

Monument In The Making

Written by Mila Fajiculay-Fruelda

Sunday, 01 February 2009 11:39 - Last Updated Wednesday, 25 March 2009 09:15

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Human life is full of adventure and mystique. It is far more than a rainbow when it comes to colors. From the very moment a breath of life commences, a drawing on the canvas for that life, likewise, begins. Every line counts, and every color matters for these are what will bring to light the final picture of that life. Whether or not it will be positively colorful depends on the events along the way.

In our journey, all of us have common experiences. We travel on plain roads, hilly terrains, and rugged mountains; cross calm waters, breezy seas, and turbulent oceans; enjoy viewing the sunrise on top of a historic hill, gazing at luminous stars on warm starry nights, and observing the sunset on a clear horizon; feeling the cold, windy nights; sharing with the joy of summer days; touching the morning dew; smelling the fragrance of the meadow; and, so much more.

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Undoubtedly, within our common experiences shelters inherent difference. This fact can be discerned primarily on the quality, environment, time, significance, and other factors.

On my part, I am blessed to have a family with a home facing our town plaza. During fiesta celebration, cultural gathering, and other occasions, viewing the activities is simply on my fingertips. The church, schools, water source, beach, and other amenities are just few meters away. Kids my age are just around the corner. This luxury is quite a bliss.

Ironically, I almost forgot my playground. When I was a kid, the front of our sari-sari store was not cemented yet. The kids in our neighbors and I enjoyed all types of games common at that time; *hide and seek*, *biku*, *lilaw*, *sipa* (*rubber band*), and more.

When the game was hide and seek, although I was scared to go far from the base, I always took cover at the back of a big and tall structure at the center of our plaza. I felt secure going there because before the "guard" can find me, more often than not, a new "guard" was ready. In the long run though, whoever was the "guard" knew exactly where to find me. Unfair, but one instance when I was the "guard" and I could not find anyone, my "easy-way-out" was to go to bed. Eventually, the rest of the kids would go to bed, too.

My **highlight** here is not being fair or not, but my being "clueless" at that stage of my life about my "cover". What I could remember was the patience of some parents to teach their small kids a poem about *Rizal*; and, became so ecstatic and proud once the kids could recite

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it per expectation.

Here it goes...

"Ako si Rizal,
Nag-tuntong sa bato;
Init, tun-og, uyan,
Agwanta ako."

In my grade school, I learned it was a monument of our national hero, *Dr. Jose P. Rizal*. Within myself, I expressed thanks to whoever put that monument there because it was beneficial for me. With some kids, we could play there; we could use it as a choice spot whenever there were activities in the plaza; and, among other things, sometimes while playing, as a source of childish amusement with amazement looking at creatures living in the cracked section of the monument.

I know the kids in our place these days no longer use my cover as their cover, not just because *Rizal's* monument had a new location; but, more likely, because our games at that time are now obsolete. I really miss those days a lot.

Later in my schooling, I learned meaningful facts about *Rizal's Life, Works, and Writings*. From that time, I changed my view about monuments whenever and wherever I saw one. It is not a mere structure, but a manifestation of a historic meaning; a symbol of decisions, actions, and

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reactions done in a rare manner; and, a reminder about the lives of those who lived and died not for themselves, but heroically and magnificently for others.

My enthusiasm about monument gradually intensified as I saw more in a variety of forms and sizes here in the United States in the course of going places during vacations. Even actual battlefields had been declared historic sites and enclosed by fence to honor, preserve the sanctity of those places; and, revere those who took part in such remarkable events.

My experience in this regard brings to my mind my hometown of *Simara*, in general; and, *Tanro-Aw Hill*, in particular. Our place is small in size--cannot be seen in some world maps even with the use of a magnifying glass--but her existence is nature's gift; and, her history beyond measure.

Let me dwell particularly on *Tanro-Aw Hill*. Part of this piece of land is owned by my late father's family. It is the place highest in elevation throughout the island. It provides an "all-you-can-eat" pasture for the animals in the vicinity. My husband when he was a kid used to bring his family's cattle to this place. Considering all these facts, another more significant attribute is what I have in focus-- *Tanro-Aw Hill* as a historic site. This is the place where fierce fighting took place between the Americans with Filipino soldiers on one hand, against the Japanese soldiers on the other hand, in what is now known in history as the [Battle of Simara](#)

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Enough information being included in the article ["A Coin In The Sand"](#) by Gilbert Fajiculay, my focus here is principally on the *"Monument In The Making"*

. The true significance of this site rests neither on its height, nor any other attributes; but, primarily on the remarkable event that took place here at that time in our history. Since the event is remarkable, there must be a marker to serve as historical reminder for our current and future generations.

It is my strong desire that may our Municipal Government negotiate with the owners of the site and adopt a measure officially identifying and declaring *Tanro-Aw Hill* as a historic site.

The *"Monument In The Making"* I have in mind is a historic site enclosed with a concrete fence with a structure within. The first level will be a room to showcase the historical legacy of Simara; the next level will house the Windows of Simara where one can aesthetically view the coastline surrounding Simara Island. Eventually, on top, a communications tower can be installed for *Simara Island Communications Apparatus and Technology (SICAT)* project.

I foresee this site to be landmark of our history. Americans and Japanese tourists, and other foreigners will, likely, visit the place. Even Filipinos, and Simaranhons in particular, will be delighted to do so. As such, this site can evolve as a significant fraction of the whole picture for *Simara Island Network of Tourist Attractions (SINTA)* potential. This site is not only historic for me; the link is family, in essence. I will be proud, as I am proud as a Simaranhon, to see this historical monument comes true.

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May Americans, Japanese, other foreigners, Filipinos, and Simaranhons alike, pool enough resources to translate this "*Monument In The Making*" into ***Tanro-aw Hill World War II Historical Memorial*** --its real meaning.

*Human race believes, heroes are worth remembering;
To commemorate their being and deeds is worth doing.
To our kababayans, is this worth the same meaning?*

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