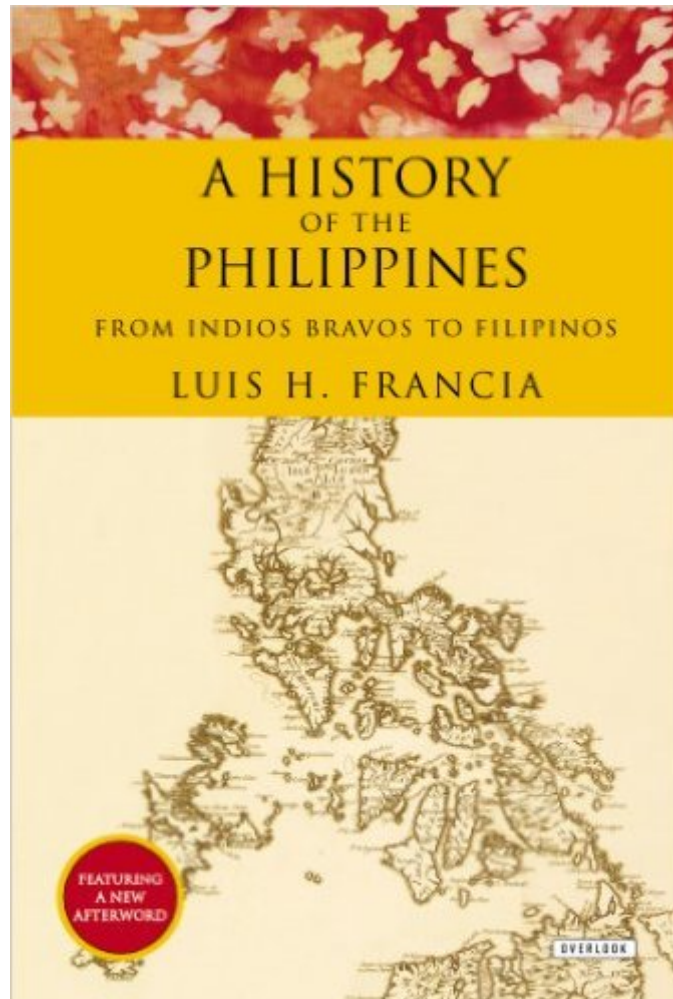


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History Of The Philippines: From Indios Bravos To Filipinos



Synopsis

Over three million Filipino Americans now live in the US, but popular histories of this rich, complicated nation are still rare. From ancient Malay settlements to Spanish colonization, the American occupation and beyond, *A History of the Philippines* recasts various Philippine narratives with an eye for the layers of colonial and post-colonial history that have created this diverse and fascinating population. *A History of the Philippines* begins with the pre-Westernized Philippines in the 16th century and continues through the 1899 Philippine-American War, the nation's relationship with the United States's controlling presence, culminating with its independence in 1946 and two ongoing insurgencies, one Islamic and one Communist. Luis H. Francia creates an illuminating portrait that offers the reader valuable insights into the heart and soul of the modern Filipino, laying bare the multicultural, multiracial society of contemporary times.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Francia's book provides an historical overview of the Philippine archipelago and people from pre-colonial times to 2009. The book is a quick read and can serve as a starting point for anyone interested in learning about Philippine History. However, I found the book to have a number of flaws. To begin with, the author is not a historian. He is a professor of creative writing and an exponent of "Tagalog Culture", and he occasionally injects his own opinion into the work. Second, the book is sometimes difficult to read. Between all the adjectives and clauses Francia likes to pack into his sentences, the subjects sometimes get lost and you have no idea what he is talking about. Thirdly, the book is very anti Western and displays sympathy for the Chinese, Muslims and even

Japanese. Even though Francia acknowledges that the Japanese were brutal imperialists, he does not give their atrocities the same kind of attention that he gives the Americans or Spanish. Finally, sometimes the writing is muddled or arbitrary. Figures are often very quickly introduced, poorly developed, and then taken out of the book. I think one of the best examples of this are the two paragraphs at the end of chapter 4 about General Yamashita, the commander of Japanese forces in the Philippines during WWII. These paragraphs come at the end of the chapter and seem very out of place. Also, I think they were put in there to add some anti American sentiment to the section. Another good example of this is his section on Marcos before Martial Law. That short section is almost entirely about Imelda. You get no real sense of who Ferdinand was at all. I would say the real redeeming grace of this book is its bibliography and section on current history.

Having read the awful history of the Philippines by Kathleen Nadeau, then the excellent one by Stanley Karnow, I decided to finish with this one. Unsurprisingly, it turned out to fall somewhere in the middle: more fleshed-out and better written than Nadeau, but not up to the caliber of Karnow. It's a fairly standard history and there's not really that much to say. Francia structures his book in a way that suggests it's meant to be read through, but in general it's scholarly and dry. All in all the coverage is fairly balanced, although he seems to emphasize the late 1800s, recent history (Marcos onward) and the pre-colonial era (compared to other histories, anyway). The American period is comparatively slighted. One trend - which might explain this coverage - is a hint of nationalism and overt anti-American bias. It's most clear in the introduction, when Francia states that he wrote the book as a way of paying homage to the early Filipino nationalists, but he definitely seems to admire the nationalists of the late 1800s and begrudge the US. As another reviewer notes, American atrocities are recounted, while Japanese ones are minimized. The overbearing neo-imperialism America displayed towards the independent Philippines is worth laying bare, but it sort of bothered me that the achievements of America's regime were ignored; instead, Francia focuses on the struggle for independence and the economic dependence the Philippines was hooked into. In common with the other historians, Francia makes clear that the Philippines' long history of colonialism has created a very conservative socioeconomic system privileging a Westernized elite and screwing over the peasant, often landless majority.

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