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Special Issue: WATER in SOUTHEAST ASIA



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Fisherman's House near Sawai in Maluku Photo by Benjamin Moseley Dear Readers -

Welcome to **EXPLORATIONS: a graduate student journal of Southeast Asian studies**. This year, the editorial team is excited to present our journal theme:

Seas, Oceans, Rivers, and Springs:

Perspectives on Water in the Study of Southeast Asia

This issue of **EXPLORATIONS** focuses attention on the multitude of ways in which water, in all of its forms, has influenced Southeast Asian Studies. The articles featured in this volume bring water to the forefront of Southeast Asian Studies scholarship by covering issues relating to water security, maritime disputes, fishing rights, disaster preparation, river management, and maritime networks in Southeast Asia in both historical and contemporary contexts. In raising these questions, this journal seeks to expand the possibilities of using the water perspective in studying Southeast Asia.

The **EXPLORATIONS** editorial team is pleased to be a part of this studentinitiated platform to encourage and promote graduate scholarship in Southeast Asian Studies, and we look forward to seeing further advancement of research in this area.

Sincerely,

EXPLORATIONS Editorial Team

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The principle mission of **EXPLORATIONS** is to offer a forum for students to present disciplinary and interdisciplinary research on a broad range of issues relating principally to the region which today constitutes Southeast Asia. Embracing both the diversity of academic interests and scholastic expertise, it is hoped that this forum will introduce students to the work of their colleagues, encourage discussion both within and across disciplines, and foster a sense of community among those interested in Southeast Asia.

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Familiar Waters:

Jakarta's Floods as Colonial Inheritance, Dutch Interventions as Postcolonial Challenge

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Abstract

In the Indonesian capital of Jakarta, growing concerns over flooding have prompted responses from Dutch engineering firms, NGOs, and government agencies, all negotiating with Indonesian authorities to begin dramatic water management overhauls. Such plans have elicited public reactions that bring to the surface tensions over the memory of colonialism and competing visions for the city's development. In delving into such debates, this paper pursues two lines of inquiry: First, it examines the Dutch state's efforts to frame water management as a distinctly national expertise (and heritage) purportedly rooted in the historical experience of a country that has long defined itself in precarious relationship with the sea. Second, it illustrates how this promoted persona of the Dutch water expert abroad is complicated when engineering projects are proposed in the very same landscapes

Introduction

From the periodic inundations that paralyze the city's center, to the steady advance of the sea that spills into its coastal *kampung*¹ a little more each year, flooding (and the anxiety its possibility inspires) is an ever-present feature of life in Jakarta. Unruly water permeates not only the physical cityscape – turning its highways into rivers, its suburbs into swamps, seeping into the homes of presidents and street vendors alike – but also its discursive and imagined ones. Along with the twin gripes of pollution and traffic, flooding (*banjir*) is a constant theme in commentary on the Indonesian capital, with journalists, politicians, engineers, and ordinary city-dwellers clamoring to explain the destructive phenomenon as well as to demand swift solutions – so far, largely in vain.

But the conversation – and controversy – surrounding Jakarta's worsening

¹ Kampung are dense urban neighborhoods, often with long histories of continuous occupation but at times perceived by local authorities as informal (or even illegal) settlements.

floods is not contained within its own municipal borders, or even those of the Indonesian state. As water rushes into the very heart of the metropolis year after year, so too do international agencies and their teams of foreign experts. From specialized NGOs to the World Bank itself, it can often seem as if everybody who's somebody (or indeed, who wants to *become* somebody) in the field of international development or disaster response is falling over themselves for a chance to solve the riddle of Jakarta's water woes.

Within this diverse cast of overseas characters, one set of actors is particularly conspicuous: a growing number of engineering firms, consultants, government agencies, and public-private organizations hailing from the Netherlands, the archipelago's former colonial power. Together, they have proposed an array of technical and infrastructural strategies to manage urban flooding, not only in Jakarta but also in a string of cities along Java's northern coastline that similarly suffer from regular inundations. Such initiatives range from ambitious collaborations between the Dutch and Indonesian governments, along with NGOs and private companies in both countries, that aim to protect the city through the construction of massive seawalls and the redevelopment of its entire northern coastline (a series of multi-million euro projects that are collectively grouped under the National Capital Integrated Coastal Development initiative); to a number of municipal arrangements whereby Dutch engineers and consultants are contracted to advise on the dredging of existing waterways, constructing of *polder*², establishment of community "water boards"³ based on the Dutch model, and even the development of a dedicated smartphone apps to track water levels in real time using crowd-sourced data; to workshops, glossy pamphlets, and public exhibitions wherein water management professionals from the Netherlands present their diagnosis of Jakarta's water troubles and spread the word about how their own specialized techniques might be adapted to its predicament.

Just how effective these proposed strategies will prove to be in easing Jakarta's chronic floods is not yet clear; in any case, evaluations of that kind are perhaps best left to keen scholars in other fields. However, what is immediately striking to myself as an anthropologist (one whose primary research investigates the local and transnational politics of revitalizing colonial-era sites and districts in Indonesian cities), is the pervasive presence of history, identity, and memory - in more succinct terms, *heritage* - throughout the language and imagery used in the Dutch promotion and Jakartan reception of these flood mitigation measures. "Expertise", "capacity building", "knowledge transfer" -

² *Polder* are low-lying tracks of land reclaimed from the sea through an integrated series of dikes, pumps, and other hydrological infrastructures. While by no means exclusive to the Netherlands, much of that country is kept dry through such techniques, which have been gradually developed and expanded over the centuries.

³ Literally translated from the Dutch, "waterschappen". Water boards in the Netherlands are elected government bodies charged with managing the hydrological infrastructures of a particular region in accordance with nation-wide management plans.

the jargon of an increasingly neoliberal development discourse that hails technical interventions or specialized training as the solution to the world's most pressing dilemmas can appear, at first, utterly ahistorical - and perhaps no more so than when applied to an ostensibly "natural" disaster like flooding. But while still being enthusiastic, indeed pioneering, participants in this discourse, the recent forays of the Netherlands' private and public sector into the scramble to control the movement of water through the Indonesian capital vividly illustrate how something as seemingly mundane as dredging a canal or sterile as blueprints for an improved dike are in fact steeped in both the past itself and our deeply-held beliefs concerning what we have inherited from it.

Water as Heritage, Expertise as Export

Indonesia is not the only country where Dutch agencies and companies can be increasingly encountered spearheading a range of water-related projects. Indeed, over the last decade or so, the Netherlands has energetically promoted its vaunted skills in the management of this resource as a kind of major national export. This promotion has been carried out through a variety of public and private platforms, one notable example of which is the Netherlands Water Partnership, or NWP. The NWP functions, in its own words, as a "comprehensive network that unites Dutch water expertise," "consisting of 200 members from private companies, government, knowledge institutes, and NGOs" and coordinating projects in countries as far flung as Vietnam, Ghana, Colombia, and even the United States in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and Superstorm Sandy. The aim of such public-private initiatives – which include not only flood prevention but also land reclamation, urban sanitation, and drought resistance – is to "put the breadth of Dutch water expertise into the limelight and position the Netherlands as a 'World Leader in Water,'" while also "offering expertise as a one-stop-shop [whereby], Dutch companies can increase their world market share considerably".⁴

Two clear themes run throughout the language and imagery employed by the NWP and the groups with which it partners. The first of these is the notion of "expertise", a term that is repeated again and again in reports, brochures, websites, and presentations. Indeed, in a familiar neoliberal move, the primary selling point being pitched to the NWP's potential foreign clients is not the money or manpower the Dutch water sector might bring to their overseas projects, but rather the knowledge, innovation, and experience of their collective experts. That is, to punch above its proverbial weight in the ever-more crowded sphere of overseas development work, the Netherlands appears to have strategically cast itself as a nation of brains over brawn. As one NWP booklet on its recent projects in Indonesia succinctly proclaims in bold lettering (alongside a graphic superimposing the outline of an illuminated light bulb over a stylized map of

⁴ This description of the NWP's activities is available on their website at https://www.nwp.nl/activiteiten and https://www.nwp.nl/over-nwp/wat-is-nwp.

the lowland nation), "World Bank: 'Ideas are the Netherlands' strength".⁵

This appeal to "expertise" is significant in and of itself, as it speaks to larger questions concerning the crucial role that the archetype of the foreign expert (and neoliberal logics writ large) has today come to play in international development projects and disaster response the world over. Provocatively, it also echoes the particular nature of Dutch colonialism in the Indonesian archipelago, where specialized experts (agriculture experts, irrigation experts, sanitation experts, etc.) played an increasingly influential role in the running of the colony during its final decades, one Dutch historian suggesting that from the late-19th century onwards the Dutch East Indies should be understood as being administered not so much by its civil servants as by a "technical intelligentsia [who] had the final say".6 Evidently, the present, global permutation of the rule of experts has a long lineage all its own.

However, particularly salient is where precisely this "expertise" is claimed to originate *from*. In the documents and presentations produced by the NWP and its related initiatives, the message on this matter is clear: contemporary Dutch water expertise is a direct product of Dutch history and Dutch culture, the natural result of a people being defined for centuries by their David-and-Goliath relationship with the sea.

As captured so perfectly in a 2010 video⁷ produced by the NWP, entitled "NWP: Water in a Changing World", such a narrative is communicated through a number of tropes that invariably preface the promotional materials circulated by the organization and its partners: Historical maps of reclaimed coastlines and yellowed drawings of early irrigation networks fade into one another, offering up evidence for a long lineage of successive water works in the Netherlands stretching far back into its past. Images of tulip-lined canals and smiling children at play in city fountains aim to showcase the Dutch population's everyday adaptations and resiliencies that make water a "way of life". Such hydrological skill is even characterized as their near-biological inheritance – "Water," the words materializing across the screen as a double helix rotates slowly in the blue background, "is in our genes." Couched in these terms by those eager to promote this expertise abroad, the techniques and knowledge to control water effectively become not only a potentially lucrative export but also a sort of heritage unto itself; a heritage that is, moreover, both nation*alized* and *naturalized*.

Not incidentally, such a view builds directly upon a pre-existing, popular narrative that one encounters at nearly every turn in the Netherlands – a narrative in

⁵ Anita de Wit et al, *Air Belanda Indonesia: Cooperation between Indonesia and The Netherlands in the Field of Water* (The Hague: Netherlands Water Partnership, 2012), 10.

