the western European version of printing, the Gregorian calendar and invested heavily on all kinds of modern infrastructures, such as train networks and modern bridges.

The Spanish East Indies were ruled as part of the Viceroyalty of New Spain and administered from Mexico City from 1565 to 1821, and administered directly from Madrid, Spain from 1821 until the end of the Spanish–American War in 1898, except for a brief period of British rule from 1762 to 1764. 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 was made free for all Filipino subjects in 1863 and remained so until the end of the Spanish colonial era. This measure was at the vanguard of contemporary Asian countries, and led to an important class of educated natives, like Jose Rizal. Ironically, it was during the initial years of American occupation in the early 20th century, that Spanish literature and press flourished.

The Philippine Revolution against Spain began in August 1896, but it was largely unsuccessful until it received support from the United States, 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 insurgent First Philippine Republic Government which, on June 2, 1899, proclaimed a Declaration of War against the United States. The Philippine–American War which 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, leaving a total number of casualties on the Filipino side of more than one million dead, many of them civilians.

The U.S. had established a military government in the Philippines on August 14, 1898, following the capture of Manila. Civil government was inaugurated on July 1, 1901. An elected Philippine Assembly was convened in 1907 as the lower house of a bicameral legislature. 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.

Japan launched a surprise attack on the Clark Air Base in Pampanga on December 8, 1941, just ten hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Aerial bombardment was followed by landings of ground troops on Luzon. The defending Philippine and United States troops were under the command of General **Douglas MacArthur**. Under the pressure of superior numbers, the defending forces withdrew to the Bataan Peninsula and to the island of Corregidor at the entrance to Manila Bay.

On January 2, 1942, General **MacArthur** declared the capital city, Manila, an open city to prevent its destruction. The Philippine defence continued until the final surrender of United States-Philippine forces on the Bataan Peninsula in April 1942 and on Corregidor in May of the same year. Most of the 80,000 prisoners of war captured by the Japanese at Bataan were forced to undertake the infamous Bataan Death March to a prison camp 105 kilometres to the north. It is estimated that about 10,000 Filipinos and 1,200 Americans died before reaching their destination.

President **Quezon** and Osmeña had accompanied the troops to Corregidor and later left for the United States, where they set up a government in exile. **MacArthur** was ordered to Australia, where he started to plan for a return to the Philippines.

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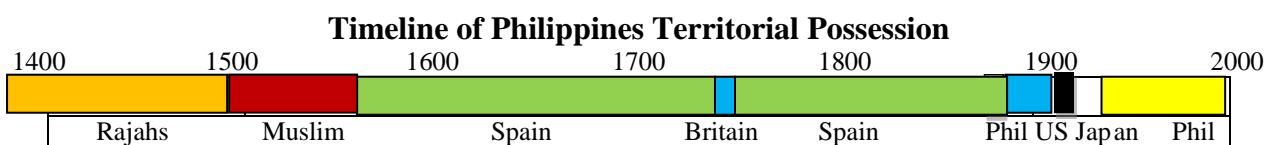
The Japanese military authorities immediately began organizing a new government structure in the Philippines and established the Philippine Executive Commission. They initially organized a Council of State, through which they directed civil affairs until October 1943, when they declared the Philippines an independent republic. The Japanese-sponsored republic headed by President **José P. Laurel** proved to be unpopular.

Japanese occupation of the Philippines was opposed by large-scale underground and guerrilla activity. The Philippine Army, as well as remnants of the U.S. Army Forces Far East, continued to fight the Japanese in a guerrilla war and were considered an auxiliary unit of the United States Army. Their effectiveness was such that by the end of the war, Japan controlled only twelve of the forty-eight provinces. One element of resistance in the Central Luzon area was furnished by the Hukbalahap, which armed some 30,000 people and extended their control over much of Luzon.

The occupation of the Philippines by Japan ended at the war's conclusion. The American army had been fighting the Philippines Campaign since October 1944, when **MacArthur's** Sixth United States Army landed on Leyte. Landings in other parts of the country had followed, and the Allies, with the Philippine Commonwealth troops, pushed toward Manila. However, fighting continued until Japan's formal surrender on 2 September 1945. The Philippines suffered great loss of life and tremendous physical destruction, especially during the Battle of Manila. An estimated 1 million Filipinos were killed, a large portion during the final months of the war, and Manila had been extensively damaged.

