# THE LAND AND PEOPLE of the PHILIPPINES

Josephine Budd Vany

PORTRAITS OF THE NATIONS SERIE

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of

#### THE PHILIPPINES

by Josephine Budd Vaughan

PORTRAITS OF THE NATIONS SERIES

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#### Portraits of the Nations Series

THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF ARGENTINA THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF AUSTRIA THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF BELGIUM THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF BRAZIL THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF CANADA THE LAND OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF EGYPT THE LAND OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF FINLAND THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF FRANCE THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF GERMANY THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF GREECE THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF ICELAND THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF INDIA THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF IRELAND THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF ISRAEL THE LAND OF THE ITALIAN PEOPLE THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF JAPAN THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF MEXICO THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF THE PHILIPPINES THE LAND OF THE POLISH PEOPLE THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF PORTUGAL THE LAND OF THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF SCOTLAND THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF SOUTH AFRICA THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF SPAIN THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF SWEDEN THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF TURKEY THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF VENEZUELA THE LAND OF WILLIAM OF ORANGE THE LAND OF WILLIAM TELL.

#### THE LAND AND PEOPLE OF THE PHILIPPINES

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#### Chapter 1

### BIRTH OF THE ISLANDS

VITHIN the western boundaries of the Pacific Ocean, just between the equator and the Tropic of Cancer, lie the Philippine Islands, the largest archipelago in the world, with a land area equal to the New England States and New York combined. Here man and nature have joined forces to develop a land of contrasts between the old and the new, between the ways of an Oriental world and those of the Occident. Continually, as the islands change in form and as new ways are introduced to them, new contrasts develop.

Today there are seven thousand islands, of which only a thousand are large enough to have anybody living on them. The largest, the northernmost island of Luzon, is about the size of the state of Virginia. The next largest is the southern island of Mindanao. It is as big as Indiana. In between Luzon and Mindanao lie a group of smaller islands called the Visayan Islands. To the west, the good-sized island of Palawan lies only five hundred miles from the mainland of Asia.

Physically, these islands never stop changing. Some of them are disappearing below the surface of the sea, while others are still being made. Many are active volcanoes and sometimes, in a single

earth-shaking explosion, one of them blows up. Then surrounded by boiling foam and a cloud of vapor the island plunges into the depths of the sea. It may take millions of years to build up a new one.

Scientists believe that some of the Philippine Islands such as Palawan may be tops of partially submerged mountains. They may once have been part of a coastal range on what was then the mainland of Asia. There have been and still are times when the sea rises and advances on the land. Over a long span of geological time the ocean gradually covered much of the lowland along coastal areas of Asia. In this way the ocean covered all but the tops of these mountains which today rise above the waters of the South China Sea. The west sides of these submerged mountains slope gently and create a large area of comparatively shallow water. On the eastern side of the Philippines, however, are some of the deepest places in any ocean. One of these is called the Mindanao Deep. It is located just east of Mindanao in the Pacific Ocean and extends two and a half times farther down than Mt. Whitney, the highest mountain in the United States, rises above sea level. In other words, the Mindanao Deep is six times as deep as the Grand Canyon.

The ocean floor itself is by no means a level plain. It rises in mounds and falls in basins. It buckles. There are cracks and crevices. Probably some ten million years ago deep under the floor of the sea volcanic eruptions occurred. These violent explosions would toss up molten lava and red-hot rocks through weak fissures in the floor of the ocean. While miles of sea water pressed the eruptions down, in the process of time, some of these submarine volcanoes built up toward the surface of the sea, and formed islands. In this way some of the islands of the Philippines were created.