⁶ Jacques van Doorn, *Engineers and the colonial system: Technocratic tendencies in the Dutch East Indies* (Rotterdam: Comparative Asian Studies Program, 1982), 3.

⁷ This video is available to view at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cn2mDS-WNJs&t=9s.

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which the gradual taming of the rivers, seas, and deltas that beset the low-lying nation is cast as a defining factor in the shaping of its landscape, institutions, and collective psyche. For instance, no less than six of the Netherlands' nine UNESCO World Heritage Sites speak to past centuries of Dutch flood protection (the Defense Line of Amsterdam), the reclamation of land from the sea (Schokland and Surroundings, the Mill Network of Kinderdijk-Elshout, D.F. Wouda Steam Pumping Station, the Beemster Polder), and the control of water in urban planning (the 17th-century Canal Ring of Amsterdam). A seventh site, recognized for its natural heritage values, is the Wadden Sea itself. In 2007, when the Committee for the Development of the Dutch Canon (a group of academics and heritage professionals tasked with outlining the most significant contours of the nation's history to guide instruction in primary and secondary schools) submitted their final report to Dutch government, they proposed four units on key moments in the development of Dutch water management through the centuries (coincidentally, the same number of units dedicated to events in the expansion and decline of Dutch colonialism). In their introduction to this revised curriculum, the Committee even likened their work to that of successive generations of water management, writing "This canon was created by bringing together a number of specialists and allowing them to consult with one another and with a choice selection of interested

individuals and stakeholders for a year. A website with a discussion forum allowed every Dutch citizen the opportunity to voice his or her opinion. The process brings to mind the way in which the Netherlands for centuries has succeeded in keeping its polders dry: collective craftsmanship".8 Indeed, this parallel between the collective, yet expert, management of water in the lowland nation and the unique character of Dutch society and politics - based on deeply-held principles of pragmatism, discussion, and compromise, or the aptlynamed "Polder Model" of consensus decision-making - is one drawn over and over by citizens in discussions of their country's history and its present.

The Engineer's Paradise

Returning to the original question at hand: what happens when this carefully curated image of the Dutch water management professional, whose legitimacy in large part emanates from this evidently inherited, almost innate, distinctly Dutch expertise, is introduced into the longstanding debate over how to best mitigate flooding in Jakarta today?

Unlike many of the locations in which NWP affiliates work overseas, Indonesia is of course not an altogether unfamiliar landscape for Dutch water engineers. Quite the contrary; it is one that was profoundly shaped by earlier generations of colonial technocrats, scientists, architects, and urban planners, the historian Jan Kop even going so far as to characterize

⁸ Committee for the Development of the Dutch Canon, *A key to Dutch history: Report by the Committee for the Development of the Dutch Canon* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 11.

the Dutch East Indies as "a paradise for engineers".9 In particular, Jakarta, or Batavia then, was designed and constructed according to colonial logics of security, ethnic segregation, and hygiene - all of which demanded that water be carefully controlled as it moved through the growing metropolis. At times these logics found expression, especially during the paternalistic "Ethical Policy" period of the early 20th century, in the humanitarian-minded redevelopment of inner-city kampung to improve drainage and sanitation facilities. At others, they were invoked to justify the unequal distribution of access to drinking water and protection from yearly floods across the cityscape, leaving "native" Indonesian neighborhoods notably disadvantaged by comparison with the newly constructed European suburbs that sprung up in the latter decades of colonial rule. While the intervening decades have altered the morphology of Jakarta in profound ways, traces of this uneven colonial-era landscape of water access and flood protection are still in evidence today: Many of the same impoverished kampung still endure few or no connections to the municipal infrastructure of piped drinking water¹⁰, while former Dutch strongholds, like Menteng in central Jakarta, are spared the worst of the capital's floods in spite of their unfavorable topography (though it is unclear if, in the case of that district specifically, its residents' dry feet are due

more to the original prowess of the colonial urban planners or the present-day girth of their wallets and the many foreign embassies they call neighbor).

While the control of water, and engineering works in general, undoubtedly played an important part in imperial contexts the world over, in the Dutch East Indies its role was a defining one for a colony that increasingly valued expertise, infrastructure, and technology in an effort to extend and deepen its rule at the very same moment that it was unknowingly slipping into its final decades. This is not to say that this generation of colonial-era experts was always successful in their endeavors; destructive flooding, in particular, plagued cities across the archipelago throughout Dutch rule. In fact, it would perhaps be more accurate to understand the colony as a *laboratory* rather than a paradise, a place where experiments in engineering of all kinds were tested, modified, and oftentimes discarded as failures (a history that is markedly contrary to the NWP narrative of water expertise as something that has long come effortlessly and innately to Dutch engineers). Nevertheless, the dogged pursuance of effective water management, regardless of the eventual outcome of such projects, remain absolutely central to the colonial project, a point perhaps best summarized by the historian and anthropologist Rudolf Mrázek: "The threat, especially as modern cities were emerging

⁹ Quoted in Anita de Wit et al, Air Belanda Indonesia, 6.

¹⁰ Michelle Kooy and Karen Bakker, "Technologies of Government: Constituting Subjectivities, Spaces, and Infrastructures in Colonial and Contemporary Jakarta," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (June 2008) 32(2): 375-391.

in the Indies, was in fluidity," "in water – polluted, dripping, leaking, or flowing unregulated...To rule the colony, to become modern there, to stay, meant to confine the flow."¹¹

A Not-So-Natural Disaster

Set against this historical backdrop, we might very well wonder what Indonesians today may make of the news that contemporary Dutch engineers will soon be planning, testing, investing, and constructing across the very same landscapes originally shaped by their predecessors for the advancement of a colonial project. The rather odd sense of déjà vu such a prospect inspires is certainly not lost on Jakarta's residents. Indeed, even if these recent Dutch involvements are momentarily set aside, the robust public debate that surrounds Jakarta's flooding today does not portray the phenomenon as a new one; instead, Indonesian discussions of their capital's water problems consistently frame these in broader historical terms. For instance, a visit to Gramedia, the country's largest bookstore chain, will typically discover several books written for a popular audience which trace Jakarta's floods from the 17th century to the present day, detailing how each Dutch or Indonesian governor struggled to cope; and ever since the particularly disruptive inundations of January 2012, Indonesian newspaper articles on such disasters

frequently make reference to prior floods or past waterworks of the colonial period.

This rising popular curiosity in peering back through the centuries to uncover the roots of Jakarta's present waterrelated challenges is but one symptom of a wider and profound shift in the public debate on the capital's floods - a shift towards understanding the phenomenon as fundamentally social and political. As urbanists (and former Jakarta residents themselves) AbdouMalig Simone and Abidin Kusno have observed,¹² many citydwellers have become increasingly (and vocally) dissatisfied with officials who wash their hands of responsibility for the floods and their aftermath by normalizing these as "natural" (and thus ostensibly unpreventable) occurrences, or who shift the blame entirely to impoverished Jakartans by claiming that their supposed lack of civic discipline in depositing their trash into the canals is the primary cause of the capital's troubles. As an aside: not only are such "environmental" arguments empirically suspect in and of themselves – overlooking the fact that while the clogging of some canals by the actions of the urban poor is undoubtedly unhelpful, it is by no means the main contributor to the city's worsening floods, not to mention that it is the oftignored responsibility of the municipal government to ensure that those canals are dredged regularly - it is common

¹¹ Rudolf Mrázek, *Engineers of Happy Land: Technology and Nationalism in a Colony* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 56.

¹² Interviews with AbdouMaliq Simone and Abidin Kusno in Etienne Turpin, Adam Bobbette, and Merideth Miller, eds, *Jakarta: Architecture + Adaptation.* (Depok: Universitas Indonesia Press, 2013), 61-101, 129-175. See also Abidin Kusno, *After the New Order: Space, Politics and Jakarta* (Honolulu: University of Hawai⁶i, 2013).



Water, heritage, and development meet in northern Jakarta. In the foreground, the ruins of warehouses built in the colonial period; in the background, recently constructed apartment complexes. Between these, a garbage depot. Photo by the author.

knowledge amongst Jakarta's activist community that such narratives have been deployed by politicians for decades as justification for the forcible eviction and swift bulldozing of informal settlements from the vicinity of Jakarta's waterways, usually to make way for more lucrative, higher-end housing developments.

Indeed, since the fall of Suharto's authoritarian regime in 1998 (and the consequent loosening of strictures on the press and public discourse in general), there has been increasing popular awareness and voiced outrage over the realization that urban flooding is by no means a random phenomenon. While some of its contributing factors may be both newly emergent and out of the immediate hands of Jakartans (sea level rise or severe seasonal weather patterns due to global climate change, for instance), increasing attention is being paid to the significant role that local histories of government corruption, socio-economic inequality, bureaucratic negligence, and unchecked construction play in determining the patterns of flood waters across the cityscape today. In this newly democratic nation, particular public criticism has been levied at the rampant development by private business conglomerates (closely allied with influential government officials) of luxury malls, gated housing complexes,

and elevated ring roads - structures that have multiplied in a seemingly exponential fashion across the city since the 1980s. Built for the convenience of Jakarta's burgeoning middle classes, such construction works are more and more regarded as major contributors to the capital's worsening floods because of their impact on the urban morphology in two regards: land subsidence due to privatized groundwater extraction (that is, the drilling of large wells to sustain such developments causes swaths of the city to actually sink, sometimes by as much as ten *centimeters* per year), and the disruption of existing drainage networks as sensitive water catchment zones along Jakarta's southern reaches are paved over at an alarming rate. All of this serves to further compound an already - since at least the colonial period - unequal landscape of water access and flood protection, with the urban poor set at a dramatic disadvantage as the community that historically has suffered the most from the floods and been attended to the least by relief efforts in their aftermath. In light of this inequality, where the waters rise and who is protected from them can no longer be dismissed by government commentators as a matter of chance, wherein flooding represents a "natural" (and so, politically neutral) problem that demands a solely technical solution. Rather, a frustrated Jakartan public, and in particular a vocal assemblage of local NGOs and community activist groups (for instance, Marco Kusumawijaya's Rujak Center for Urban Studies),

increasingly demand that the challenges in water management their city faces today be recognized as the product of sedimented histories of urban planning, social tensions, and political influence. Indeed, I would go so far as to suggest that talk of water and talk of inequality – both its historical and contemporary manifestations – have become inherently tied together in contemporary Jakarta, with the former increasingly functioning as a kind of proxy for the latter in public debate.

