

GLORIOUS PAST OF MALAYANS

by

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PAN-MALAYAN is a term that immediately grips the mind and fires the imagination. It is thought-provoking, and it conjures up a vision in which a great drama unfolds itself from the distant past, at times glorious with heroic and epic grandeur, at other times

of going from place to place—the work of a tourist—begins to produce discouragements and dismays!

"Oh, believe me that if we do not succeed in becoming independent, it is because we do not deserve it: because there is no energy in our men, nor patriotic virtue in our women. Hence I need your cooperation, for women can do much.

"Tell to our fellowmen that Independence cannot be obtained from roses with comfort and without risk. Independence is attained after a period of fighting, of sufferings, sacrifices, afflictions and the surge of blood. If our fellowmen there do not have the courage to go to the battlefield to fight, they should at least have the virtue to be silent, inasmuch as in living in Manila they want to say that they recognize American sovereignty, because he who is not with us is against us, and are consequently, traitors.

"I do not demand compliance with oaths, cries and the unfurling of national colours in times of peace where everything was quiet and the table was ready. I would only want a bit of consistency, somewhat reasonable, that demonstrates that we are neither children nor cowards.

"Good-bye, Conchita! We find more pleasure here than there and we know how to be consistent with our ideals.

"Know that your servant is attentive to you,

A. LUNA"

(The foregoing letter is a reprint from the English version by Julio Villamor of Col. Juan Villamor's book: "GENERAL D. ANTONIO LUNA Y NOVICIO," pp. 64-66.)

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radiant with the romance and exquisite beauty of tropical seas and skies, with the sweet cadence and rhythm of Oriental music, song and dance; and again solemn and spiritual with mystic sublimity of philosophy and religion.

You have asked me to speak on Malayan history and culture. It is a subject far beyond my very limited powers and meager preparation. Volumes of fascinating narrative and literature could hardly do it honor and justice; for it would be more than a mere historical and ethnological treatise, it would be the vindication of a much misunderstood people, a race that has prominently contributed to lay the foundation of modern civilization and progress. And yet I have accepted the task willingly, and even enthusiastically because I am convinced that any unbiased discussion of history, however brief, will show that the Malayan race, to which we have the privilege to belong, is not inferior to any other race, absolutely to no other race, either in potentialities and capacity or in culture and achievements.

I lay no claim to any special erudition on the subject. But I am animated by honest conviction, and the fond hope that some of you with greater talents and more facilities than I have at my disposal, would take up the quest and undertake the defense of the Malay against the charge, at times outspokenly made, and always insinuated, that we are a shiftless race, incapable of sustained effort and constructive progress. The tragedy of it is that such an unjust and unfounded prejudice has gained credence even among our own people, many of whom have developed a kind of inferiority complex, a state of mind which has caused us incalculable harm and has considerably retarded our progress, like leaden weights shackled to our feet. No people that does not have a firm belief in its power and capabilities can achieve a great destiny. It is of the

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highest transcendence, therefore, that we strive for the well-deserved dignification of our race, by showing the immense contribution given to civilization by our ancestors, and by recounting and making known their glorious achievements. Thus may we redeem ourselves from the approbrium or blind prejudice; thus may we release the tremendous but latent forces of our people.

I will not now indulge in subtle definitions and distinctions, based on philological and ethnological theories, as regard who the Malays are, or whether they are different from Indonesians or Polynesians. Even learned authors fail to agree on these questions. I shall use the term Malay as referring to the brown race in general, as distinguished from the white, the yellow and the black, according to that simple, unsophisticated and practical classification we learned in the schools of our boyhood.

As we look around us today, we find the brown man occupying a widespread and far-flung territory more vast than we imagine; more extensive than that of any other race. Besides his home in the Malay Peninsula and the Indian Archipelago, comprising Sumatra, Java, Borneo and other islands of the East Indies, and the Philippines, we find him in India, in South-eastern Asia, where the names of countries like Siam and Annam and Kalinga, are suggestively Malaya; in Korea, Formosa and Southern Japan, particularly in the island of Kyushiu; in the Hawaiian Archipelago and other oceanic island groups; in New Zealand and Australia; in Madagascar and the African coast; in North and South Americas in the person of the American Indian and the descendants of the Aztecs and the Incas. And even in Europe traces of him may be found among the brunette peoples of the Mediterranean coast. The unparalleled dispersion of the race over the face of the entire globe speaks high of the courage and pioneering spirit of the brown race. History and literature written by Occidental writers, almost always one-sided and over-emphatic on the history of the white race, and ex-

ceedingly brief on the history of the East, extol the bravery and the sea-faring exploits of Phoenicians and Greeks in the dawn of history. We do not wish to minimize the heroism and the glory of their adventures, but it may be well to remember that they were almost entirely confined to the Mediterranean and Aegean seas, mere lakes compared with the immense vastness of the Pacific where the unsung adventures and daring exploits of Malayan Ulysses, conquerors, traders and colonizers were enacted, long before Trojans and Greeks fought their wars made famous by song and epic poetry, long before Phoenician sailors venturously issued forth from their native shores upon the blue waters of inland seas, to brave the dangers of mythological Scylla and Charybdis.