After the end of the war, the Treaty of Manila established the Philippine Republic as an independent nation. Elections were held in April 1946, with **Manuel Roxas** becoming the first president of the independent Republic of the Philippines.

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 President Ferdinand Marcos who declared martial law in 1972. The peaceful and bloodless People Power Revolution of 1986, however, brought about the ousting of Marcos and a return to democracy for the country. The period since then, however, has been marked by political instability and hampered economic productivity.



History of Philippine Freemasonry

What is claimed to be the first mention of the Craft in the Far East relates to two Irish masons who in 1756 were tried by the Inquisition in Manila, but being under British protection, were released with a reprimand².

The first Lodge in the Philippines³ had a Portuguese charter in 1856 followed by a German Lodge. Spain warranted 4 Lodges in the 1880s. During the early stage of Masonic history, it was almost impossible for Filipinos to join any of the Spanish lodges in the Philippines. The lodges that worked in the Philippines were all foreign founded and established for social purposes. However **Marcelo H. Del Pilar** and **Dr. Jose P. Rizal** conceived the idea of organizing Freemasonry in the Philippines. As a result, Nilad Lodge No. 144 was established in 1891 with the consent of the Grand Orient of Spain. **Marcelo H. Del Pilar**, also known in the Philippines revolutionary world as “Plaridel” earned the recognition as Father of Philippine Masonry⁴.

²The Thai Freemason website History page

³“Masonic World Guide” Henderson ISBN 0 85318 139 X

⁴Republic of the Philippines - Stamps & Postal History website - “Philippine Masonic Philately

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Following the Spanish-American war of 1898, Manila Lodge No. 342 was established in 1901 constituted by the Grand Lodge of California. This was the first lodge in the Philippines with proper recognition by a regular Grand Lodge. In a couple of years, two more lodges were formed, also under California, and these were Cavite Lodge No. 350 and Corregidor Lodge No. 386.

By 1901 the irregular Grand Orient of France also had 3 Lodges working in the country⁵.

By 1912 a number of Masonic Jurisdictions had Lodges in the Philippines as follows⁶:-

No	Lodge name	Location	Jurisdiction
342	Manila	Manila	Grand Lodge of California
350	Cavite	Cavite	
386	Corregidor	Corregidor Island	
1034	Lodge Perla del Oriente	Manila	Grand Lodge of Scotland
1106	Cebu	Cebu	

In 1912 the 3 American Lodges, applying the universally recognized laws of Masonry in the United States that whenever there are three chartered Lodges in any State or Territory in which no Grand Lodge has been established, these Lodges have the absolute right to meet in convention and organize a Grand Lodge for such State or Territory, formed the Grand Lodge of the Philippine Islands

There were a number of Lodges working under a Regional Grand Lodge of the Grand Orient of Spain which was considered to be irregular by the American and Scottish Grand Lodges which caused some hesitation in the formation of a combined Grand Lodge. However reason prevailed and these difficulties were overcome so that the Grand Lodge of the Philippine Islands and the Regional Grand Lodge of the Grand Orient of Spain merged to become the Grand Lodge of the Philippines in 1917 with **Manual Quezon** as Grand Master and sponsored by the Grand Lodge of California. At its formation, in addition to the above Lodges, it had 27 other Lodges as follows:-

No	Lodge name	No	Lodge name	No	Lodge name
12	Nilad	21	Dapitan	30	Mactan
13	Walana	22	Rizal Manila	31	Magdalo
14	Dalisay	23	Solidaridad	32	Martires
15	Pilar	24	Banahaw	33	Isarog
16	Sinukuan	25	Malinao	34	Lincoln
17	Bagong Buhay	26	Pinagsabitan	35	Batangas
18	Araw	27	Bagumbayan	36	La Regeneracion
19	Silanganan	28	Balintawak	37	Kalilayan
20	Rizal Lopez	29	Zapote	38	Bulusan

Today it has 271 Lodges working in all parts of the country as well as 3 Lodges in Guam, 2 in Japan, 1 in South Korea and 1 in the Marianas⁷. It has almost 17,000 members and is recognized by the United Grand Lodge of England.