This has certainly been the case in the recent run-up to Jakarta's contentious 2017 gubernatorial election (the outcome of which, at the time of writing, remains uncertain¹³). The incumbent, Basuki "Ahok" Tjahaja Purnama, built his campaign on a platform of pragmatism, touting his supposedly results-driven approach as the solution to the city's most pressing problems – flooding in particular. Ahok has attracted a great deal of attention from media outlets outside of Indonesia in the run up to the election because of the vocal opposition his campaign has faced from hardline religious organizations (most notably the FPI, or Front Pembela Islam), who accuse this Christian and Chinesedescendant politician of blasphemy. In the eagerness of outside observers to cast the election as a battle for Indonesia's soul between conservative religion and secular pluralism, the strong criticism of Ahok that also emanates from many of the city's progressive circles has gone largely unnoticed. This left-leaning dissatisfaction

¹³ Ahok ultimately lost the election in April 2017 to rival Anies Baswedan. Shortly thereafter, he was sentenced to two years in prison on charges of blasphemy.

with the governor has crystalized in large part around objections to his single-minded management of urban water issues, most controversially so his administration's evictions of several poor kampung communities from along the city's rivers and canals. Justified in the name of overcoming Jakarta's flooding emergency, these dramatic bulldozing of neighborhoods like Bukit Duri have become flashpoints of public debate. But, most apropos of our discussion here, whether Jakartans cheer or abhor Ahok's attempts at waterproofing their city, the arguments inevitably take on a historical tone, as urbanites look back into the past for benchmarks against which to judge their current government's achievements or failures. This can be seen to play out especially in social media, for instance (to give only one example of many) on the popular Facebook page, Indonesia Jaman Dulu ("Indonesia in the olden days"). A nostalgia-tinged hub for over 300,000 history enthusiasts, Indonesia Jaman Dulu typically posts black-and-white photographs of becak (rickshaws) lining dusty lanes, bungalows with smiling Dutch children playing in the garden, and President Sukarno meeting with foreign celebrities and heads of state. Since the gubernatorial campaign has gathered momentum, however, these have been replaced with multiple rounds of images showing an inundated Jakarta through the decades of the past century, all the way up to the (ostensibly) dry present. The page's administrators, clearly proud supporters of Ahok, frame these images as archival proof of the governor's successful management of the capital's floods – a claim hotly contested by followers in the comments. The key point here is that just as to speak of Jakarta's water woes is necessarily to speak of its citizens' inequalities, so too are discussions of water innately entangled in discussions of time – its passage, cadence, and memory.

To return to the case of interventions from the Netherlands: we cannot yet be certain what the returned presence of Dutch experts and projects in Jakarta's waterways will bring in terms of reactions from Jakartans, but set within this domestic shift in popular discourse towards what we might call the "de-naturalization" of the capital's floods - and within the Dutch's own promotion of their hydraulic expertise as a kind of national heritage steeped in their own collective past – we can surely expect that it will give rise to local and transnational discussions that link together past and present in unexpected ways. While more ethnographic study of this discourse is necessary, even a cursory glance at blogs posts, newspaper articles, and online discussion forums where the floods and Dutch interventions are debated reveals local opinions that range from distrust ("Indonesia should be aware that there is no such things as 'free lunch' in regards with the aid and funds"), to sarcasm ("ah it's [sic] reminds me of 400 years ago...")¹⁴, to relief - the latter especially from those

¹⁴ A selection of reader comments on the article by Abdul Khalik, "The Dutch return, this time as friends," *The Jakarta Globe* (November 20, 2013) http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/news/the-dutch-return-this-time-as-friends/.

foreign residents inclined to agree with one outspoken ex-pat blogger who in reaction to the unprecedented floods of 2012 lamented, "Unless the lowlanders of Holland were to return and govern the city I can't see any other solution but to abandon it to Mother Nature".¹⁵

Indeed, the insistence of organizations like the NWP on water management as an innate skill-*cum*-heritage of the Dutch nation actively encourages the drawing of such connections between past and present. The problem, however, for those who seek to advance such a narrative is that when promoted in a country that still bears the memory (and material imprint) of a uniquely technocratic tradition of Dutch governance and the centrality of water management to colonial logics (compounded by contemporary entrenchments of urban inequality), those connections will be necessarily complex, likely contentious, and possibly undermine the very authority and expertise to which they lay claim. That is, to give your opinion on why Jakarta's floods were so bad this year, or on who should be tasked with attempting to solve them altogether, might very well amount to a statement on the successes and failures of the colonial project at large.

"Heritage, mister"

Following a particularly destructive spate of floods that left many in the city stranded and sick, a cartoon appeared in a

Jakarta newspaper. One of many wry illustrations to be found in Indonesia's thriving print culture that poke fun at political figures and critique social injustices, it depicted the then newly-elected governor (now president) of the capital region, Joko "Jokowi" Widodo, waist-deep in the rising waters, holding his shoes above the waves and wearing a nervous expression on his face. A smiling passerby – straining against a current that in the background threatens to engulf shacks, motorbikes, office buildings, and even the city's iconic National Monument – cheerfully shouts out to him: "Warisan masa lalu, pak". The phrase can be translated as "Inheriting the past, Mr. Governor"16; but even more succinctly might be read as "Heritage, mister" (warisan being one several terms commonly used by those working in the country's fledgling conservation sector to refer to cultural traditions or objects, and masa lalu here meaning "the past").

Besides its dry (pun intended) humor, this cartoon encapsulates the core conclusion to be drawn from this case of rising waters and vaunted expertise, former colonizer and colonized, and the discourses that have formed at their intersection: things that might appear at first utterly ahistorical are in truth steeped in the past and our diverse understandings of what we have inherited from it. A "natural" phenomenon turns out to be a historical one through and through; the efforts to mitigate it blend

¹⁵ Terry Collins, "Floods of Excuses," *Indonesia Expat* (January 16, 2012) http://indonesiaexpat.biz/featured/ floods-of-excuses/.

¹⁶ This translation suggested by Dr. Abidin Kusno from York University in Ontario, Canada. My thanks to him for first making me aware of this cartoon through a paper he delivered at the University of California, Berkeley on April 2, 2014, entitled "Floods, Dams, and Difference in an Indonesian Metropolis".

together technical expertise and deeply-held beliefs about collective identities and national character; the local perception of these measures inevitably frames such contemporary interventions in light of both a long history of colonial governance and engineering across that very same cityscape, as well as more recent patterns of social inequality and political failure.

Indeed, for the burgeoning field of heritage studies itself, an even broader lesson can be drawn from this story of Dutch water management and Jakarta's worsening floods: phenomena, practices, and materials that would not seem to have anything to do with "heritage" proper as we have come to expect it – "natural" disasters, technical expertise, infrastructural repair – are often about *just that*, interwoven with the past, and our beliefs about what has been handed down to us from it, in surprising ways. As researchers, we need not look only to the conventional sites of

reflection on history – the museum gallery, the UNESCO World Heritage Site, the archaeological dig - to witness the development and deployment of heritage discourse today; in fact, we may not be so well served by turning our attention too quickly to those places that proclaim a priori "here be heritage". Rather. in our enthusiasm for elucidating and explaining the power of the past in the present, we might equally look to the orderly board room, the trash-clogged canal, the glossy policy brief, the unfinished piece of infrastructure still encased in scaffolding. Here also, governments, companies, professionals, and ordinary city-dwellers trade in potent notions of inheritance, identity, and memory; here also, the weight of history is a force that can be seen to shape our present material world, our aspirations for its future improvement, and our fears of its potential disruption.

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The Will to Trade: The Bruneian Incorporation of the Pre-Hispanic Manila Region

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Abstract

While it is difficult to precisely trace the origins of Brunei's establishment of the Manila region as an economic satellite, sufficient sources suggest that it occurred as a result of a marriage between Bruneian and Manila royalty. Bruneian oral histories suggest this was a forced event brought upon the Manila polities by Bruneian leaders. However, other historical sources of the Luzones, the inhabitants of the Manila region, show that the Luzones played a greater role in the maritime trade of Southeast Asia. This is in part due to the strategic location of the Manila entrepôt between China and the more southern islands of Southeast Asia. This location, coupled with the Luzones long exposure to maritime trade in the region, motivated the Luzones polities to intermarry with the Bruneians to gain greater access to Southeast Asian maritime markets.

Introduction

The bulk of information about Philippine history accessible to the public is about the islands during and after Spanish colonization. Pre-Hispanic sources and histories are few, and the amount of colonial and post-colonial sources draw historians to study those periods. Due to this, scholars know little about the pre-Hispanic period or the precolonial Philippine natives. This is especially true with the Luzones¹ Tagalogs who inhabited pre-Hispanic Manila and the surrounding region. When Europeans started colonizing and trading in Southeast Asia, the Luzones were a fierce and regionally sophisticated people that spread beyond the Manila region. Unfortunately, little research has been done on the subject

¹ The term "Luzones" is a term I borrow from William Henry Scott. However, primary sources use spellings such as "Luções." The Spanish also referred to the island as "Luçon" before standardizing the spelling to "Luzon." See William Henry Scott, *Barangay: Sixteenth-Century Philippine Culture and Society* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1994), 193; Tome Pires, *Sixth Book of Malacca* in *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1990), 2:268; and Miguel Lopez de Legazpi, "Relation of the Filipinas Islands and of the character of their inhabitants" *The Philippine Islands*, *1493-1898* edited by Emma Helen Blair and James Alexander Robertson (Cleveland: Author H. Clark Company, 1904), 3:60-61. From this point forward, *The Philippine Islands* will be referred to as *B.&R*.



The Manila Region in blue.

of precolonial Luzones leaving the Philippine islands and interacting with foreign polities.²

One detail that scholars know about pre-Hispanic Manila and the surrounding area is the Bruneian economic influence in the area. Manila, shortly before the advent of the Spanish, became a satellite of the Brunei Sultanate. However, while some historians speculate that Brunei conquered Manila, historical, archeological, and other sources suggest otherwise. The purpose of this paper is to show that the Luzones in reality agreed to become a Bruneian satellite. They did this to gain greater access to the Southeast Asian trade networks because of Brunei's well-established presence there.

