

Most urbanized region



Region IV is famous for its unique industries, like balut-making and carving (left top and bottom photos) and salt-making (top).

by Lilia C. Galang

Region IV combines in a single political unit five provinces in southwestern Luzon and the islands of Marinduque, Mindoro and Palawan. The five provinces—traditionally referred to as the Southern Tagalog region—are Batangas, Cavite, Laguna, Quezon and Rizal.

The region has a total land area of 46,119 square kilometers and an aggregate population of 6,827,377 (as of the 1970 census). About 55 percent of Region IV's population lives in urban centers, making it the most urbanized geographic unit in the country next to Metro Manila. (Undoubtedly the region's proximity to Manila has influenced it in this regard.)

There is considerable diversity in Region IV, where extensive tuff-covered plains contrast with soaring volcanic peaks of varying ages and elevations. The region has rich mineral, forest and marine resources and wide agricultural lands planted to rice, coconut and sugarcane, the region's most important agricultural products. Rich fishing grounds abound off Palawan and Mindoro; together the two areas yield an average 279 million kilos of fish per year. Destined to be an even more important source of income is oil, discovered off Palawan late in 1976 and due for commercial production late this year or early next.

Local transport in the areas near Metro Manila is fairly well developed. Regular bus lines—and even trains—traverse the region. The landlocked provinces

are less fortunate: their road facilities are limited to coastal towns. Least well off are the islands. Puerto Princesa, for example, the most important town in Palawan, is accessible from Manila by air only once a week and by sea only twice.

Region IV has 13 national ports, 67 municipal ports, 12 national airports, one international airport, 13 private airports, three military airports and 10 heli-ports. Because of its proximity to Metro Manila, Region IV has the highest share of the foreign tourists that visit the Philippines. Popular tourist spots include Tagaytay City, Pagsanjan Falls, the hot springs of Los Baños and the beaches of Batangas, Cavite and Mindoro as well as the caves and underground rivers of Palawan.

Gateway to Manila

All roads leading to and from Manila pass through Rizal Province. This is because, except for that portion of it that directly faces Manila Bay, Metropolitan Manila is surrounded entirely by the 1,860 square kilometers of Rizal.

Rizal itself is hemmed in by Bulacan in the north, Quezon in the east, Laguna Bay in the south and Cavite in the southwest. The eastern half of the province lies along the Sierra Madre range, while the western half reposes on the fertile Central Plain, sloping gradually until it reaches sea level at Manila Bay. The province is traversed by many rivers, the most important being the Pasig.

Because Rizal rings Manila, some of the city's population has spilled over into the province. The latest census put Rizal's population at 2,844,689, with an average density of 1,530 persons per square kilometer. This makes Rizal the most populous and most densely populated province in the country. And it's still growing—at an annual rate of 6.7 percent.

In addition to being the most populous, Rizal is also the most urbanized province in the country. Its literacy rate is also the highest in the land. Some 96 percent of Rizal's population read and write Pilipino, 61 percent English and 8 percent Spanish. As in most provinces in Luzon and the Visayas, the predominant religion is Roman Catholicism.

Of Rizal's total land area, 56 percent is cultivated (rice and fruits are the most important crops), 10 percent is idle open land, swamp or brushland and the rest



Makati, in Rizal province, is one of gateways to Metro Manila.

is urbanized. Much of the idle land is believed to be held by speculators in anticipation of further increases in the value of real estate. Many areas, especially those close to Manila, have gone up in value more than 100 times in recent years.

Rizal was one of the first eight provinces to rise

in rebellion against Spain in 1898. Pinaglabanan, in San Juan del Monte, and Calococan—both formerly parts of Rizal—were the scenes of historic and bloody encounters. The "Cry of Balintawak" and the Bonifacio Monuments in Calococan stand today as reminders of Rizal's heroic heritage.