



## The Golden Image of Sri Visaya

By ALICE FRANKLIN BRYANT

(Continued from October Issue)

WHAT a frightful sight met his eyes! There before him were a fully grown wild pig and a huge python. The python had a coil of its thick, long body wrapped around the pig, while the pig was squealing, struggling, and trying to bite. In a moment he did succeed in sinking his sharp teeth into the python. At that, the python lashed about furiously, and the two boys drew back in fright. But the python did not let go of the pig. It slipped another coil around the pig and squeezed. The pig's squeals redoubled. Pablo heard the cracking of its bones. He felt half sick—he had never seen anything half so horrible.

In a few minutes the squealing became weaker, and the boys left. As soon as the python finished killing the pig, he would cover it with saliva. Then he would swallow the pig—all in one bite—and go off to his den to spend a week or so sleeping off the effects of his heavy meal.

"While he is asleep," said Ulan, "we will take a net to catch him in. We will kill him and have lots of good meat."

When they reached the little houses, they found them all deserted. Everyone was half a mile down the hill making a *cañgin*, or clearing. The Negritos depend for the most part on *finding* their food in the forest. They kill birds, deer, iguanas, catch fish, dig wild yams. But some of them also make tiny rude clearings in the forest in which they raise small amounts of corn and sweet potatoes and sometimes squash and beans.

So Pablo and Ulan found them all, men, women, and children, busy slashing down brush, vines and small trees. The large trees they did not fell, but simply cut deep rings around them so that the trees would die and the leaves fall off. The bare branches would not make enough shade to interfere with the growth of their crops. After all this vegetation was well dried out, they would set fire to the little field; and then, as soon as the dry season was over and the first rains fell, they would make little holes with sharp sticks, and put in their seeds.

As soon as they saw the boys approach they all stopped working and gathered around, asking Ulan questions about Pablo.

Ulan told about his finding Pablo, about Pablo's reason for being up there, and about the python they had just seen. At mention of the python, his

listeners lost some interest in their strange guest, because they are very fond of the flesh of the python. And the Philippine python, by the way, is said to attain a larger size than any other snake in the world, sometimes having a length of more than thirty feet.

They stopped their work of clearing, and went off, some here, some there, into the forest to look for rattan which can be used as rope.

Pablo went with Ulan and helped him cut and carry the lengths of rattan. On their return to camp, the men made of them a strong net.

While they were making the net, Ulan built a little house for Pablo. It was a very simple shelter like the five houses that were already there. First he stuck two poles in the ground. Each of these had a fork at the top. In these forks he laid another pole. Then he got some strips of bamboo and placed them one end on the ground, the other on the horizontal pole. With rattan he tied a few strips crosswise, covered the frame so made with banana leaves laid on like shingles, and, behold, the house was finished!

They had scarcely finished the house, when Ulan's mother called the boys to supper. She had cooked some corn in a section of bamboo and roasted over the open fire some little pieces of iguana strung on a strip of green cane. She split the section of bamboo and poured the steaming corn onto banana leaves. Then she, her husband, Ulan, and his little sister, and Pablo all sat around the banana leaves in front of their hut and ate with a healthy appetite.

While they were still eating, someone from another household got out a rude bamboo violin and began to play. The tune was very simple—just four notes repeated again and again with an occasional change of key. But the player's sense of rhythm was excellent, and Ulan could not sit still another minute. He hastily ate a last handful of the corn, sprang to his feet, and began to dance. Two young men soon joined him. They danced quite cleverly, and kept perfect time with the music.

The other Negritos sat around talking and laughing. Pablo now observed them at his leisure. They were all small, belonging, it is supposed, to the same family as the pygmies of Africa. They all had kinky hair and very broad, flat noses; but their lips were not very thick, and their expressions

were alert and good natured.

The men wore loin cloths like Ulan's, and the women wore nothing but short skirts of bark cloth. He saw one or two whose skirts were made of black cloth, very old and ragged. This cloth and their bolos and spear points had been obtained in some round about way from the Filipinos, for the Negroes know nothing of the manufacture of real cloth or the working of iron. As for the small Negrito children, the only thing they wore was a string of dried berries around their necks.



When the dancers became tired, they sat down to rest. Someone suggested singing a song for Pablo. All the men and older boys stood up one behind another, each one with one hand on the shoulder of the man in front of him. Crouching a little they walked around in a circle. Presently the man in front struck a note, the others joined in and held the note as long as they could. Then another note was sounded, step became faster, the men stopped abruptly, backed a few steps, and repeated the whole performance. Finally they began to sing. The song was very short, but was repeated a number of times. At times during the singing they would all stop and yell at the top of their voices.

Pablo found all this very interesting, and he thanked his hosts for their entertainment. But he was not forgetful of his purpose in making this trip of exploration.

He went up to the oldest, wisest looking man and asked him if he knew of any gold in the mountains. The old man shook his head doubtfully, but Pablo insisted that there must be gold. So the

old man called his neighbors together, and they went into a huddle.

The old man finally emerged from the consultation and turned to Pablo. "One day's walking from here," he said, "there is a very bright substance in the bed of a stream. We do not know whether it is gold.

"Tonight and tomorrow night you shall stay with us, for tomorrow we will slay the python and feast upon its flesh.

"The next morning, since you insist, you may go to hunt for the gold, and we will send Ulan with you. The doors of the forest are open to him, and we can tell him how to find the stream of the glittering substance."

On hearing this Pablo could have jumped with joy. He seized the hand of the old man, put it to his forehead, and thanked him profusely.

Within half an hour everyone in the little settlement was fast asleep; and Pablo was dreaming of a golden stream, a fine house, a big automobile, and lots of good things to eat!

(To be continued)

## ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS

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### GRADE ONE

- |            |         |
|------------|---------|
| 2. (a) 7   | (b) Yes |
|            | (c) No  |
| 1. b, d, e | (d) No  |
| 3. (a) No  | (e) Yes |

### GRADE TWO

- Useful
- Flies
- Web

### GRADE THREE

- False
- True
- False
- True
- True

### GRADE FOUR

- |         |          |
|---------|----------|
| 1. Noon | 4. House |
| 2. Hot  | 5. Shade |
| 3. Dry  |          |