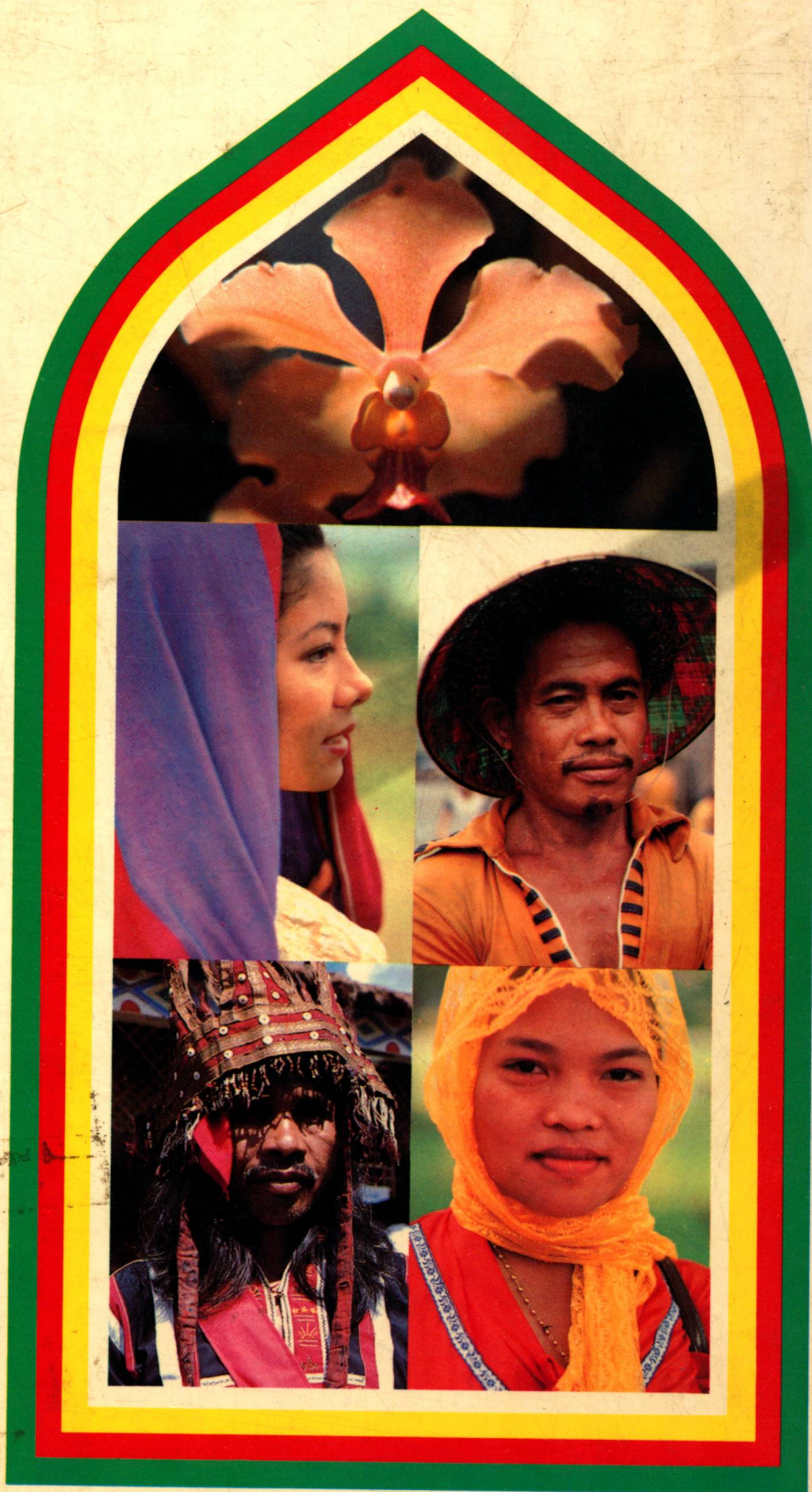


Tuladan

The Philippine South



Tuladan

Dedicated to
FERDINAND E. MARCOS
to whom the unity of the Filipino
people and the building of the Nation
have always been an abiding obsession and
a testament of faith.

20 January 1978

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Preface

The story of a people cannot be fully captured in the pages of a book. Words and pictures can only approximate the larger reality, which is older than anyone can remember, and too complex and fluid to be fully expressed.

But it is a task worth attempting, if only because re-creation and interpretation of one's heritage, no matter how tentative or fraught with difficulty, are doubtless steps to understanding.

It was in this spirit that we began our series on the peoples and regions of the Philippines with the publication in 1977 of *LADAOAN: the Ilokos and the Ilokanos*, which was an exploration of the land and lifeways of the Filipinos of the north.

With this volume, the series moves southward, to the southern borders of the Archipelago and their unique aggrupation of diverse cultural communities.

