

Barong Tagalog

In the Philippines a modern, westernized style of dressing is common everywhere. In the urban areas as well as in the rural areas. For a long time already. Happily, it doesn't mean that it is impossible to see typical Filipino dress.

At ceremonies, festivals and all other kind of important meetings, you will be able to see some men wearing the Barong Tagalog.

Barong Tagalog is an upper garment and known as the formal men's wear of the Philippines.

The Barong Tagalog has a long tradition of more than four centuries. The look as well as the meaning of the dress have evolved throughout four centuries. The special traditional features remained untouched; the dress is thin and transparent (with a shirt under it), has decoration and one will wear the barong tagalog 'tucked out'.



The meaning of the name "Barong Tagalog"

- 'Baro' = word for 'dress'
- 'Barong' = means 'dress of'
- 'Baro ng Tagalog' = 'dress of the Tagalog'

The Tagalog: people that lived on the island of Luzon, already a very long time before the Spaniards arrived on Luzon.



The origin of the specific features of the Barong Tagalog

Long time before the Spaniards arrived in the Philippine archipelago, the Tagalog people on the northern island of Luzon, wore already a dress, that can be seen as the origin of the Barong Tagalog. The dress reached slightly below the waist, was colourless and had an opening in the front. The dress was, as the picture shows, tucked out.

Barong Tagalog

explanations for the specific features

Why is it that the barong is tucked out?

There is more than one explanation!

One explanation says that it is because of the tropical climate, which favours clothes that are tucked out. However, the historical explanation says that the Barong Tagalog traces its roots in the Spanish-colonial era (1565-1898).



The roots of the Barong Tagalog

From the beginning of the Spanish rule in the Philippine archipelago, the Spanish rulers demanded the Filipino men to wear the Barong Tagalog. The Spaniards wanted to make the differences between themselves and the 'natives' visible by the dress.

Therefore they prohibited to tuck the barong under the waistband. That was the mark of the inferior status of the natives. Next to that, the cloth material should be transparent. That should make it impossible to hide any weapon that



could be used against the Spanish rulers. Furthermore, it was forbidden to have any pockets in the barong. This had to prevent any thievery.

Even at the time that some Filipinos became successful business men or successful in agricultural activities, these lucky and more important middle class men had to wear the Barong Tagalog just as the Spanish rulers demanded. In these Spanish period, the new middle class started to put more attention to the design of the barong. The front of the barong showed more and more a hand-work design. It was the beginning of becoming a symbol of resistance to colonization.

Pictures: Kasal.com

Details of a barong tagalog



Pictures of the details: MyBarong.com
Click to enlarge!



The Barong Tagalog evolved to 'the national dress'!

The Barong Tagalog gained his real 'national prestige' after president Quezon, the first Filipino president, declared the Barong Tagalog "the National dress". So, the Barong Tagalog evolved from the pre-Hispanic became officially a symbol of the Filipinos' resistance to colonization!

The Barong Tagalog week

In 1975 The former president Ferdinand Marcos issued a decree proclaiming an official " Barong Tagalog Week " (June 5 - 11). It was the incentive to a wider use of the Barong Tagalog.



Bridegrooms and the Barong Tagalog

In the Philippines of today, many Filipinos will wear the Barong Tagalog at important events. It became a custom for bridegrooms to wear the long-sleeved, embroidered Barong Tagalog.

Polo Barong

After the introduction of the short-sleeved variety, the "Polo Barong", the barong dress became less formal than in the past. In the last 25 years the polo version became the all-around

Ref.: <http://www.philippines.hvu.nl/clothes1.htm>