There is also The Deputy Sovereign Grand Lodge Of the Philippine Archipelago In America - formerly "The Regional Philippine Grand Lodge in America" based in Seattle, Washington working under the auspices of "Grand Orient of Spain", which is a member of the Universal League of Free Masons, Geneva, Switzerland and International Masonic Alliance, Paris, France, which are not recognized by the United Grand Lodge of England

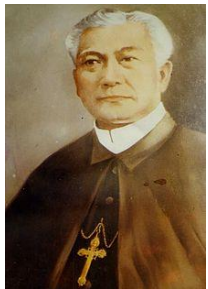
⁵Henderson op cit

⁶ "Organization Of Grand Lodge Of Philippines-1912" Excerpt from " a Century of dedicatedMmasonic service"

⁷Website of the Grand Lodge of the Philippines

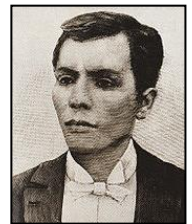
Filipino Freemasons

José Abad Santos y Basco (1886–1942) was the fifth Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippines and served as Acting President of the Philippines during World War II. He was executed by Japanese forces during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines.



Gregorio Aglipay⁸ was the Supreme Bishop of the Philippine Independent Church. In 1898, Archbishop Bernardino Nozaleda asked **Aglipay** to confront the revolutionary leaders, offering them a level of autonomy for the Philippines if they would end the rebellion. When **Aglipay** returned to Manila and discovered that the Americans had attacked, he joined the revolution and was appointed Military Vicar General of the revolutionaries. **Aglipay** sent a letter to various clergy asking them to ask the Pope to appoint Filipinos in all local church positions for which he was excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church. In 1902, with the Philippines now a territory of the United States, **Isabelo de los Reyes** was working towards the formation of a Filipino national church, and suggested that a Church independent of Rome with **Aglipay** as its Supreme Bishop be established.

Andrés Bonifacio y de Castro (1863–1897) was a Filipino nationalist and revolutionary. He was a founder and later supreme leader of the *Katipunan* movement which sought the independence of the Philippines from Spanish colonial rule and started the Philippine Revolution. He is considered a national hero of the Philippines, and is also considered by some Filipino historians to be the first President, but he is not officially recognized as such. He was a member of Taliba Lodge No. 165 under the Spanish Grand Lodge.



Manuel Camus (1875-1949) was Philippine Senator and a member of Zetland in the East Lodge. He was a lawyer and completed his education in Singapore and returned to the Philippines in 1899 to serve as an interpreter and translator for the Provost Marshal General of the United States Army.



José P. Laurel (1891-1959) was President of the Japanese-Sponsored Philippines during World War II, from 1943 to 1945. Since the administration of President Diosdado Macapagal, **Laurel** has been recognized as a legitimate president of the Philippines. **President Laurel** was a member of in Batangas Lodge No. 383, under the Grand Lodge of the Philippines, and served as a Junior Warden.

Graciano López Jaena (December 18, 1856-January 20, 1896) was a Filipino journalist, orator, and revolutionary from Iloilo, well known for his written work, *La Solidaridad*. Philippine historians regard **López Jaena**, along with **Marcelo H. del Pilar** and **José Rizal**, as the triumvirate of Filipino propagandists. Of these three ilustrados, **López Jaena** was the first to arrive and may have founded the genesis of the Propaganda Movement. He was Worshipful Master at Logia Povernir No. 2.



Juan Luna y Novicio (1857—1899) was an Ilocano Filipino painter, sculptor and a political activist of the Philippine Revolution during the late 19th century. He became one of the first recognized Philippine artists. His won the gold medal in the 1884 Madrid Exposition of Fine Arts. Regarded for work done in the manner of the Spanish and French academies of his time, **Luna** painted literary and historical scenes, some with an underscore of political commentary. His allegorical works were inspired with classical balance, and often showed figures in theatrical poses. He was raised in Paris, France, under the auspices of Lodge Solidaridad 53.

⁸Wikipedia

Camilo Osías (1889-1976) was a Filipino politician. He studied at the University of Chicago in 1906 and 1907. He returned to the Philippine Islands and entered education politics, eventually becoming President of the National University (1921–1936). Then he entered national politics. He was elected a member of the Philippine Senate in 1925, and served twice as President of the Senate of the Philippines.



Rafael Palma, Filipino politician, writer, educator and fourth President of the University of the Philippines. He was a member of Bagong Buhay Lodge No. 291 and Sinukuan Lodge No. 16 and in 1920 became Grand Master of the unified Grand Lodge of the Philippine Islands.



Marcelo H. del Pilar (1850-1896) was a Filipino writer, reformer, journalist, and leader of the Philippine Revolution. He is considered as the "Father of Philippine Masonry" and was initiated in Spain in 1889. A master polemicist in both the Tagalog and Spanish languages, he helped the Propaganda Movement through his speeches and liberal writings on the plight of the Filipinos as a result of the abuses of the Spanish friars in the country. He was the editor and co-publisher of "The Solidarity", a newspaper advocating reforms

for the Philippines.

