FILIPINO FAMOUS LITERATURE

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It is not out of the common knowledge that the Philippines is full and overflowing with culture and traditions. For the farthest island of the North to the tail-end of the South of Mindanao, each of the seven thousand plus islands has its own distinct cultural identity.

Aside from traditions and beliefs, there are also tangible cultural evidences that survived the changing times such as arts and literature.

There are tons of Filipino spoken and written literatures through time. From the Ivatan folklores, to the Muslim tales of Sulu and Davao. But there are several that stood out against the countless beautiful works, one of which is the Ilocano epic entitled “Biag ni Lam-ang” or as it translates in English as “The life of Lam-ang”. The epic was originally written in Ilocano by a blind poet named Pedro Bucaneg in 1640. After the first actual publishing of the story in 1889, there has been dozens of versions of the story that were created.

The story, which revolves around the fictional adventures of an Ilocano born Hero, depicts Lam-ang as an exaggeratedly strong and brave child in the beginning. Lam-ang was a wonder boy, he was said to have the ability to talk and walk even just after his birth. As the story progress Lam-ang grew into a man with such notable and impressionable characteristics that the people look up to him almost as if he’s god-like. His adventures range from slaying a monstrous creature to marrying the most beautiful maiden in all of the lands. The “Biag ni Lam-ang” is the Ilocano version of the mainstream fairy tales but the best part is that his endeavours and conflicts resonates with the
problems and hurdles that the people of that time underwent only in a more embroidered fashion.

Another famous lore that most Filipinos are familiar with, especially for those who live in the Southern parts of the Luzon islands, the story of ‘Dalagang Magayon’ which is the folklore that represents the formation of the perfect cone-shaped volcano, the Mt. Mayon.

The narrative describes Dalaga Magayon as a very alluring and charming daughter of a Tribes chief in land that will turn out to be Albay. She was so beautiful that many men fell head over hills for her, unfortunately no one was able to woo the young beauty. Until one day, while taking a bath in the Yawa river she slipped and almost drowned, it was then that she met the man she will love, a young man named Pangaronon. Pangaronon saved Magayon’s life and soon after, started to court her. Magayon accepted the courtship and even got the blessing from her father to marry the young man. But the tale only goes south from there. One of Magayon’s former suitors felt cheated and wanted Magayon for himself. He then abducted the Magayon’s father and asked her to be his wife in exchange for his freedom. This ignited a war between the tribe of the suitor and Pangaronon, which the latter won. But at the very end a stray arrow struccted Pangaronon, he died in the arms of Magayon. Due to heartbreak and to be with the man she loves, Magayon took Pangaronons knife and killed herself. It is believed that the Mayon volcano emerged from the ground where the lovers were buried. Some said that it was a curse for Magayon for taking her own life while some believed that Mt. Mayon with its perfect beauty is Dalagang Magayon and Pangaronon is the clouds that kiss the volcano ever so often.

The story of Dalagang Magayon and Pangaronon is a star-crossed lover’s tale. A tragedy that spawned from the creative imagination of Filipino tribe’s people of the Bicol region.

There are many more stories like these two. In fact, almost every mountain and lake in the archipelago has a folklore that surrounds it. Tales of fairies and deities, of love and
tragedy. This might be due to the basic truth that Filipinos has always been creative people.

Today it is vital that we pass down these masterpieces to the younger generation so that it won’t die down through time. Especially with all the modern reading materials and stories that overtakes the traditional literatures. It is now, more than ever that we should imprint these gems and cultural treasures to the children to make sure that even in the decades and centuries to come; there will be reminiscence of the history and culture of the Filipinos.

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