



## TITLE

# MANILA MEN: FIRST ARRIVAL OF ASIANS IN AMERICA - 1763 (FILIPINO SLAVES ON SPANISH SHIP)



GRADE LEVEL: HIGH SCHOOL

**SUBJECT:** History

**THEME:** Identity and Culture, Immigration, International Affairs, Labor

**STANDARDS:** UCLA Public History Standards: Era 2: Colonization and Settlement:: Standards 1, 2: Why Europeans were attracted to America; brought enslaved people; mixing of peoples, cultures, religions reshaping life in the Americas.

## OBJECTIVES:

### Students will be able to:

- Explain what the Manila Galleon trade was that existed between the Mexican town of Acapulco and Manila, the capital of Philippines
- Connect the trade to the first settlement by Asians in the swamps of Louisiana, specifically Saint Malo
- Explore how the rule of the Spanish Empire in the New World is linked to the arrival of Asians in America.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- Why is it important that we learn about early settlers into the Americas besides those from Europe?

## LESSON DURATION:

2 -3 Class Periods



**CREDIT AUTHOR AND CONTACT:**

GARIMA SHARMA, TING-YI OEI

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## ASSESSMENT:

1. To begin the lesson, divide the class into groups of three or four. Each group will need access to a computer with internet connection for this part of the lesson. Once the groups have been formed, introduce a short activity to the students:

- Share these phrases with the students – Acapulco, 1763; Manila Galleon; Saint Malo; Manila men.
- Ask students to conduct a quick research online to find out the links between these phrases, place the words in the right logical order, write a few sentences (2-4 max) using all phrases to explain how they're related.
- Give students about 20 minutes to do the research and prepare the short write-up.

*(Ideal responses should include the following: The Spanish Empire had a trading route between Manila in Philippines and Acapulco in Mexico (part of New World at the time), called the Manila Galleon. The ships also carried slaves from the Philippines along with other trading items. It is believed some slaves escaped from one of these ships, and eventually made their way to Louisiana, and eventually settled in a place called Saint Malo. The presence of these men, who became known as Manila men, has been recorded as early as 1763.)*

2. Map work. Share the link for Google Maps: <http://maps.google.com> and ask students to locate Manila in the Philippines, Acapulco in Mexico, and Saint Malo in Louisiana on the map.

- Using an outline map of the world, have students trace possible shipping routes for the Manila Galleon. This can be an opportunity for students to expand their understanding of basic geography concepts and identification of specific places.
- Why was the Spanish Empire bringing slaves from the Philippines to the New World? (links to prior knowledge) (15 minutes)

3. Have students discuss the following questions: Why would slaves want to escape from the Manila Galleon ships? Why do you think the Filipino slaves, called Manila Men, settled in Saint Malo? *(Responses should reflect that slaves often sought to escape to achieve freedom; that their journey had been dangerous where their lives mattered little; and once escaped they would venture to places where they likely would not be found.)* (5 minutes)

4. Show photos of illustrations of their settlements, Google digitized edition of original Harper's Weekly article p196-199 using a document interpretation tool such as <https://www.docsteach.org/resources/document-analysis>. (20 minutes)

5. Using excerpts taken from the article in from the Harper's Weekly (1883) by Lacfcadio Hearn, St Malo by Lacfcadio Hearn, have students analyze the passages to create a picture of the land, the community, and its culture as described by Hearn. See worksheet at end of lesson. Note: preparation for this activity should include a discussion of the importance of being considerate and respectful in the language both students and teachers use in discussing the article. Students should also be reminded that the article is from 1883 and, therefore, reflective of views and attitudes of the time





### REFLECTION:

Ask students to consider what they have learned in this lesson and how it fits into their overall understanding of the settlement of America. Ask students to consider: Why were Filipinos brought to the Americas as slaves? How did the settlement of these Filipino slaves in Louisiana affect the history, culture, and economy for Louisiana and all of the US.

*Student responses might include observations that Filipinos were brought here and elsewhere in the Americas for the same reason Africans were enslaved - to do the hard labor. Filipino-Americans living in Louisiana participated in the American Revolution; played an important role in America's victory in New Orleans in the War of 1812, under Andrew Jackson; participated in the growth of the fishing and shrimp industry in Louisiana; added their imprint on the multicultural growth of New Orleans and Louisiana.*

Go back to the essential question: how important is it to include this history into the curriculum? (15 minutes)

### RESOURCES:

History.com

[The First Asian American Settlement Was Established by Filipino Fishermen - HISTORY](#)

Filipino Louisiana:

<https://filipinola.com>

Brochure created by Filipino La, from Louisiana

Harper's Weekly, v. 27: 31 Mar. 1883.

[St Malo by Lacfadio Hearn](#)

[Google digitized edition of original Harper's Weekly article p196-199](#)

Blog Post by a self-identified historian, blogger, copywriter based in Cebu, the Philippines

[The Forgotten Story of the Manila Men](#)



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Excerpts taken from:

[St Malo by Lafcadio Hearn](#)

In pairs or groups of three, have students capture the essence of one of the excerpts below using their own words. Take 5 minutes for this part of the exercise. Then, have students read out their passage to the whole group followed by their brief explanation of what their passage was about.

