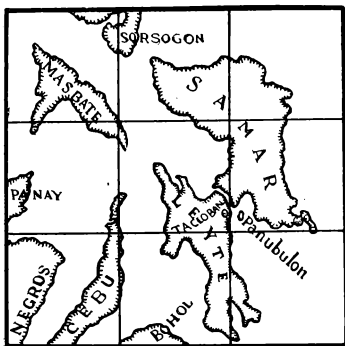


Turtle Hunting on Panubulon Island

By MRS. FELICIDAD G. FERNANDEZ



ABOUT three miles from Tacloban, the capital of Leyte, lies a coral island called Panubulon. It is about two and a half hectares in area. The island is a refuge for small sail-boats during bad weather. Some five hundred coconut trees are growing on the island.

To the shore of the island hundreds of turtles come, especially at night, and for this reason people come to secure as many of these prizes as possible. A turtle-catcher tries to capture a turtle by turning it over on its back. The turtle is so strong that a man may be dragged to the water if he holds to the turtle. But once the catcher succeeds in putting the creature on its back, he has secured a prize, for the turtle's meat, as well as the shell, are both salable.

During the egg-laying season, the catchers watch for the turtles—not to catch them

then but to find out where they lay their eggs. The female turtle digs a hole in the upper part of the beach not reached by the water even at high tide, and there lays her eggs. After laying them, she covers them and goes back to the water at day-break, to return again the next evening. She continues this procedure for about a week. Then it is time for the egg-hunters to dig for the eggs. The egg is round and white, and looks like a ping-pong ball. The only difference is that it is soft. The turtle's egg is delicious and can be eaten either raw or cooked.

Some hunters leave the eggs until they are hatched. The hatching takes place after two weeks. The baby turtles, smaller in size than a fifty-centavo piece, crawl to the sea. The small turtles live on the very small pieces of weeds floating on the water. The hunters catch the small turtles and place them in jars or tanks filled with salt water in order to grow them for market. They feed them with very small particles of green coconut husk, and later with small fish. After a year they are big enough for the market.

Once I placed a baby turtle in fresh water and gave it bread and rice instead of its usual food. The turtle lived for more than two years until it became so large that it was necessary to dispose of it.

Perhaps raising turtles for the market would be a paying proposition for Filipino school boys.