Mountains were formed in much the same way as the islands

themselves. Earthquakes or the violent eruptions of volcanoes ridged the earth's surface, and formed high places. Today range follows range, like a backbone, up the central part of most of the islands of the Philippines. Their average height is 4,000 feet, but the highest single peak, Mt. Apo on Mindanao, reaches 9,610 feet. Mt. Mayon, in the extreme south of Luzon, rises in a perfect cone to 7,916 feet. Compared with the Alps or the Himalayas, or the Rocky Mountains of the United States, these are not high. Both Mt. Apo and Mt. Mayon, like many of the other mountains throughout the Philippines, are active volcanoes and therefore greatly feared.

Between the mountains the valleys are constantly eroded by water cutting away the land. This erosion enlarges the valleys and gradually new lakes or great rivers are formed. These rivers, like smaller streams, carry sediment which shifts downward toward the sea and forms fertile lowlands along the coast.

Not all lakes in the Philippines are found in enlarged valleys. Many lie in the empty craters of dead volcanoes. One of these, Lake Taal, fifty miles from the city of Manila, has in its center an island where there is an active volcano which has erupted many times. One eruption was followed by a tidal wave in Taal Lake itself, and ninety-five earthquakes. The eruption which surprised the inhabitants at midnight killed thirteen hundred people. Some were killed by the mud, steam and volcanic ash thrown up by the volcano, but most died of the poisonous gases which were released. The eruption stripped the bark from trees, and left ash a foot deep on the fields and six feet deep in the ravines. Part of the town of Taal sank into Taal Lake, where it still can be seen below the water. The eruption also killed all the fish which were thrown up in a cooked condition on the shores.

Early volcanic eruptions, however, brought more benefit than harm to the Philippines. Those that formed the islands also sup-

plied them with rich mineral resources. Molten lava, containing different metals, was spewed through the crevices in the ocean floor to the surface of the sea where it cooled, solidified and formed islands. In more recent times, rivers and streams slowly cut into these rich deposits, revealing hidden wealth and washing some of it down into the valleys and river beds. As a result of this process gold is found today in great quantities in many parts of the Philippines.

In the same way, and often at the same time, great pieces of iron ore were thrown off from the main mass of volcanic rock and deposited over wide areas on the surface of the land. These pieces are called float ore and range from chunks the size of a person's fist to masses as large as a house and weighing many tons. It takes months of prospecting over large areas where this float ore is found to discover the main body of ore from which the float is detached. The Philippines are rich in such deposits while many of the other Pacific islands that were similarly formed, such as Japan, have little.

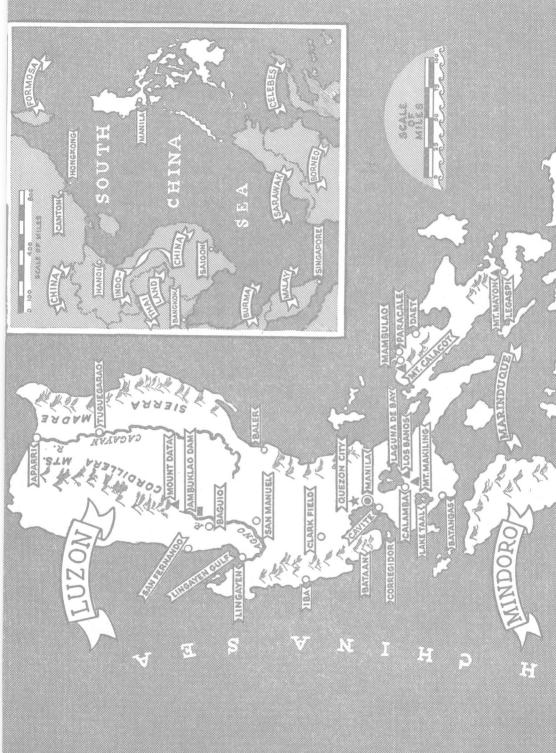
When the Philippines were first formed and had emerged from the sea, there was no life upon them. They were bare rocky volcanic hills. Only with the passage of time did plants and animals appear. Bits of brush drifted with the current from other lands or a tortoise managed to pull himself onto the shore. Tiny plants with insects on them may have washed up on dry land, or migrating birds dropped dirt from their wings and the dirt held seeds of plants. The seeds took root and grew. Some of the plants lived, but others died and decayed, mixing with the drift and the disintegrated lava deposited by volcanic explosions to form a very fertile soil. Slowly the islands came to be covered with luxurious vegetation. Today more than three-fifths of their surface is blanketed with evergreen subtropical forests.