In consequence of that spirit of adventure and daring, which is also a necessary element of the highest progress, we see today the universal impress of Malay civilization and culture. Its influence is not only found in the present homelands of the race, which bear names all too obviously Malayan, like the kingdom of Siam, a word which means "nine" of Annam, which means "six," allusions probably to subdivisions or provinces of a more ancient and larger political unit; Malacca, Malabar in India, and the Himalayas, the highest mountain of the world, whose name suggests that the Malay might have been the first to use formidable mountain passes like famous Khyber pass now associated with the more recent migrations of Aryans; Madagascar near South Africa, and other places bearing Malayan names. The very word "Malay," "Malayo" which in Tagalog and kindred dialects means "far," denotes the wide range of Malay activities and influence. But it is not only in the East that the brown race has held its sway and has left traces of its ancient culture. It is not a wild theory to uphold that it has in no slight degree helped to lay the foundation of European civilization. I will now submit for your consideration certain facts and inferences which, though I do not pretend that they have been historically and defi-

nately established, may yet be true, and are at least reasonable leads or suggestions for further study and search in line with our thesis.

Prior to the flowering of Aryan civilization, antedating Median, Pesian, Greek, Roman and Teutonic cultures, there flourished in Europe and North Africa and in the islands of the Mediterranean, great empires and kingdoms of dark-skinned or brown peoples, whose civilization reached such a high degree of development and excellence, that in many respects it has remained unsurpassed unto this day. Sumerian and Ancient Egypt and Crete were the pioneers of European civilization, and they were the homes of dark-skinned or brown, Non-Aryan peoples. Huxley and Wells and many other researchers admit this fact. It has likewise been found that the Ancient Egyptians belonged to the same stock as the Dravidians of India, and therefore absolutely of the brown race. When we pause in wonder before the awesome grandeur of the Pyramids of Giseh, or the Oriental magnificence of the temples of Karnak; when we feel ineffable enchantment at the sight of the precious remnants of the lost arts of Egypt; when upon reading the deciphered cuneiform records of Assyria we come across the mention of a marvelous Sumerian civilization; when we admire a precious vase of exquisite workmanship excavated from pre-historic ruins of Cnossos, unexcelled by the best of Greek art, we cannot but feel proud of the accomplishments of the dark or brown race; and we realize how groundless and futile is the assumption and the misjudgment that ours is an indolent and unprogressive people. We do not want to claim superiority but neither do we admit inferiority. If we have learned much from other races, we may also contend with equal truth that they have learned much from us. In passing we may state, for whatever it may be worth, that even the symbols, adopted by those that pretend to be the principal exponents of Occidental civilization, were familiar to the Malay or the brown race. The Swastika of Nordic Germany is an old symbol of good luck among the people of Northern Luzon. The Roman

salute has for untold ages been the salute of ancient Malayan sun-worshippers and even the fasces, which stand for unity call to mind the graceful and banded strength of our bamboo trees. The folklore of Europe, specially of Ireland, is strikingly similar to that of the Malays.

As builders of empires the brown race was unsurpassed in ancient times. Besides those of Sumeria, Egypt and the Aegean cities, which we have already mentioned, there were those of India whose architectures are significantly of the same style, of the same imposing and colossal proportion, coupled with artistic care and finesse of details; those of Shri-Vishaya, and of the Kmers in Cambod who build the marvelous palaces and temples of Angkor-Vat and Angkor-Thom, and there was the Malay empire of Madjapahit, which produced the magnificent palaces of the Borobuddar, and with which, like the older Shri-Vishayan empire, the Philippines was associated.

As to the great men of the brown race, besides Rizal, Gandhi and others of our days, we may mention Buddha of Gautama, Asoka and Akbar and a host of others. According to Biblical history, the mother of Solomon, the wisest of men, was Hittite, of the Hyksos of Egypt who were a dark or brown people. Thus, may we say, our race had a place in the origins of Christianity. And one of the three kings or wise men who paid homage to the Divine Child at Bethlehem was Baltazar, the Malayan prince. We may continue reconstructing the glories of the past of our race. But what has already been said is sufficient to show the great potentialities of our people, and that what our people, and that what our ancestors could do we may achieve; that we are a people inferior to none, capable of the highest progress, culture and civilization: Sons of Malaya, lift high your brow, and steel your hearts and souls for noble and high achievements: be worthy of your ancestors and the glorious past of the race!