A careful analysis of previously accessed sources will show that the Luzones were lucrative and had hundreds of years of experience trading with China and Southeast Asian polities and traders. They actively participated in the Indian Ocean trade and attracted both Chinese and Southeast Asians. This long-standing trade with these foreign polities transformed Manila and the surrounding region into a maritime economic center that attracted foreigners and their goods. Sometime around 1500 CE, the Bruneian Sultanate peacefully gained some economic control in

² William Henry Scott discusses the presence of Luzones outside of their indigenous homeland, but does not delve into much detail. See Scott, *Barangay*, 191-195. Others acknowledge the existence of foreign influences, particularly Chinese and Islamic influences, but do not go in depth about these interactions between these polities. See Luis H. Francia, *A History of the Philippines: From Indios Bravos to Filipinos* (New York: Overlook Press, 2010), 45-48; Anthony Reid, *A History of Southeast Asia: Critical Crossroads* (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2015), 105-106; Vicente L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society Under Early Spanish Rule* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 106-107.

the Manila region through a marriage between the two polities, allowing Luzones to further access Southeast Asian maritime trade.

The Manila Region

To better understand why the Luzones allowed Brunei to gain some economic control over the Manila region, an understanding of the Manila region and the Luzones that inhabited it is needed.

Manila's placement is strategic. It lies near the center of Luzon, the largest of the Philippine islands located in the South China Sea with China to the north and Borneo and the spice-producing Maluku islands to the south. Directly west of Manila is its natural harbor, the Manila Bay, and Laguna de Bay, a landlocked lake, is directly east. Laguna de Bay flows westward into Manila Bay via the Pasig River, which divides Manila north and south. The land region surrounding Laguna de Bay and the western segment of Luzon directly south of Manila Bay, known today as the Southern Tagalog regions, as well at the Island of Mindoro, located just south of the Southern Tagalog regions, all played important roles in the historical relations with Manila. This is especially true in regard to Manila trade with Brunei, China, and Japan. For this purpose, Manila, the

Southern Tagalog regions, and Mindoro will be referred to as the Manila region for the rest of this article.

The native inhabitants who inhabited the Manila region during the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries called themselves Luzones. Scholars assumed they were Tagalogs and the various indigenous groups from Mindoro since these peoples inhabited the region when Spanish colonizers arrived. However, in their interactions with the Spanish, the Chinese, the Malays, and with other Philippine natives, they referred to themselves as Luzones, after the island of Luzon.³ Whether the inhabitants of the Manila region called themselves Luzones before the fourteenth century is unknown, but it is assumed that the predecessors of the Luzones and population of the Manila region before the fourteenth century, to some extent, were Tagalogs.

The region, to use the words of Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, is a micro-region located in the greater Southeast Asian region. It is a relatively small region with its own goods, peoples, and geographic attributes that differs from the rest of greater Southeast Asia.⁴ This micro-region is distinct because of its natural harbor, Manila Bay, as well as its placement between China to the north and

³ Scott, *Barangay*, 191-195. Pires, *Sixth Book*, 268. Ming court documents show that the Luzones differentiated themselves from other Luzon natives. A banquet with the Luzones and the Pangasinans shows that the two groups, while both inhabitants of the Luzon island, were referred to by different names. See "Yong-le: Year 8, Month 11, Day 15" in *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: an open access resource translated by Geoff Wade*, Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore, http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/entry/1599, accessed November 18, 2016.

⁴ Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 77-80.

Borneo and the Maluku islands to the south. It proved to be a beneficial entrepôt through the centuries. It acted as a gateway port at the end of an extended archipelago, or a series of landmasses separated from each other, but connected through maritime travel due to their close proximity.5 Bruneian and other Insular Southeast Asians could reach the Manila region by sailing north from Borneo, along Palawan, to Mindoro and Luzon. From here, goods filtered between insular Southeast Asian traders and the Chinese and Japanese traders that came from the north in the open sea. The Manila region, in a sense, created a safe, visible shipping line between the insular Southeast Asian traders to a micro-region that was closer to China than any of the other insular Southeast Asian polities and ports south of the Philippine archipelago.⁶ This geographical placement is one of the reasons why the Bruneian Sultanate wanted some control over the micro-region.

Manila: Bruneian Economic Satellite

When the Spanish arrived to Manila, they discovered the Luzones and the Bruneians had close connections to one another. Within time, the Spanish learned that Bruneian elites and oligarchies exercised some control over the Manila region politically and dominated the economic sphere. They also realized that much of the population declared themselves to be Muslim, a fact compatible with the notion that the Manila region was a satellite of the predominately Muslim sultanate at that period.⁷ Notwithstanding, why Manila was a satellite of Brunei is still disputed due to lack of sources, but most sources point to the fact that an intermarriage occurred between a Brunei official and Luzones royalty, something that the Luzones willingly agreed to in order to get a better foothold in Southeast Asian trade.

A common argument made about Brunei's economic expansion into the Manila region comes from a Bruneian oral history. This history argues that Brunei took over Manila through a war. It tells how a Bruneian Sultan conquered the leading datu of Salundang, a name given to the home of the Luzones, assumed to be modern-day Manila. After the capture of Salundang, the Sultan married the daughter of the datu and proceeded to conduct trade with Luzon and China.⁸ However, primary source accounts support a peaceful unification of Bruneian and Luzones.

Before exploring the flaws of this oral history, it is necessary to acknowledge the importance of oral histories in general, especially in Southeast Asia. Oral histories contribute significantly to all historiographies. They provide perspectives of generations of people. Cultural patterns and

⁵ Ibid., 133-135.

⁶ Ibid., 124-142. Kenneth R Hall, *A History of Early Southeast Asia: Maritime Trade and Societal Development, 100-1500* (Plymouth, UK: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2011), 328-333.

⁷ Linda A. Newson, *Conquest and Pestilence in the Early Spanish Philippines* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 12, 19; Scott, *Barangay*, 190-194.

⁸ Pehin Jawatan Dalam Seri Maharaja Dato Seri Utama Dr. Haji Awang Mohd. Jami Al-Sufri, *Survival of Brunei: A Historical Perspective* (Bandar Seri Begawan: Brunei History Centre, 2002), 20.

past values are interlaced throughout their accounts. They also add details to written records by providing themes, details, and expressions that cannot be written in words alone.9 In a Southeast Asian context, they become especially important when Europeans authored the only available written sources of a specific event or period. Oral histories give perspectives of indigenous people and their history when the only other available sources were written by foreigners. This is further amplified in parts of Southeast Asia that have no known written histories before European contact and oral histories are the only available histories of specific events or periods.10

While oral histories play an important role in Southeast Asian history, especially during periods before European contact, this Bruneian source is questionable based on these contradictions and the lack of supporting historical or archeological evidence. The unification probably only resulted from the marriage between a Bruneian elite and a ruling Luzones family after years of trade and diplomatic relations, as suggested by the pre-Iberian Islamic practices in the region of intermarrying ruling families for economic and political purposes.¹¹ Many other historical sources also suggest no warfare or conquering occurred due to the peaceful relations between the two groups.

Present-day historians assume a Bruneian wrote this particular oral history on paper in the eighteenth century. It was not until the nineteenth century that British imperialists obtained the manuscript, and scholars have yet to finalize the age of the manuscript.¹² Regardless of these details, the fact that the author penned the oral history in the eighteenth century at the earliest implies at least two centuries distance the manuscript from the intermarriage of Bruneian officials and the Manila ruling class. The passage itself about the takeover of Manila is comparatively short, only incorporating a few sentences. It is inside the genealogy of the Sultans, a description that attempts to justify the authority of the Bruneian dynasty. It is likely that the story slowly changed over time by including warfare elements of conquering due to Spain's subsequent colonization of the region and Spain's later attempt to colonize Brunei.13 The cultural justification to legitimize Islamic rule by controlling trade through warfare may have also played a part in the change.¹⁴

Other historical and scholarly sources suggest that the marital unification of Manila and Brunei was more peaceful. Indeed, these sources suggest that the

⁹ Kwa Chong Guan, "The Value of Oral Testimony: Text and Orality in the Reconstruction of the Past" in *Oral History in Southeast Asia: Theory and Method* ed. P. Lim Pui Huen, James H. Morrison, Kwa Chong Guan (Singapore: National Archives of Singapore and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1998), 24-28.
¹⁰ Ibid., 21-27.

¹¹ Reid, A History, 44, 104-107, 113, 127-128; Scott, Barangay, 191.

¹² P. L. Amin Sweeny, "Silsilah Raja-Raja Berunai" in Papers Relating to Brunei (Selangor, Malaysia: Academe Art & Printing Services Sdn. Bhd., 1998), 46-49, 99.

¹³ Al-Sufri, Survival of Brunei, 22-26.

¹⁴ Hall, *Early Southeast Asia*, 291.

Bruneian elites not only gained a political foothold in Manila through intermarriage, but that the Luzones agreed to this intermarriage so they could gain more access to Southeast Asian maritime trade.

To better understand the incorporation of Manila and the surrounding region as a Bruneian satellite, Brunei's motives in incorporating the region need to be analyzed. Its motives were tied to closer access to China, a longtime trade connection. Geographically and economically, Brunei wanted to control the Manila region to strengthen its relations with China. The region traded with China for centuries before Brunei molded it into a satellite polity. This factor, tied with Brunei's long history of trading with China, motivated the Sultanate to create political ties with the Manila region to have more access to Chinese markets and more control over their goods.

Scholars still do not know who originally settled the Manila area and transformed the region to an entrepôt, how they did it, or when. However, archeological and historical sources show the existence of settlements in the Mania Bay and Laguna de Bay area that traded with China as early as the thirteenth century C.E, suggesting the region existed as an entrepôt for several centuries before the Spanish advent.¹⁵ Archeologists found Chinese porcelains throughout the Manila region dating back to the Song dynasty, though a majority of their findings are from the Ming dynasty.¹⁶ One Chinese source suggests that Chinese started trading with Mindoro as early as the tenth century, though one historian argued that this source is referencing Laguna de Bay, not Mindoro.¹⁷ Regardless of the outset of Chinese trade with the Manila region, by the advent of the Spanish takeover of Manila in 1571, the Tagalogs and Luzones traded with the Chinese for hundreds of years. Indeed, a small Chinese community existed in Manila in 1571 and Chinese junks visited the city at least annually. These junks also visited Mindoro, making the Manila region an active and attractive micro-region to the Chinese, the Bruneian, and the Spanish by the mid-sixteenth century. The region was not only strategically located, it proved to be a valuable source of Chinese good and maritime trade.¹⁸

This information is important because it not only shows the long period of contact the Manila region had with China, but it also shows why the region attracted

¹⁵ William Henry Scott, *Prehispanic Source Materials: For the Study of Philippine History* (Quezon City: New Day Publishers, 1984), 24; F. Landa Jocano, *Filipino Prehistory: Rediscovering Precolonial Heritage* (Manila: Punlad Research House, 1998), 144-149.