1. For nearly 50 years there has existed in the southeastern swamplands of Louisiana a certain strange settlement of Malay fishermen – Tagalas from the Philippine Islands. The place of their *lacustrine* village (see Notes below) is not precisely mentioned upon maps, and the world in general ignored until a few days ago the bare fact of their amphibious existence. Even the United States mail service has never found a way thither, and even the great city of New Orleans, less than a hundred miles distant, the people were better informed about the Carboniferous Era than the swampy affairs of the Manila village.
2. Out of the shuddering reeds and *banneretted grass* (see Notes below) on either side rise the fantastic houses of the Malay fishermen, posed upon slender supports above the marsh, like cranes or bitterns watching for scaly prey. Hard by the slimy mouth of the bayou extends a strange wharf, as ruined and rotted and unearthly as the timbers of the spectral ship in the “Rime of the Ancient Mariner.” Odd craft huddle together beside it, fishing-nets make cobwebby drapery about the skeleton timber-work. Green are the banks, green the water is, green also with fungi every beam and plank and board and shingle of the houses upon stilts. All are built in true Manila style, with immense hat shaped eaves and balconies, but in wood; for it had been found that palmetto and woven cane could not withstand the violence of the climate. Nevertheless, this wood had to be shipped to the bayou from a considerable distance, for large trees do not grow in the salty swamp. The highest point of land... is only six inches above low-water mark, and the men who built those houses were compelled to stand upon ladders, or other wood frame-work, while driving down the piles, lest the quagmire should swallow them up.
3. Here is the home of the mosquito, and every window throughout all the marsh country must be closed with wire netting. At sundown the insects rise like a thick fog over the lowland; in the darkness their presence is signaled by a sound like the boiling of innumerable caldrons. Worse than these are the great green-headed tapponoes (see Notes below), dreaded by the fishermen. Sand-flies attack the colonists in warm weather; fleas are insolent at all hours; spiders of immense growth rival the net-weavers of Saint Malo, and hang their webs from the timbers side by side with seines and fishing-tackle. Wood-worms are busy undermining the supports of the dwellings, and wood-ticks attack the beams and joistings. A marvelous variety of creatures haunt the surrounding swamp — reptiles, insects, and birds. The *prie-deau* — “pray-god” — utters its soprano note; water-hens and plovers call across the marsh.

4. Such is the land; its human inhabitants are not less strange, wild, picturesque. Most of them are cinnamon-colored men; a few are glossily yellow, like that bronze into which a small proportion of gold is worked by the molder. Their features are irregular without being actually repulsive; some have the cheek-bones very prominent and the eyes of several are set slightly aslant. The hair is generally intensely black and straight, but with some individuals it is curly and browner. In Manila there are several varieties of the Malay race, and these Louisiana settlers represent more than one type. None of them appeared tall; the greater number were under-sized, but all well knit, and supple as fresh-water eels. Their hands and feet were small; their movements quick and easy, but sailorly likewise, as of men accustomed to walk upon rocking decks in rough weather. They speak the Spanish language; and a Malay dialect is also used among them. There is only one white man in the settlement — the ship-carpenter, whom all the Malays address as "Maestro." He has learned to speak their Oriental dialect, and has conferred upon several the sacrament of baptism according to the Catholic rite; for some of these men were not Christians at the time of their advent into Louisiana. There is but one black man in this lake village — a Portuguese Negro, perhaps a Brazilian maroon.
5. Justice within the colony itself, however, is of a curiously primitive kind; for there are neither magistrates nor sheriffs, neither prisons nor police. Although the region is included within the parish of St. Bernard, no Louisiana official has ever visited it; never has the tax-gatherer attempted to wend thither his unwelcome way. In the busy season a hundred fierce men are gathered together in this waste and watery place, and these must be a law unto themselves. If a really grave quarrel arises, the trouble is submitted to the arbitration of the oldest Malay in the colony, Padre Carpio, and his decisions are usually accepted without a murmur.
6. There is no woman in the settlement, nor has the treble of a female voice been heard along the bayou for many a long year. Men who have families keep them at New Orleans, or at Proctorville, or at La Chinche; it would seem cruel to ask any woman to dwell in such desolation, without comfort and without protection, during the long absence of the fishing-boats. Only two instances of a woman dwelling there are preserved, like beloved traditions, in the memory of the inhabitants. The first of these departed upon her husband's death; the second left the village after a desperate attempt had been made to murder her spouse.
7. The most intelligent person in Saint Malo is a Malay half-breed, Valentine. He is an attractive figure, a supple dwarfish lad almost as broad as tall, brown as old copper, with a singularly bright eye. He was educated in the great city, but actually abandoned a fine situation in the office of a judge to return to his swarthy father in the weird swamps. The old man is still there — Thomas de los Santos. He married a white woman, by whom he had two children, this boy and a daughter, Winnie, who is dead. Valentine is the best perogue oarsman in the settlement, and a boat bears his name. But opposite the house of Thomas de los Santos rides another graceful boat, rarely used, and whitely christened with the name of the dead Winnie.

8. It is at Hilario's great *casa* that the Manila men pass stormy evenings, playing monte or a species of Spanish keno. when the *cantador*, (the caller) sings out the numbers, he always accompanies the annunciation with some rude poetry characteristic of fisher life or Catholic faith:

Pareja doe uno;  
Dos piquetes de rivero —  
(*a pair of one (11); the two stakes to which the fish-car is fastened.*)

Número cuatro;  
La casa del gato —  
(*number 4; the cat's house.*)

9. There is no liquor in the settlement, and these hardy fishers and alligator-hunters seem none of the worse therefore. Their flesh is as hard as oarwood, and sickness rarely affect them, although they know little of comfort, and live largely upon raw fish, seasoned with vinegar and oil. There is but one chimney — wooden structure — in the village, fires are hardly ever lit, and in the winter the cold and damp would soon undermine feeble constitutions.

#### Notes

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1. **Lacustrine**. Having to do with a lake.
2. **Banneretted grass**. Grass that looks like a small banner.
3. **Tappanoes**. Horse flies. — *Origin uncertain*
4. **Spanish Beard**. Early French explorers called Spanish moss *Barbe Espagnol*, or Spanish Beard.
5. **Columbaria**. A *columbarium* is a building like a mausoleum, but it holds urns with ashes rather than bodies.