In colonial as well as in contemporary times, Southern Philippines has always enjoyed the attention and interest of scholars and observers in a way unparalleled by any other region of the country. For historical, economic, cultural, and other reasons, the Philippine South has always loomed large in the story of the Filipino nation, and today it is once more indelibly etched in the national life on account of an internal conflict that has continued for the better part of the decade.

The problem in the South forms only a part of the story told in these pages, but in tracing its peoples' beginnings, in recording their efforts to cope with their environment and to build strong and enduring institutions, and in depicting the many aspects of contemporary life in Southern Philippines, this book may well be a contribution of no mean significance.

How people live, think, and act are determined and conditioned to a large extent by their environment and historical experiences. And since these elements differ in each of the regions of the country, the directions of the life and ways of the people in Southern, Central, and Northern Philippines have correspondingly differed. But the diversity does no more than signify a variety of surfaces which through time, space, and circumstances have formed on what is basically a commonality of elements. Behind the veneer is the fabric of community which has made of the many peoples of the Philippines one nation and one people.

And this fact is immediately brought home to us once an effort is made to explore and understand the story of Mindanao and Sulu.

A word taken from the many languages of Southern Philippines fittingly describes the task of this volume. It is the word "tuladan," which means either a portrait or a mirror.

If the Filipinos of the South — whatever ethnic or cultural group they may belong to, whether Maguindanao, Maranao, Taosug, Cebuano, Tiruray, Ilokano, Manobo, Hiligaynon, or Waray — will find in this volume a mirror of themselves and an image of the larger community of which they are a part; and if others will understand them better because of it, then the effort of preparing this book on the first anniversary of the joint implementation of the ceasefire agreement between the forces of the Republic of the Philippines and those of the Moro National Liberation Front shall have been more than amply rewarded.



Fabian C. Ver

Prologue

*Assalamu aleikum
warahmatullahi wa-barakatu.*

*Peace be unto you
with the mercy of Allah and His blessings.*

An aura of romance and mystery pervades the islands that comprise the Philippine South, and colorful myths of creation, epics, and legends of the exotic people are woven in their beliefs, customs, ideals, and values, touching their deepest emotions — their fears, sentiments, passions, hopes, and aspirations. All combine to form the fabric of what has always been regarded by government and polity alike as “the land of promise.”

This is the story of that land and its people — elusive puzzles that have intrigued both scholars and laymen for ages, for it is no ordinary land and neither are they a middling people.

It is said that before settling in the northern part of the Philippines, the colossal Ilokano progenitors Angalo and Aran, had wandered about the land not then an archipelago but one wide, solid area which extended to the tip of northern Borneo. At the southern end of the large island, the hungry couple had stopped to gather clams from the clear waters. Prying the mollusks open, they found imbedded in the soft flesh sparkling stones which must have caught their fancy, for soon they were frenziedly gathering more shells and removing more brilliant stones. By nightfall, they had collected quite a number. Heading back to the middle of the island, the gigantic duo soon fell to quarelling over who should get the bigger share of the glittering pebbles. Aroused, they stomped their feet and shouted angrily at each other, causing such an upheaval that the mountains and hills fell apart. The land levelled here and cracked there. As the fight became even more intense, huge chunks of earth went flying in all directions, and the sea rushed in to cover the low lying areas. The scene of the fray became a scattered group of islands which now make up the Visayas. The enormous pieces that were left in place are now Luzon and Mindanao — separated by the sea but nevertheless joined by the ancient land bridge beneath the waves.

Not much later, according to the Bagobos, a *diwata*, god, called Pamulak Manobo appeared in the land

that is now Southern Philippines. He filled the sea and the earth with plants, fish, and animals of every shape and size. Then he took a handful of soft rocks, molded them to his own image, and breathed into them the spirit of his own life, thereby creating the man Toglai and the woman Togliban, who were sent forth as guardians of all that he had made.

Toglai and Togliban lived in a little village called Sibulan, cultivating the fields, domesticating wild animals, and bearing many children. But when the couple died, great misfortune befell the land. The rain did not fall; the rivers and brooks dried up; and the plants withered away and died. Hunger and disease swept the countryside, and the people left their village in search of food — but all was barrenness. Young and old starved and slowly died.

Pamulak Manobo, in pity, sent down the life-giving rain; the trees grew and the rivers throbbed — life returned to the land. But rather than go back to Sibulan and relive painful memories, the children who had spread across Mindanao settled elsewhere and became the ancestors of the different ethnic groups now peopling Southern Philippines.

There are many more such stories about the Philippine South, a land that has been the dominant frontier of the country, to be explored and tamed by the venturesome and daring. Yet at the same time, the “promise” has always existed side by side with mystery and even terror, so much so that only the most intrepid have dared to explore and tame it.