¹⁶ Jocano, *Filipino Prehistory*, 144-149.

¹⁷ Go Bon Juan argues that China referenced trade with Laguna de Bay in the tenth century, see "Ma'I in Chinese Records – Mindoro or Bai? An Examination of a Historical Puzzle" in *Philippine Studies* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 2005), 53, (1):119-138.

¹⁸ Francia, *History of the Philippines*, 46-47; Scott, *Barangay*, 207-209.

Brunei traders. Its location was not only a convenient gate port between Brunei and China, but it also brought Chinese traders. Historians generally accept the fact that the Chinese called Brunei "Bo-ni."19 Chinese records dating back to the sixth century CE show trade relations between China and Boni. With these details in light, Brunei likely traded and held relations with China for centuries.²⁰ By the fifteenth century, Brunei and other maritime polities took advantage of the Zheng He voyages to entice Chinese officials and traders by establishing trade routes and offering specific goods.²¹ While Brunei perhaps had centuries of trade history with China, it took measures to strengthen trade alongside other competing centers of trade. One of these was Manila.²²

It was under these circumstances around the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries that Brunei officials intermarried with and created strong ties with the Luzones peoples in Manila. With current understandings of Southeast Asian Islamic culture during the time, historians assume that Manila became a Brunei satellite through the marriage of Luzones leaders and started filling aristocratic and political classes in the Manila region.²³ They did this to exercise more influence over the Manila region and to have better access to Chinese trade. They also lengthened their extended archipelago by obtaining this entrepôt at the end of a series of islands that allowed Bruneian traders to decrease the amount of time they spent sailing the open oceans on their way to China. This, in turn, ensured that the Bruneian Sultanate controlled more Chinese goods in the Southeast Asian markets through their connections in the Manila region.

Trade History of Manila Region

Though it appears to threaten the Luzones, Bruneian economic control over Manila, the surrounding region, and the Chinese goods that entered the region is something that the Luzones willingly agreed to and wanted. The Brunei marital union in the Manila region meant that the Luzones gained greater access to the wider Southeast Asian maritime and Indian Ocean trade routes.

Well before the Bruneian Sultanate took control of the Manila entrepôt, the Luzones actively traded with foreign polities. As discussed earlier, the Chinese contacted and traded with Manila and the

¹⁹ Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Early Modern Southeast Asia, 1400-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 109-110; Geoff Wade, translator, *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: an open access resource*, Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore, http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/place/bo-ni, accessed February 25, 2017.

²⁰ Johannes L. Kurtz, "Pre-modern Chinese Sources in the National History of Brueni: The Case of Poli" in *Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia and Oceania* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2013), 169 (2-3): 213-231. While Kurtz article is critical of the Brunei and "Bo-li" connection, it is very revealing of Chinese records that reference Bo-ni, or Poni. The current consensus, as discussed by Andaya, Andaya, and Reid, still suggest that Bo-ni is a premodern reference to Brunei. See footnote 12.

²¹ Reid, A History, 65-67.

²² Ibid.

²³ Shelly Errington, *Meaning and Power in a Southeast Asian Realm* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 236-237; Scott, *Barangay*, 191. Andaya, *Early Modern*, 107-110.

surrounding area for centuries before the Bruneian intermarriage with the region's leaders. However, the Chinese and the Bruneians were not alone in contacting the Luzones before Spanish colonization.

Archeological evidence proves the existence of Srivijayan contract with the Manila region in the ninth century of the common era. While this piece of evidence is limited, a copperplate inscription found near Laguna de Bay written in a mix of Old Malay, Old Javanese, and Old Tagalog proves trade relations existed between the two polities. The inscription indicates that two parties settled a debt weighed in gold. One party is probably a Tagalog native, judging by geographical location and the use of Old Tagalog. The other party could very well be Javanese or another Southeast Asian foreigner from Srivijayan or an area under its influence, but that is still difficult to determine.²⁴ Either way, the document verifies that the Manila region was in contact with Srivijaya as early as the ninth century, decades earlier than the first known Chinese mention of the Manila region.

Linguistic elements and archeology also show that the Manila region had some sort of contact with India, whether directly or indirectly. The Tagalog language, coupled with several other Philippine languages, are replete with words of Sanskrit origin. Archeological evidences include glasses, metals, and beads that originated in India found throughout the Philippine islands.

Archeologists identified twelve of these metals dating back to pre-Hispanic Philippines that only could have been mined in the Indian subcontinent. Specific to the Tagalog region, archeologists identified a medallion with a Siamese-influenced Buddhist figure on it south of Manila Bay. Scholars even linked some cultural elements of native Philippine society to Indic influences. Of course, there is debate as to whether these Indic elements came through the Tagalog and Philippine contact with Srivijava and other Southeast Asian polities or from Indian traders that frequented the Southeast Asian seas during the first millennia of the common era.²⁵ Despite this debate, these pieces of evidence show early Southeast Asian trade between the Manila region and other extra-Philippine polities even before the ninth century copperplate inscription.

Scholars still dispute when these Indic influences started to come to the Philippines. Earlier theories suggest as early as the third century before the common era. Others suggest as late as the fifth century of the common era.²⁶ While scholars continue to debate the sources of these influences and the dates of their appearance, these sources all provide enough evidence of Tagalogs trading with foreign peoples as late as a millennium before Hispanicization.

As stated earlier, it is difficult to determine the full extent of the Luzones trade relations before the Bruneian

²⁴ Antoon Postma, "The Laguna Copper-Plate Inscription: Text and Commentary" in *Philippine Studies* (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, 1992), 40 (2): 183-203.

²⁵Jocano, Prehistory, 138-144.

²⁶ Ibid., 141.

intermarriage. Indeed, it is difficult to determine the full extent before Spanish contact and colonization since a vast majority of primary sources come from Spanish sources. However, this information all suggests that the Luzones and their Tagalog predecessors in the Manila region actively traded with foreign polities for centuries. They shaped the region into a entrepôt and a micro-region. They knew how to not only trade, but how to attract traders to their coasts. The intermarriage with the Bruneian elites was not the Luzones' first exposure to trade politics. They knew what they were doing.

The Lure of Islam

By the early sixteenth century when the Portuguese and Spanish came to Insular Southeast Asia in the sixteenth, Brunei actively traded with many Southeast Asian polities, including Sulu, Champa, and Melaka. They also sent Muslim missionaries to Champa and Sulu. Their diplomatic and economic network appears to have been extensive and well-developed. As discussed earlier, Brunei had long economic ties with China. However, Brunei surely had similar ties with another Islamic polity in Southeast Asia.

Scholars do not know who brought Islam to Brunei or when, but they must have received it decades or even centuries before the coming of the Iberian powers. Brunei needed a strong Islamic presence before being able to declare itself a sultanate and authenticate it by marrying into a prominent Islamic line. Scholars speculate that Islamic influences came through Indian Ocean maritime trade and spread throughout Southeast Asia. It began as early as the eleventh century due to the existence of a Muslim tombstone in Brunei dated 1048 CE.²⁷ Various port cities in Southeast Asia adopted Islam and spread their faith through trade and warfare by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.²⁸ These Islamized Chinese, Melakan, Javanese, and Sumatran port cities probably continued to spread their faith to Bruneian traders and political leaders. Melaka, one of the most significant entrepôts of the region at the time, officially adopted Islam in its court during the fifteenth century.²⁹ Melaka then pressured other port cities and entrepôts to adopt Islam, which many agreed to for trading purposes.³⁰ Eventually, the Bruneian king married foreign Muslim royalty and had the authority to establish a sultanate.31

Although it is still disputed how Islam came to Brunei, Brunei contacted foreign powers during this period and influenced them to convert to Islam. These contacts must have been either strong enough or long enough to allow Islam to establish a Sultanate in Brunei from their former political system. This implies that Brunei held strong relations with foreign

²⁷ Barbara Watson Andaya and Leonard Y. Andaya, *A History of Malaysia*, 2nd ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 54.

²⁸ Reid, A History, 101-105.

²⁹ Andaya, History of Malaysia, 54-58.

³⁰ Ibid., 56.

³¹ Graham Saunders, *A History of Brunei* (London: RoutledgeCurzon), 2002, 35-48.

polities. Additionally, since the Bruneians actively traded with foreign polities at the coming of the Portuguese and Spanish, and since Islam spread into Southeast Asia through Indian Ocean trade networks, the Bruneians definitely held trade relations with many of these Islamic Southeast Asian port cities and polities, just like they did with the Chinese. This appears to be the case with Melaka, which will be discussed later.

With this in mind, creating a political alliance with Brunei must have been incredibly appealing to the Luzones, who had centuries of experience in Southeast Asian maritime trade. After this long period of experience, the Luzones knew what to do to gain a stronger presence in the maritime market. They knew Brunei already had that presence, especially since the Bruneian royalty married a foreign Islamic elite and became a Sultanate.³² Establishing strong trade relations with the Bruneian Sultanate and intermarrying with them to create a political allegiance was a viable option for them. This is especially true since political leaders intermarried during this period to establish diplomatic relations with foreign powers.³³ Indeed, Brunei did the same thing to establish its sultanate.

