



Historical Background of Palawan, PHILIPPINES

Archeological findings indicate that the first Filipino once lived in the Tabon Caves complex, Quezon, Palawan. A Tiabla Bone of a man and a skull cap of a woman unearthed in 1962, carbonated to be 47,000 and 16,000 years old respectively, bore testimony to this, thus gave credit to the caves as “The Cradle of Philippine Civilization.”

Studies showed that there came three waves of migration from Asia to Palawan passing through the land bridges of Balabac, in the following order: The Pgyimies (Aetas/Negritos); the Indonesians – to this group belong the Tagbanuwas; and the Malays.

Historical records, also show that long before Spaniards discover the Philippines in 1521, inhabitants of Palawan were already doing commerce with ancient Chinese traders, particularly in the coastal areas of Calamianes. This is evidenced by the sizeable amount of Chinese porcelains, jars and other relics found in Palawan today.

Palawan was then known as the Province of Calamianes, with Taytay as its capital. Poor and inadequate transportation and communications however, made governance arduous – thus in 1859 the Province was divided into two, CASTILLA and ASTURIAS. “Castilla” included Cuyo, Taytay, Calamian, Busuanga and adjacent islands – with Taytay as its capital. “Asturias” comprised all municipalities south of Taytay down to Balabac. Puerto Princesa was its capital.

Castilla and Asturias were to be short-lived however. In 1862 a royal decree again divided Palawan into two Provinces, “Calamianes” and “Paragua”. To the former was added Bacuit. And to encourage migrants to settle in these Provinces, no taxes were levied for a period of ten years. In 1873, the capital of PARAGUA was transferred from Taytay to Cuyo.

The Peace Treaty between the Spain and United States of America in 1898 gave way to American Regime. In 1901, a Military Government was established with Major John Brown as Lieutenant Governor. Eventually in June 23, 1902 the American established the Civil Government of Paragua with Major J. Brown as the appointed Governor. In 1905 pursuant to Act No. 1363 of the Philippine Commission, the name PARAGUA was changed to PALAWAN and the capital was transferred from Cuyo to Puerto Princesa.

American governance laid emphasis on Education, Agriculture, Medical Assistance, and Right of Tribal Minorities were also considered. Because of its democratic ways and enlightened policies, Americans succeeded in uniting the people.

At the outbreak of World War II, Japanese Imperial Forces occupied Palawan on May 18, 1942. They established garrisons in Coron, Puerto Princesa and Iwahig. Consequently guerilla were formed in three sectors led by Capt. Carlos Amores in Calamianes, Dr. Higinio Mendoza, Sr. (Governor elect 1931-1937) in the Mainland and Emilio Tumbaga in Brooke’s Point. Palawan was liberated in 1945.

The name Palawan was believed to come from Chinese word “PA-LAO-YU” meaning “The Land of Beautiful Safe Harbor” and a Spanish word PARAGUA which likens the shape of the island to a closed umbrella.