Reynato Puno (1940-) was Chief Justice of the Philippines, an active member of Hiram Lodge No. 88, and the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the Philippines. Appointed on December 8, 2006 by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, he was the 22nd person to serve as Chief Justice. Puno had initially been appointed to the Supreme Court as an Associate Justice on June 28, 1993.



Manuel L. Quezon (1878-1944) was the first president of the Commonwealth of the Philippines under U.S. occupation rule in the early period of the 20th century. He was raised in Sinukuan Lodge No. 272 and became the first Filipino Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of the Philippine Islands that was established in 1917. He was the first Filipino to head a government of the Philippines and is considered by most Filipinos to have been the second president of the Philippines, after Emilio Aguinaldo. He was a Freemason most of his life. He was most instrumental, along with other Filipino and American Masons, in the unification of Filipino and American Lodges on February 13, 1917. Due to the influence of his wife, Quezon resigned from Masonry on September 17, 1930. After his death, the Catholic Church claimed he had renounced Masonry. However, seven years after his resignation, Quezon made this statement: *"I didn't and never will renounce Masonry. There is a form which those returning to the Church are supposed to sign but I refused to sign it. Instead, I wrote the Archbishop a personal note saying that I understand that I could not be readmitted to the Roman Catholic Church so long as I remained a Mason, and, for that reason I was resigning from Masonry but I never renounced Masonry"*.



José Protacio Rizal Mercado y Alonso Realonda (1861-1896) was a polymath and a National Hero of the Philippines. He was a member of Lodge Solidaridad 53 in Madrid, Spain and was made an honorary Worshipful Master of Nilad Lodge No. 144 in 1892. He was the most prominent advocate for reform in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial era and is regarded as the foremost Filipino patriot. His execution by the Spanish in 1896, a date marked annually as *Rizal Day*, a Philippine national holiday, was one of the causes of the Philippine Revolution. He attended the University of Paris and earned a second doctorate at the University of Heidelberg. Rizal was a polyglot conversant in twenty-two languages. He was a prolific poet, essayist, diarist, correspondent, and novelist. He was a devoted Mason, and, together with **Marcelo H. del Pilar** and other active Filipino Masons abroad, worked judiciously hard for the successful implantation of the seeds of Freemasonry in Philippine soil. He wrote two books, "Noli Me Tangere" and "El Filibusterismo", through which he denounced and exposed fearlessly the abuses and corruption of the friars and the Spanish officials in the Philippines.



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Manuel Acuña Roxas (1892–1948) was the first president of the independent Third Republic of the Philippines and fifth president overall. He served as president from the granting of independence in 1946 until his abrupt death in 1948. **Roxas** was a Past Master of Acacia Lodge No. 13. He was a Master of Makawiwild Lodge No. 55 of Capiz.

Mariano Ponce (1863-1918) was initiated in Madrid and became Secretary of Lodge Revolucion and Lodge Solidaridad. He also became a 33° A&AR mason under the auspices of the Grand Orient of Spain. He was a Filipino physician, writer, and active member of the Propaganda Movement. Among his significant works was *Efemerides Filipinas*, a column on historical events in the Philippines. He wrote *Ang Wika at Lahi* (1917), a discussion on the importance of a national language. He served as Bulacan's representative to the National Assembly.



Nicanor Abelardo (1893-1934) was a Filipino composer, who was raised in Luzon Lodge No. 57. He composed over a hundred of Kundiman songs, especially before the Second World War.



Isabelo Florentino De Los Reyes, Sr. (1864–1938) was a prominent Filipino politician, writer and labor activist in the 19th and 20th centuries. He was the founder of the Aglipayan Church, an independent Philippine national church. For his writings and activism with labor unions, he was called the Father of Filipino Socialism. While living and working in Madrid, he was influenced by the writings of European socialists and Marxists. Returning to the Philippines in 1901, he founded the first labor union in the country. He also was active in seeking independence from the United States and served in the Philippine Senate.

Quintín B. Paredes (1884-1973) was a Filipino lawyer, politician, and statesman. He was raised in Sinukuan Lodge No. 16, became its Worshipful Master in 1920 and Grand Master in 1922.