Additionally, as Brunei wanted to expand its extended archipelago of economic influence to the Manila region, this extension worked in reverse. The marital union allowed the Luzones to join an extended archipelago that the Bruneians created to strengthen their economic and political presence in Insular Southeast Asia. The Luzones would have the ability to fully access this extended archipelago to trade with the various Bruneian satellites throughout the Philippines islands, including Sulu and Palawan, down to Borneo and perhaps further into Insular Southeast Asia.³⁴

This idea that the Luzones desired this intermarriage is actually supported by their relations with the Bruneians before and after the union. In terms of Islam, the Luzones adopted the religion quickly to enhance trade relations. Several polities during the rise of Islam in Southeast Asia adopted Islam for a variety of reasons, but one included political and commercial opportunities that spanned the Indian Ocean.³⁵ The Manila region in particular held economic motives to adopt the religion. Spanish primary accounts show how economically driven the Muslims of the Manila region were. In fact, Spanish accounts tell us that the more involved in the Southeast Asian trade network the Luzones were, the more they adhered to Islam

For the first several decades of European contact with the Luzones, Europeans assumed that all of the Tagalogs were an Islamized people.³⁶ However, when

³² Ibid., 42-43.

³³ Reid, A History, 44, 104-107, 113, 127-128.

³⁴ Saunders, *History of Brunei*, 42-51; Newson, *Conquest*, 33-34.

³⁵ Hall, Early Southeast Asia, 288.

³⁶ Legazpi, "Relation," 60-61; Tome Pires, *Fourth Book – China to Borneo* in *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires* (New Delhi: Asian Educational Services, 1990), 1:134.

the Spanish arrived to Manila in 1570, the animist traditions of the Luzones in the Manila region surprised them. They discovered that the Luzones were a small population of a greater Tagalog ethnicity that populated the Manila region with other ethnicities. Only a small number of the Tagalogs professed to be Muslim and followed the precepts. Many of these Tagalogs in the Manila region claimed to be Muslim but only followed a few precepts, specifically abstinence from meat, and continued to practice various aspects of animism. The rest of the Tagalogs, mostly those inland away from the coast, only practiced animism and did not profess to Islam at all.37

In the account, "Relation of the Conquest of the Island of Luzon," the unnamed author made some interesting distinctions between the various Tagalogs on Luzon. Only those close to the coastal areas professed to be Muslim. But even though they professed the faith, their adherence was allegedly shallow. "In the towns closest to the sea," the author states, "some do not eat pork, the reason for their not eating it....being that, in trading with the Moros of Burney [Brunei], the latter taught them some part of the evil doctrine of Mahoma [Mohammed], charging them not to eat pork."38 It is interesting that these professors of Islam only lived near the coast, where Muslim merchants from

Brunei had the ability to come into contact with them through their maritime journeys. Also, given the geographic location of Manila in comparison to the rest of the Manila region, many of these Bruneian traders probably took advantage of the trading opportunities available in these coastal villages surrounding Manila on their journeys to and from the entrepôt. Of course, when trade relations are established, people do not just trade goods, services, and currencies. People also trade ideas, which is why this European author noted how the Bruneian traders, who traded with them. "taught them some part of the nefarious doctrine of Mahoma."

Even with these Bruneian trade relations and Islamic connections, the author still recounted how superficial he believed this conversion was. The author further described why these coastal Tagalogs who proclaim Islam do not eat pork. The author claims that they did not know why nor did they know "Mahoma" or his laws.³⁹ Though these coastal Tagalogs professed to adhere to Islam, they hardly practiced it. They just abstained from meat and called themselves followers of "Mahoma." This particular author was not alone in this observation. Miguel Lopez de Legazpi also noted how many of the natives of Luzon who professed to be Muslim had "little knowledge of the law which they profess[ed], beyond practicing circumcision

³⁷ "Relación del descubrimiento y conquista de la isla de Luzón, y Mindoro, en Filipinas," 20 April 1572, block 2, pages 1, 17-20, in Pares Portal de Archivos Españoles, http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas/servlets/

Control_servlet?accion=3&txt_id_desc_ud=121790&fromagenda=N, accessed July 12, 2017. ³⁸ Ibid., 17-18.

³⁸ Ibid., 17

³⁹ Ibid.

and refraining from pork."⁴⁰ Based on these two supportive observations of the European explorers, the Tagalog Muslims may have had a limited understanding of Islamic law and only proclaimed to follow the faith and only practiced a few precepts of it.

Continuing in the "Relation of the Conquest of the Island of Luzon," the author made another interesting observation: "It is true that some of them who have been in Burney understand some of it [Islam], and are able to read some of the Alcoran [Koran]; however these are very few."⁴¹ Here, the author noted the differentiation between those who understood Islamic law and those who did not. That differentiation is whether that individual visited Brunei or not. This is understandable, given that Brunei at the time not only had a marital union with Manila, but that it was also the Manila region's sultanate.

As interesting as the Luzones travels to Brunei are, there is something deeper to these travels than just the sultanate. Another chronicler, Doctor Francisco de Sande, mentioned the economic enterprises of the Philippine natives who had ties to the Bruneian Sultanate, which included the Manila Tagalogs. Said Sande, "Some are Moros, and they obtain much gold, which they worship as a god. All their possessions are gold and a few slaves... They believe that paradise and successful enterprises are reserved for those who submit to the religion of the Moros of Borney, of which they make much account."⁴² It is interesting how economically tied the religious practices of the "Moros" were to the Bruneian Sultanate. In fact, if a Tagalog or other Philippine native wanted to be successful, the popular belief was that they would have to submit to "the religion of the Moros of Borney," or the Bruneian Sultanate. Only through submitting to the sultanate could they prosper economically.

This idea that a Philippine native had to tie themselves to the Bruneian Sultanate suggests that one or more factors played a part. First, the Philippine natives, especially the coastal Tagalogs, saw that if they declared themselves patrons to the Bruneian Sultanate and to the Islamic faith, they accessed the maritime markets more easily. It was a simple way to gain access to the Bruneian traders and their economic trade. If Luzones intermarried with Bruneian elites and created these political connections, more people would be willing to trade with the Luzones. This declaration of loyalty and faith liberated Luzones from some form of isolation and opened the doors to economic development with the greater Southeast Asian maritime markets. This idea is supported with the statements of the European conquerors who noted that along the coasts all professed to belong to Islam but did not actually know much about the faith. While it is not certain whether the coastal Philippine natives actually accepted or adopted Islam in the sense that Europeans claimed they did, the European observation of coastal Philippine natives

⁴⁰ Legazpi, "Relation," 60-61.

⁴¹ "Relación del descubrimiento," page 18.

⁴² Doctor Francisco de Sande, "Relation of the Filipinas Islands," in *B.&R.* 4: 67-70.

identifying to some extend with the Islamic faith should be acknowledged. The Philippine natives probably professed to be Muslim because they knew it would benefit them economically and help boost their image to the Bruneian traders that dominated the Philippine seas with their frequent travels to Manila and other port cities.

Second, the Bruneian traders convinced Philippine natives that if they joined ranks with the Bruneian Sultanate, they would have greater economic access. Once again, this idea is supported by the fact that the coastal Tagalogs submitted to the faith to some extent. It is also supported by the Spanish observation of the Tagalogs proclaiming to have more economic success because of their Islamic faith.⁴³ But it would not have been the Tagalogs deciding on their own to pledge allegiance to the Sultanate. It was the Bruneians convincing the Tagalogs to come under their economic influence through a marital union in exchange to access to the wider markets.⁴⁴

Third, perhaps the Islamic faith within itself attracted the Luzones and other Philippine natives. The spiritual elements of having a single god that united them with the wider Southeast Asian traders must have been appealing to those who wished to travel abroad. This aspect may have been particularly appealing to the animist Luzones who believed in and depended on a centralized and geographically-located religious center with their animist beliefs and the Indic elements in those beliefs. Islam broke this religious geocentricism, allowing Luzones to worship a deity that not only followed them throughout their travels on the seas of Southeast Asia, but allowed them to worship wherever they went.⁴⁵

All three of these factors all involve economic success in regard to maritime trade. Accepting Islam as a society included trade incentives, something that the Luzones and the Tagalogs dealt with for centuries before the Bruneian political exchange. Perhaps spiritual factors existed with the Luzones, as suggested through the means of geographic liberation from location-based deities, but here this still includes a trade element that the Luzones wanted to take advantage of and indeed did take advantage of.

Luzones Political and Trade Patterns After Marital Union

While the date of the marital union between the Luzones and the Bruneians is unknown, fifteenth and sixteenth century trade patterns note close ties between the two groups in the extra-Philippine island world. The most obvious example is within Brunei. This marital union did not benefit the Bruneians alone with controlling trade within the Manila region. Luzones went to

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Andaya, Early Modern, 159.

⁴⁵ H. M. J. Maier, "The Malays and the Sea, The Waves and the Java Sea" in *Looking in Odd Mirrors: The Java Sea* edited by V.J.H. Houben, H.M.J. Maier, and W. van der Molen (Leiden: Vakgroep Talen en Culturen van Zuidoost-Azie en Oceanie, 1992), 1-26. Reid, *A History*, 70.

Brunei as well. Probably the best known example of Luzones in Brunei is the Spanish capture of the son of the Luzones "king" in Brunei. After the death of Magellan, his fleet went to Brunei. On their visit there, they captured a number of junks, one of which held the son of the "king" of Luzones. He told the Spanish that he worked as a captain-general of the Sultan of Brunei and just completed a mission to destroy and sack a settlement that refused to pledge allegiance to the Brunei Sultanate and followed a Javanese polity instead.⁴⁶ The Portuguese also encountered Luzones sent by the Brunei Sultanate to fight them during their takeover in Melaka.47 In his description of the Luzones, Tome Pires, a Portuguese native who stayed in Melaka for some years in the early sixteenth century, described the Luzones as a people that travelled down to Brunei, presumably through the extended archipelago, traded with them, and sailed with them to Melaka to trade their goods with the traders there.⁴⁸ Indeed, the Luzones and the Bruneians maintained close relations in the Malaysian peninsula as they established trading colonies there.

Pires described the Luzones, whom he met as early as 1511 in Melaka, as a recent group represented in the Melakan port city. The Melakan government appointed a Luzones to a government position. After his appointment, this official rallied other Luzones to join him in Melaka and they established a small colony of some five hundred Luzones on the Malay peninsula. A few, including the government official, intermarried with the Malay populations. "They never used to be in Malacca as they are now," Pires explained describing the people.⁴⁹ This statement indicates that the Luzones only began to arrive and interact with the Melakan trade on the Malay peninsula. This is compatible with the idea that the Luzones took advantage of the intermarriage between their royalty and the Bruneian elite because it offered them more economic opportunities through Brunei's economic connections with the larger Southeast Asian trade networks.

