



THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE

TAAL VOLCANO AND ITS RECENT DESTRUCTIVE ERUPTION

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DISTANCE detracts amazingly from public appreciation of the magnitude of great calamities, and as the people of the United States have thus far gained their information relative to the recent great eruption of Taal Volcano chiefly, if not entirely, from meager newspaper reports, it is not strange that few of them even now realize that in the early morning of January 30, 1911, there occurred in the Philippine Islands an appalling disaster.

The destructive eruption of Taal Volcano which then took place is by no means its first outbreak within historic times. Taal is an old offender in this regard and we know that it was making trouble soon after the discovery of the Philippine Islands.

The town of Taal was founded by Augustinian friars in 1572, and in his description of this event Father Gaspar de San Agustin says that in Lake Bombon, on the south shore of which the town was located, "there is a volcano of fire, which is wont to spit forth many and very large rocks, which are glowing and destroy the crops of the natives."

The volcano was unquestionably very active at this time. In fact, Father Nada has stated that Taal was actually in eruption in 1572. No details of this eruption were recorded, so far as is now known,

but it is certain that Father Albuquerque celebrated mass on Volcano Island with a view to tranquil the spirits of the panic-stricken natives.

In 1591 Father Alcantara performed a similar ceremony, because the volcano had begun to belch forth extraordinary masses of smoke.

Between 1605 and 1611 Father Tomás de Abreu not only said mass on the volcano, but had an immense cross of hard wood erected at the brink of the principal crater, for the reason that from this crater there had come frequent subterranean rumblings which had greatly terrified the inhabitants of neighboring villages.

In several chronicles there exist vague statements concerning eruptions in 1634 and in 1635.

In 1707 there occurred the first well-established and authentically recorded eruption. At this time a cone, which still exists and is called Binintiang Malagui (see page 318), "burst forth with a tremendous display of thunder and lightning; but aside from fear and tremblings no damage was done in the towns situated on the shores of Lake Bombon."*

*The translations of the accounts of early eruptions are taken from the Rev. Miguel Saderria Maso's paper on "The Eruption of Taal Volcano on January 30, 1911."