Galicano Apacible (1864–1949) was a Philippine politician. A cousin to **Jose Rizal**, he co-founded La Solidaridad and Nacionalista Party. He held the office of Governor of Batangas and was the representative of the first District of Batangas from 1909 to 1916. He is known for his piece *To the American People, an Appeal*, in which he tries to plead with the people of the United States to pressure its government not to invade his newly independent country.



On January 17, 1936, Most Worshipful Brother **Samuel R. Hawthorne**, Grandmaster of the Most Worshipful Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the Philippines, made **Douglas MacArthur** "Mason at Sight". He affiliated with Manila Lodge No. 1 and received the 32nd degree, Manila Scottish Rite in same year. In 1937, he was elected Knight Commander of the Court of Honor. When the Supreme Council of the Philippines was formed, he became a member of the Council and its Grand Orator⁹.

Apolinario Mabini was a member of Lodge Balagtas; one of the organizers and Grand Orator of the Regional Grand Council (Grand Orient of Spain). He is also known as the Sublime Paralytic, and, Brains of the Revolution. He was also private counsellor to Emilio Aguinaldo, President of the Philippine Revolutionary Government. He also served as one of the cabinet members under Aguinaldo and as such, wrote the important decrees issued by Aguinaldo.



⁹Republic of the Philippines - Stamps & Postal History website - "Philippine Masonic Philately"



Charles Augustus Lindbergh (1902–1974) (nicknamed "Slim", "Lucky Lindy", and "The Lone Eagle") was an American aviator, author, inventor, explorer, and social activist. He is honoured in the Philippines for his work in helping to preserve the Tasadays, a tribe in Southern Philippines, perhaps the last of the aborigines.

Lope K. Santos (1879–1963) was a Filipino Tagalog language writer and former senator of the Philippines. He is best known for his 1906 socialist novel, "*Banaag at Sikat*" and to his contributions for the development of Filipino grammar and Tagalog orthography. He received Bachelor of Arts (Law) degree in 1912. He wrote the first socialist-oriented book in the Philippines which expounded principles of socialism and seek labor reforms from the government. In early 1910s, he started his campaign on promoting a "national language for the Philippines". In 1910, he was elected as governor of the province of Rizal and later was elected to the 5th Philippine Legislature as senator of the twelfth senatorial district representing provinces having a majority of non-Christian population. He was the first Worshipful Master of Magat Lodge No. 68 in Bayombong, Nueva Vizcaya.

Emilio Aguinaldo y Famy (1869–1964) was a Filipino general, politician, and independence leader. He played an instrumental role during the Philippines' revolution against Spain, and the subsequent Philippine-American War of Philippine Independence that resisted American occupation. **Aguinaldo** became the Philippines' first President. He was also the youngest (at age 29) to have become the country's president, the longest-lived president (having survived to age 94) and the president to have outlived the most number of successors.



Conclusions

There can be no doubt that Freemasons were in the forefront of Philippine independence movements from Spain and later from the United States of America and that they helped to form the stable Governments of this nation, a people that carried out the world's first bloodless revolution to topple the Marcos autocracy in the 1980s.

Freemasonry in the Philippines itself is unique in several ways. It flourishes in a nation that is strongly Christian with a Roman Catholic background although many of the Churches are separated from Rome into an independent Church, due mainly to Spain's historic tardiness or unwillingness to appoint sufficient local and indigenous priests. As in Mexico, even people with pure Spanish blood but born in the Philippines were not given the same status and opportunities as those born in Spain, who, if in the Church or Army, were given special privileges¹⁰.

Whereas the history of Freemasonry in other Asian countries has been largely due to expatriates, Philippine Freemasonry has been largely due to indigenous Filipinos some of whom were initiated in Spain, where Freemasonry was suppressed. While there are many Japanese nationals who are Freemasons in Japan and many indigenous Malaysians in Malaysian Lodges all of their earlier Lodges, even in Singapore, were started by expatriates and most still owe allegiance to overseas Masonic Jurisdictions. The Grand Lodge of the Philippines was the first national Grand Lodge in South East Asia and sponsored the Grand Lodge of Japan after establishing several Lodges there. Furthermore it was formed by the fusion of a small number of recognized US Lodges and a larger number of Lodges which may continue to have been isolated from mainstream Freemasonry, to the great credit of its Filipino members and the warm fraternal relations that exist between the Philippines and the United States of America.

¹⁰ Read Mitchener "*The Eagle and the Raven*" for an account of these privileges ISBN 0 7493 1415 X