Pires further validates this notion. "They [the Luzones and the Bruneians] are almost one people; and in Malacca there is no division between them." Before this statement, he described the Bruneians, their visits to the Malay Peninsula, and the goods they brought and traded. His description distinguishes the two, illustrating the Bruneians as long time traders with the Melakans and the Luzones as a people that recently joined the Bruneians with their trading in Melaka.⁵⁰ This not only implies a recent marital union between the Bruneians

⁴⁶ Antonio Pigafetta, *The First Voyage round the World* in *European Sources for the History of the Sultanate of Brunei in the Sixteenth Century* edited by Robert Nicholl (Bandar Seri Begawan: Star Press, 1975), 10-11.

⁴⁷ Scott, *Barangay*, 194. The term "king" is in quotes because that was the Spanish description of the captive's father. His father may have gone by a different title and operated a government system very different from the European monarchies.

⁴⁸ Pires, Fourth Book, 133.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 134.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 132-134. Pires, Sixth Book, 283.

and the Luzones, but the Luzones utilizing this union to access foreign trade markets. Once the union took place, certain Luzones took advantage of these new trade possibilities, went to Brunei, traded with them, and followed them to Melaka. After the Melakan government appointed one Luzones to be a government official, he encouraged more to come to Melaka, taking advantage of the Bruneian connection, and to create a new society of Luzones in Melaka. Those five hundred Luzones in Melaka came to Melaka not only because of the government official, but also because of the Brunei connection. Getting to Melaka was more of a possibility now with the extended archipelago and the Bruneian political connection. That is why the Luzones were frequently considered one with the Bruneians.

One other foreign area of interest is China. This is a more difficult place to determine Bruneian influence with Luzones and Chinese interactions since the Luzones and Tagalogs had centuries of contact with multiple Chinese empires. However, one court document made an interesting mention of the diplomatic relations between the Luzones and the Chinese.

In the Ming court records, called the Ming Shi-lu, there exist only two references to the pre-Hispanic Luzones. Both occur in the early fifteenth century. One recounts a visit of a Luzones "chieftain" to the Ming court to attend a banquet held in the honor of the family member of Bruneian royalty.⁵¹ In contrast, for the Bruneian, there are dozens of references of the Bruneians making court appearances through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, suggesting closer political connections with the Ming dynasty.⁵² While Chinese contacted the Manila region for centuries and, assumingly, still contacted the region at the time of the marital union, surely the Luzones wanted to bolster their contact with Chinese traders, and a marital union with a loyal Chinese tribute and Chinese mestizo Sultanate like Brunei was appealing to draw in more Chinese trade, especially since Manila would become a gate port at the end of the Bruneian extended archipelago. Whether this did draw in more trade is another question, but the appeal of making these political ties to such a close ally to the Ming empire certainly motivated or encouraged Luzones to enter into the marital union with the Bruneians.

Although it is difficult to determine exactly how close the Luzones and the Chinese were before the marital union, Pires made an interesting observation in his records. In an attempt to describe Southern China, he relied on the testimonies of Luzones in Melaka who claimed to have visited China. They described Southern

⁵¹ Geoff Wade, translator, *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: an open access resource*, Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore, http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/yong-le/year-8-month-11-day-15, and http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/reign/yong-le/year-3-month-10-day-5, accessed December 13, 2016.

⁵² Geoff Wade, translator, *Southeast Asia in the Ming Shi-lu: an open access resource*, Singapore: Asia Research Institute and the Singapore E-Press, National University of Singapore, http://epress.nus.edu.sg/msl/place/bo-ni, accessed December 13, 2016.

China as a sophisticated country with plenty of trade opportunities, all of which were on land.⁵³ This could be a result of the marital union, where the Luzones gained access to Bruneian trade routes and made their way to China via Bruneian ships. Indeed, having Luzones who probably went to Melaka through Bruneian connections, as stated by Pires, say that they have been to China opens the door to the possibility that they utilized Bruneian relations to make their way to China as well.⁵⁴ Unfortuantely, the evidence for this point is somewhat lacking. It cannot be considered fact, just a possibility.

With the definite examples of travel to Brunei and to the Melaka Straits, and perhaps increased trade and travel to China, it is apparent that the Luzones utilized the Bruneian marital union to gain access to these foreign trade and political opportunities through the means of the Bruneian extended archipelago. In regard to Melaka, it may not have been an opportunity to the Luzones at that time before the marital union based on Pires' description of the Luzones dependence on the Bruneian traders. Entering into this marital union with the Brunei Sultanate opened the doors to the Luzones to expand further in the maritime trade routes of Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean.

Conclusion

It is a fact that the Manila region was an economic satellite of the Brunei

Sultanate before the advent of the Spanish in the sixteenth century. How it became a satellite is clearer with the sources put into sight and its placement in the larger maritime trade networks. While there is still no definite source proving a date or place for this intermarriage between the Bruneian sultanate and the Manila regional leaders, enough evidence supports the fact that an intermarriage must have occurred because of regional practices of intermarriage and both parties will to trade. Brunei wanted to influence the Manila region and expand its archipelago to gain safer and more secure shipping routes to China, a close ally. Contrary to the oral legends, Brunei peacefully intermarried with the Luzones of the Manila region to gain this influence.

The Luzones agreed on this intermarriage because they knew it would open new doors to trade. The Luzones traded with foreign polities for centuries. They knew how a marital union could benefit them both economically and politically in maritime trade. Because of this knowledge, and assumingly their knowledge of Brunei's political and economic power in the region and the desire for Brunei to establish an extended archipelago to the Manila region, they agreed to the marital union and joined the wider Southeast Asian maritime trade network with their new ally. Through this, they successfully established a settlement in Melaka, gained economic influence in Brunei, and strengthened relations with China and presumably with a myriad of

⁵³ Pires, Fourth Book, 121.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 133-134.

other polities throughout Southeast Asia that Brunei was in contact with. This union did not only favor Brunei.

The union displays the role the Manila region played in the Southeast Asian maritime trade network before direct contact with Europeans. The Manila region was very involved in trade, and the inhabitants familiarized themselves with these trade patterns and networks. The Luzones integrated themselves in with new ideas and political and economic contacts, as implied by their willingness to open trade relations with the Spanish when the Spanish first began colonizing the Visayan islands before they reached Luzon.⁵⁵ The Luzones were truly a lucrative people, and they certainly willingly and peacefully agreed to the intermarriage of their royalty with Bruneian elites.

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⁵⁵ "Resume of Contemporaneous Documents, 1559-68" in *B.&R.* 2:141-142.

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The Political Sea:

Conservation Policies, State Power, and Symbolic Violence The Case of the Bajau in the Wakatobi Marine National Park

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Abstract

This article explores how the establishment of a marine national park in order to protect the natural resources of South-East Sulawesi Sea has resulted in symbolic violence against the Bajau, also known as sea gypsies, by destructing their ways of life under the cover of conservation and development policies. This article argues that those policies dissimulate the central government's will to extend its control over the people and the natural resources in the peripheral areas and can be root back to the concept of "political forest". Against this backdrop, the sea has become a key political entity on which claims are made, to which meanings are attached, and over which political conflicts erupt.

As every state engaged in a nationbuilding process, extending and consolidating the central state power over space or territory is crucial, especially over peripheral areas inhabited by various ethnic minority groups who live physically, culturally, and politically at the margins¹. Indonesia, with its estimated 13,466 islands², disposes of vast peripheral areas over which the central government has tenuous influence. The sea, for instance, have, for a very long time, escaped state control. However, evolution of technologies and international regulations have made it more convenient for the government to make claims over parts of the sea, thus, providing the government control over natural resources and people behavior. The sea, therefore, become a key political entity where its biological and ecological properties matter less than its strategic

¹ Baird, I.G. 2009. "Controlling the margins: Nature conservation and state power in northeastern Cambodia". In: Bourdier, Frédéric (Ed.). *Development and Dominion: Indigenous Peoples of Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos.* Bangkok: White Lotus Press.: 215-248

² According to the 2007-2010 Survey undertaken by the Indonesian National Coordinating Agency for Survey and Mapping

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resources³. Nonetheless, the expansion of control over the sea is a challenging task force for the government. One of the various tools that the Indonesian government uses to extend its control over its territorial waters, is the establishment of marine protected areas or marine national parks. Meanwhile, under the cover of conservation programs, the central state is simply continuing colonial territorialization processes, which have led to the expansion of state power in the peripheries. Back to the nineteenth century, when the European powers were expanding their territorial control in Southeast Asia, expansionist rulers claimed huge areas of "forest" lands as state property so to protect the nature as well as allowing them to control over territory and natural resources at the local people's expenses⁴. Conflicts over natural resources have emerged and escalated over time as the newly independent nation-states pursued the previous "conservation" policies. At the same time demographic and economic trends have hastened the pace of change in the physical and social environment⁵. Nowadays still, the creation of national parks involves various kinds of coercion and violence against the "indigenous people" living in remote areas⁶. State development programs along with the conservation policies have increasingly

allowed government to interfere in the lives of local people. Forced settlement, resettlement or official discourses bear symbolic violence against the ethnic minority groups.

To point out the connections, this paper will discuss empirical case study of the Wakatobi Marine National Park in South-East Sulawesi. Drawing from the concept of "political forest" as described by Peluso and Vandergeest (2001), this paper will demonstrate how the establishment of the Wakatobi Marine National Park is the continuation of land-based territorialization process but on sea, highlighting the numerous similarities and differences between the "political forest" and the "political sea". This paper will also explore why the "political sea" is an arena for confrontation between the Indonesian government and the Bajau, a sea nomadic ethnic group living in the Flores Sea. Last but not least, it will underline the symbolic violence embedded in conservation and development policies implemented by the central state to extend its power in the margins.