It is reflective of this promise and wonder that over the centuries Southern Philippines has been the setting of both dynamic growth and intense strife, of the confluence of cultures and their clashes and confrontations.

And the paradox remains.

This land today — with its fertile valleys and plateaus, its magnificent mountain ranges and hills, its rich fishing grounds and waterways — comprises what some have called a bounty of riches for a developing nation. The people are a rich blending of many cultural communities, some indigenous to the land, and others induced to migrate in search of a better life.

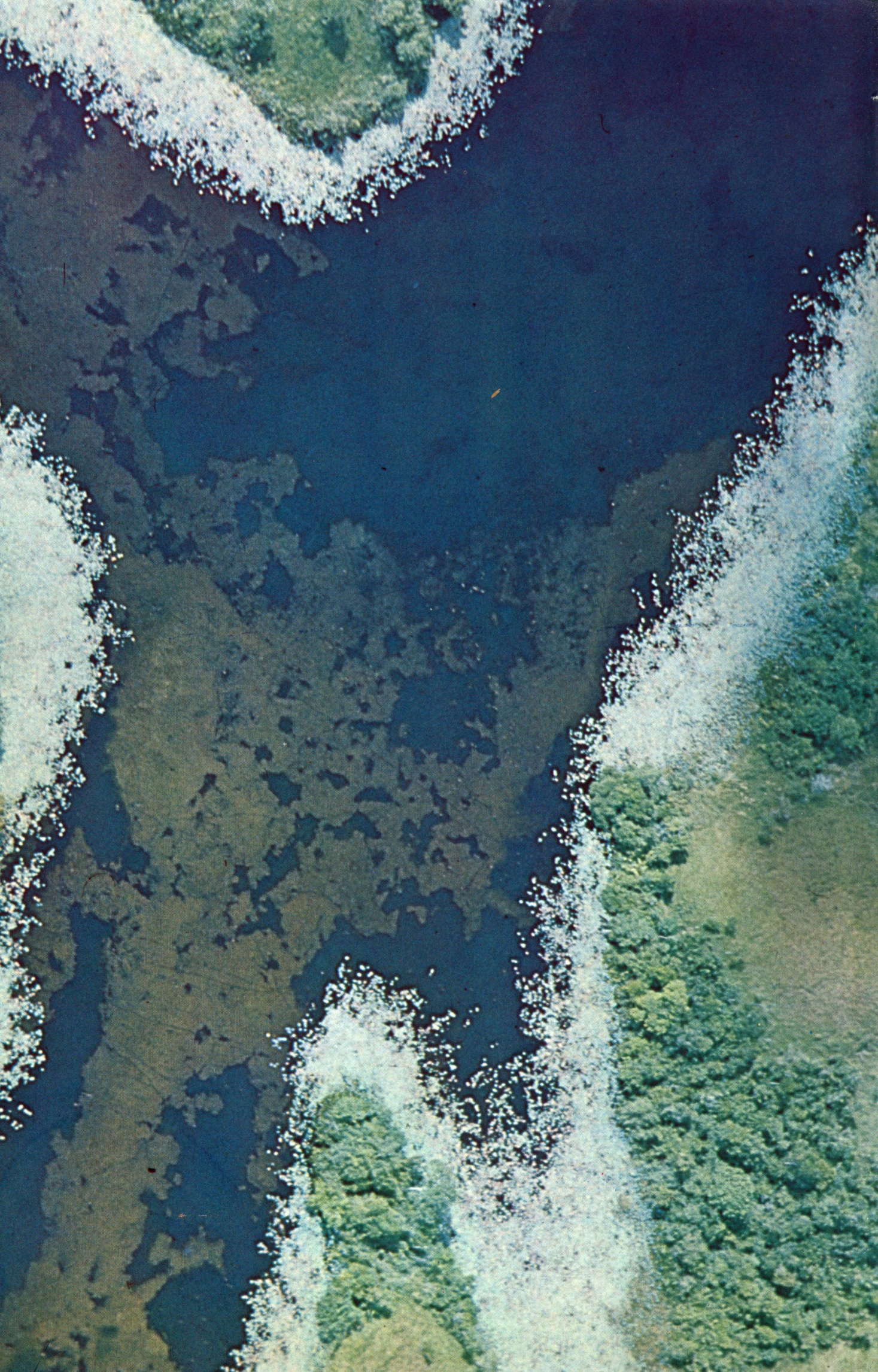
But this immense and colorful scenery is also the setting of intermittent conflict and tension.



There is an aura of romance and mystery that pervades the region which has always been regarded as the "land of promise."

Although separated from Luzon and Visayas by the sea, the islands are nevertheless joined by the ancient land bridge beneath the waves.





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This is a land that has been the dominant frontier of the country, to be explored and tamed by the venturesome and daring.

*According to the Bagobo creation myth, a **diwata** appeared in the land and filled it with plants, fish, and animals of every shape and size.*