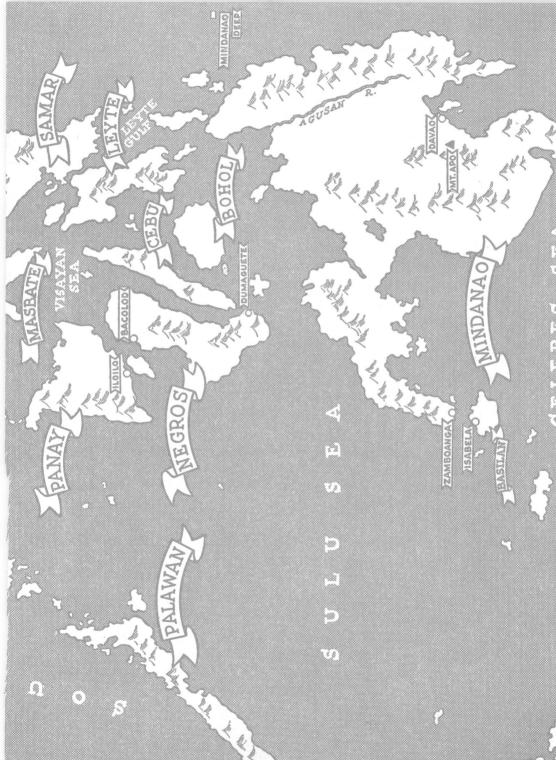
The climate helps this growth. The Philippines have year-round

warm weather with plenty of rain. Their average temperature is eighty degrees, although this varies somewhat with the altitude. In April, May and June it sometimes reaches one hundred degrees. After November it cools slightly. Usually there is a short shower during the afternoon, but more abundant rains come with the trade winds. These winds blow regularly, coming over the Pacific and crossing the Philippines. From January to June they come from the northeast, bringing rain to the eastern side of the islands. Because the central mountains force these winds to rise into cooler altitudes, the northeast trades cool above the mountains and drop any remaining moisture before reaching the western side of the islands. From June to October, however, the western part is drenched with rains carried by the prevailing southwestern trade winds of that season. During these wet periods endless rain dominates, and everything is dripping wet. Streams become roaring torrents. Suddenly, however, the rain is over and the sun shines again. It is no wonder that, with such temperatures and rainfall, an abundance of rich vegetation grows throughout the Philippines.

For more than a hundred million years with the help of perpetual sunshine and two rainy seasons a year, vegetation thrived during what is called the Rain Forest Period. Trees grew to immense heights. Some were two hundred feet tall. They formed what might be called the upper story of the forest, for their trunks rose as high as one hundred feet before branching. They made a canopy so dense that the sun rarely reached the small trees growing beneath them. Unfortunately, in time water undermined these giants, or fire or wind destroyed them, and they fell. Shortly after that, dense tangles of undergrowth developed and smaller trees took the place of the big ones.

In other areas, in lowlands and on lower mountain slopes, forests of broad-leafed palms grew up in profusion. They varied from one another, as they do today. The tall slender betel palm





bears red fruit. The bamboo palm forms dense thickets of its giant grasses. The nipa palm has large globose heads of dark brown fruit and grows within reach of brackish water, while the sago palm thrives only in fresh-water swamps. The fruit-laden coconut palm is found along the edge of long stretches of shimmering white beach, close to the sea, where, often, its fruit falls into the waters and is carried by tides and currents to begin new life on distant shores.

In still other parts grows the narra, which has become the national tree of the Philippines. It is characterized by yellow flowers, and its fine wood is harder than mahogany.

