

# *The Anting-Anting of Manuelito*

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Philippine

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*Intermediate  
5 min read*

The Anting-Anting is a stone or other small object covered with cabalistic inscriptions. It is worn around the neck, and is supposed to render its owner impervious to knife or bullet. Many are wearing these charms, especially the Tulisanes or outlaws. The Anting-Anting must not be confused, however, with the scapular, a purely religious symbol worn by a great number of the Christian Filipinos.

Many of the older Filipinos remember Manuelito, the great Tulisane, who, more than fifty years ago, kept all the Laguna de Bai district in a state of fear. His robber band was well organized and obeyed his slightest wish. He had many boats on the lake and many hiding places in the mountains, and throughout the country there was no villager who did not fear to oppose him, or who would refuse to help him in any way when required to do so.

In vain the Guardia Civil hunted him. Many times they surrounded the band, but Manuelito always escaped. Many shots were fired at him, but he was never hit; and once, when he was cut off from his men and surrounded, he broke through the line, and though fifty bullets whistled around him he did not receive a scratch.

The officers of the Guardia Civil blamed their men for the bad marksmanship that allowed Manuelito to

escape. They told all the people that it should never occur again, and promised that the next fight should end in the death of the outlaw. The people, however, did not believe that Manuelito could be killed, for he wore on his breast a famous Anting-Anting that he had received from Mangagauay, the giver of life and death.

This charm was a stone covered with mysterious signs. It was wrapped in silk and hung by a string from the robber's neck, and even if a gun were fired within a few feet of him the Anting-Anting was sure to turn the bullet in another direction. It was this charm that always saved him from the Guardia Civil.

Manuelito was very proud of his Anting-Anting, and many times, when a fiesta was being held in some town, he and his band would come down from the mountains and take part in the games. Manuelito would stand in the town plaza and allow his men to shoot at him, and each time the Anting-Anting would turn aside the bullets. The people were very much impressed, and though a few of the wiser ones secretly thought that the guns were only loaded with powder, they were afraid to say anything; so the greater number thought it very wonderful and believed that there was no charm so powerful as the Anting-Anting of Manuelito.

For years the Tulisane, protected by his charm, continued to rob and plunder. The Guardia Civil hunted him everywhere, but could never kill him. He grew bolder and bolder, and even came close to Manila to rob the little towns just outside the city.

At last the government grew tired of sending out the Guardia Civil, and ordered a regiment of Macabebes to hunt and kill the Tulisane and his men.

Manuelito was at Pasay when news was brought to him that the Macabebes were coming. Instead of running from these fierce little fighters, he decided to meet them, and many people offered to help him, believing that the Anting-Anting would turn away all bullets and give them victory. So Manuelito and many men left the town, built trenches in the hills near San Pedro Macati, and waited for the Macabebes to appear.

They had not long to wait. The Macabebes, hurrying from Manila, reached San Pedro Macati and soon found that Manuelito was waiting to fight them. They left the town at once and advanced on the Tulisane trenches.

It was a great fight. From the other hills close by many people watched the battle. Five times the Macabebes advanced, and were forced to fall back before the fierce fire of the Tulisanes. But the Macabebe never knows defeat, and once more their line went forward and in one terrible charge swept over the trenches and bayoneted the outlaws. In vain Manuelito called on his men to fight. They broke and ran in every direction.

Then, seeing that all was lost, Manuelito started to follow them; but a volley rang out, and, struck by twenty bullets, he fell to the ground dead. The Macabebes chased the flying Tulisanes and killed that of all the band only a few many, safely reached the mountains.

While the Macabebes were chasing the outlaws, many people came down from the hills and stood around the body of Manuelito. They could hardly believe their eyes, but the many wounds and the blood staining the ground proved that the great Tulisane was indeed dead.

What of the Anting-Anting? Had it lost its power?

One man timidly unbuttoned the shirt of the dead robber and pulled out the charm. The mystery was explained. Fixed firmly in the center of the Anting-Anting was a silver bullet. There was but one explanation. The Macabebes had melted a statue of the Virgin and used it to make bullets to fire at Manuelito. Against such bullets the charm was useless, but against ordinary lead it never would have failed. Had not the people seen Manuelito's own men fire at him?

The charm was taken from the neck of the dead Tulisane and many copies were made of it. Even to this day hundreds of people are wearing them. They will tell you about Manuelito's great fight and also about his famous Anting-Anting.

"But," you say, "the Anting-Anting was useless. Manuelito was killed."

They answer, "Yes, Señor, it is true; but the Macabebes used bullets of silver. Had they used lead the story would have been different. Poor Manuelito!"

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