Gradually, animal life, too, developed on these islands, and with similar variety. Some of the animals found in the Philippines are related to creatures that once existed in southeastern Asia. Because some animals like those once found in Asia, are found only on certain islands, scientists believe they were once part of the Asiatic continent. In some cases scientists can tell approximately when the islands were separated from the continent, because they know how long ago the animals found on the island existed in Asia.

On the other hand, when island animals are not related to those of Asia, scientists feel that the island may be of volcanic origin. They cannot be sure, however, because many factors influence animal life. The island may once have had Asian animals that died. They might have been destroyed by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, or by the fierce winds called typhoons. Typhoons are particularly dangerous in the Philippines where, after originating at sea, they strike at a speed of 120 miles an hour, uprooting everything in their path. As mountain ranges are formed by volcanic explosions, the higher elevations and colder climate may have caused some species of animals to die out. Similarly, as the vegetation changed, other creatures died because there was nothing for

them to eat. It is important to remember that some of the large animals, too heavy to be carried by water, were later brought by man. At the time when animal life was developing as a natural process, however, there still were no men on the Philippines.

Among the strange animals found on some of the islands, the strangest is the flying lemur. He is nocturnal and, as he lives principally on leaves and fruit, he spends most of his life in the trees. Covered with fine soft silken fur spotted with yellow, the flying lemur looks like a giant tropical fruit when seen hanging from the limb of a tree. A thin membrane of furry skin stretches between the toes and fingers, as well as from neck to thumb, wrist to ankle, and the end of the outer toes to the tip of the tail. This membrane enables him to glide through the air. He can cover as much as seventy yards with ease, which is why he is said to fly.

Another unusual animal is the anteater. His forefeet are equipped with strong claws which he uses to dig into ant nests, to find food. He is protected by hard overlapping scales, and when in danger he rolls himself up until he looks like a large cone from a spruce tree.

Certain animals are restricted to islands of volcanic origin. The popeyed tarsier, whom the Filipinos today call the "Old Man of the Mountains," is found only on the Southern Islands. He is an unforgettable creature. The length of his head and body is only six inches, but he has a ten-inch tail. He is covered with thick woolly fur of a yellowish-brown color. He has goggle eyes protruding from a rounded head, a very short and pointed muzzle, and long fingers with tiny nails. Both fingers and toes end in flattened pads which are slightly adhesive. The tail is naked except for a tuft of hair at the end. He has large moveable ears that furl like a sail when he flies, though his flying is more accurately described as a series of leaps, each of which covers a great distance.

He lives in the brush and bamboo and, as his large eyes suggest, is a nocturnal creature.

On the other hand, the gymnure is among the animals now found only on the islands that once were part of Asia. He is a gray moonrat who feeds on termites and cockroaches, and smells just like garlic. He has five toes on both forefeet and hindfeet, and walks on his whole foot rather than on just the toes as do cats and dogs.

Peculiar to Mindoro is the tamarau, who looks like a small water buffalo. Unlike the tame water buffalo, however, the tamarau is very wild and extremely dangerous, often charging hunters without provocation. The water buffalo wallows in mud and bathes in water, but the tamarau, a nocturnal animal, inhabits only the densest part of the jungle.

There are many species of birds in the Philippines and, because these creatures can easily fly to new locations, there once were more birds than mammals. Since it is a simple matter for most species of birds to move from island to island, their location is not taken as an indication of the origin of the island on which they are found. In spite of this, there are many unique varieties. There is an ogrelike creature called the monkey-eating eagle. His cold gray eyes behind his hard-shelled, arched beak are a terrifying sight. Certain species of the hornbill not found in any other part of the world live on these islands. There is a falcon that is just a little larger than a sparrow. Mound birds bury their large eggs, some three feet deep, in mounds made of sand or earth or leaves; they leave their young to hatch and force their way out of the mound and fend for themselves. Even more restricted in habitat than these are nine varieties of birds found only on the island of Cebu. All of these lack many of the characteristics of the birds on others of the Philippine Islands. Yet, even though as little as four miles separate Cebu from the neighboring island of Negros,