The Wakatobi Marine National Park (thereafter WMNP) is one of the nine maritime national parks in Indonesia. Located in South-East Sulawesi, it encompasses the waters surrounding the four

³ Peluso, Nancy. 1992. "Coercing Conservation: The Politics of State Resource Control". *Global Environmental Change* 4: 199-218

⁴ Peluso, Nancy L., Vandergeest, Peter. 2001. "Genealogies of the Political Forest and Customary Rights in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand". *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60 (3)

⁵ Aguilar, Filomeno V. Jr., Uson, Ma. Angelina M. 2005. *Control and Conflict in the Uplands*. Manila: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University: 9

⁶ Peluso, Nancy L., Vandergeest, Peter. 2015. "Political forests". In Bryant, Raymond L. (Ed.). The International Handbook of Political Ecology. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing: 166-175

major islands of the Tukang Besi archipelago (Wanci-Wanci, Kaledupa, Tomia and Binongko). The WMNP covers a total area of 1.4 million hectares at the center of the Coral Triangle. Therefore, it includes approximately 50,000 ha of coral reefs, over 390 species of coral and 590 fish species, to the extent that "these levels of diversity are among the highest recorded in any coral reef"7. The WMNP park is established to protect the highly bio-diverse coral reefs and to halt the use of destructive fishing techniques in the zone that the Wakatobi Marine Conservation Area was established in 1996 by the Ministry of Forestry and later became a National Park in 2002. The WMNP park is managed by the Wakatobi District government and the Wakatobi National Park Authority. Despite a decentralization movement engaged in Indonesia since 1998, the park management rely heavily on centrally governed rules and regulations⁸. The creation of WMNP and establishment of conservation regulations have directly affected 100,000 people who

live in the area. The WMNP is thus the arena of a conflict between the local populations and the government.

Among these local populations, the Bajau represent an estimated number of 40,000 people⁹. The accurate number of this group is hard to estimate as they are one of the three distinct groups usually called "sea nomads", along with the Moken and the Orang Laut¹⁰. The various groups collectively referred to the Bajau as they share linguistic characteristics, along with historical and cultural attributes. The Bajau speak Sama-Baiau, a linguistic family of around ten languages¹¹. Their place of origins is very hard to identify, as they have continuously travelled over time, but they are thought to originate from the Sulu archipelago, even though in their origin myth, they claim coming from Johore¹². They migrated south from the Sulu archipelago around the ninth century to establish a network of trading routes. They would have moved to Sulawesi around the fifteenth century, about the same time as the

⁷ Unsworth, Richard K. F., Clifton, Julian, Smith, David J. (Ed.). 2010. *Marine Research and Conservation in the Coral Triangle: The Wakatobi National Park*. New York: Nova Science: 12

⁸ De Alessi, Michael. 2014. "Archipelago of Gear: The Political Economy of Fisheries Management and Private Sustainable Fisheries Initiatives in Indonesia". *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 1 (3): 576

⁹ Clifton, Julian. 2010. "Achieving congruence between conservation and community: the Bajau ethnic group and marine management within the Wakatobi and south-east Asia". In Unsworth, Richard K. F., Clifton, Julian, Smith, David J. (Ed.). 2010. *Marine Research and Conservation in the Coral Triangle: The Wakatobi National Park*. New York: Nova Science: 199

¹⁰ Sopher, David E. 1965. *The sea nomads: A study based on the literature of the maritime boat people of Southeast Asia.* Singapore: Printed by Lim Bian Han, Govt. printer. 422 p.

¹¹ Sather, Clifford. 1997. *The Bajau Laut: Adaptation, history and fate in a maritime fishing society of southeastern Sabah*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 8

¹² *Ibid* : 17

founding of the Sulu Sultanate, following the development of the *trepang* trade with China¹³. Prior to the last century, Bajau family groups lived almost exclusively at sea in family houseboats, trading with coastal settlements and, through their nomadic traditions, escaping European colonial rule¹⁴. But more recently, with technological innovation (especially the outboard engine), the assertion of nationhood and its implications for individual movement throughout Southeast Asia and the rise of Islam as a unifying force, all combined to radically alter the Bajau way of life¹⁵. A contemporary trend pushes the Bajau people to settle down in villages of stilt houses. In the Tukang Besi islands, the Bajau occupied five different settlements. Despite their sedentarization, they have an

inferior status in relation to other ethnic groups, being marginalized politically and poorly provided with health care, education and other government services¹⁶. They have been particularly criticized by the government and other international organizations for their destructive patterns of maritime resources utilization including cyanide poisoning and blast fishing¹⁷. The fact is that the Bajau heavily depend on fisheries for subsistence¹⁸ and sedentarization of Bajau communities has resulted in the intensification of fishing effort¹⁹. However, these negative views of the Bajau as un-ecofriendly exploiters do not take into account the Bajau traditional knowledge of marine resources. This knowledge is deeply intertwined with the Bajau worldview, a syncretic form of Islam with their own

¹³ Boomgaard, Peter, Henley, David, Osseweijer, Manon (Ed.). 2005. *Muddied Waters: historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Management of Forests and Fisheries in Island Southeast Asia*. Leiden: KITLV Press: 48; Warren, James. 2011. "The Global Economy and the Sulu Zone: Connections, Commodities and Culture". *Crossroads - Studies on the History of Exchange Relations in the East Asian World* 3

¹⁴ Scott, James. 2009. *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press: ix

¹⁵ Clifton, Julian. 2010. "Achieving congruence between conservation and community: the Bajau ethnic group and marine management within the Wakatobi and south-east Asia". In Unsworth, Richard K. F., Clifton, Julian, Smith, David J. (Ed.). 2010. *Marine Research and Conservation in the Coral Triangle: The Wakatobi National Park*. New York: Nova Science: 200

¹⁶ Cullen, Leanne C. 2010. "Marine resource dependence and natural resource use patterns in the Wakatobi". In Unsworth, Richard K. F., Clifton, Julian, Smith, David J. (Ed.). 2010. *Marine Research and Conservation in the Coral Triangle: The Wakatobi National Park.* New York: Nova Science: 166

¹⁷ Clifton, Julian, Majors, Chris. 2012. "Culture, Conservation, and Conflict: Perspectives on Marine Protection among the Bajau of Southeast Asia". *Society & Natural Resources: An International Journal* 5 (7): 717

¹⁸ Clifton, Julian. 2010. "Achieving congruence between conservation and community: the Bajau ethnic group and marine management within the Wakatobi and south-east Asia". In Unsworth, Richard K. F., Clifton, Julian, Smith, David J. (Ed.). 2010. *Marine Research and Conservation in the Coral Triangle: The Wakatobi National Park*. New York: Nova Science: 166

¹⁹ Clifton, Julian, Majors, Chris. 2012. "Culture, Conservation, and Conflict: Perspectives on Marine Protection among the Bajau of Southeast Asia". *Society & Natural Resources: An International Journal* 5 (7): 717

cosmology²⁰. For instance, they believe that the *Mbo madilao* (ancestors of the sea) and diverse groups of spirits populate the sea²¹. Observances and gifts to these spirits by fishermen are believed to bring good luck in the form of increased catches²². Therefore, the Bajau have more traditional, cultural, and spiritual connections to the sea rather than simply economic²³.

The Indonesian state, however, tends to see these beliefs as primitive and is more concerned with conservation issues. Conservation policies in Indonesia are largely inherited from the Dutch²⁴. Following Indonesia's independence in 1945, state power was highly centralized, especially control over natural resources, and heavily exploited natural resources. Under international pressures, a turn in conservation policies happened at the early 1980s with the establishment of the state ministry of population and environment in 1978 and the first five national parks in 1980. More recently, a new trend in the international conservation agenda, prominently in Indonesia through NGOs and international aids, regards integrated conservation and development projects as the standard approach to conservation²⁵. The first efforts to develop indigenous communities took place under the Dutch. The colonial power was then interested in controlling population, extracting labor, and tax revenues²⁶. The modern Indonesian state has pursued these development programs and has forced nomad peoples into "social settlement". In the 1970s, special attention was given to "geographically isolated customary law communities" in particular²⁷. Despite being often considered as responsible for the destruction of the environment, these local communities also represented a separatist threat as long as they would not be integrated into the Nation²⁸. As wanderers living on the boat, the Bajau fell into this category of "geographically isolated customary law communities". This category, however, contradict the reality as

²⁵ Chatty, Dawn, Colchester, Marcus. 2002. *Conservation and Mobile Indigenous Peoples: Displacement, Forced Settlement and Sustainable Development*. New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books: 313

²⁸ *ibid*: 88

²⁰ Sather, Clifford. 1997. *The Bajau Laut: Adaptation, history and fate in a maritime fishing society of southeastern Sabah.* Oxford: Oxford University Press: 269-319

²¹ Stacey, Natasha. 2007. *Boats to Burn: Bajo Fishing Activity in the Australian Fishing Zone*. Canberra: ANU E Press: 33

²² Clifton, Julian. 2010. "Achieving congruence between conservation and community: the Bajau ethnic group and marine management within the Wakatobi and south-east Asia". In Unsworth, Richard K. F., Clifton, Julian, Smith, David J. (Ed.). 2010. *Marine Research and Conservation in the Coral Triangle: The Wakatobi National Park*. New York: Nova Science: 204

²³ Stacey, Natasha. 2007. *Boats to Burn: Bajo Fishing Activity in the Australian Fishing Zone*. Canberra: ANU E Press: 31; Cullen 2010: 168

²⁴ Aguilar, Filomeno V. Jr., Uson, Ma. Angelina M. 2005. *Control and Conflict in the Uplands*. Manila: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University: 27

 ²⁶ Duncun, Christopher R. 2004. "From Development to Empowerment: Changing Indonesian Government Policies toward Indigenous Minorities". In Duncun, Christopher R. (Ed.). 2004. *Civilizing the Margins: Southeast Asian Government Policies for the Development of Minorities*. New York: Cornell University Press: 87

²⁷ *ibid*: 86

most conservation and development programs in Indonesia have met opposition from the local people. In some cases, projects claiming to integrate development and conservation have actually resulted in forced settlement, abuse of power by park's rangers and increased government interference in the lives of the local people²⁹. The WMNP is one example of conflicts that may arise when the government decides to create a national park to protect the environment but with economic and social impacts on the local population.

As mentioned above, the WMNP was established to protect the marine environment in the Flores Sea. Nevertheless, the creation of the marine national park also serves larger political purposes such as securing politico-economic power for the state. Using national parks as instrument of power to extent state's territory and claims over natural resources is not a new strategy, but it takes its roots back to the concepts of territorialization and "political forest." Territorialization can be defined as the attempt by the state to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area³⁰.

Territorialization first served to protect state's access to people and income from taxes and natural resources, and later, to organize surveillance, gather information about the population, force them to settle down, and organize close control over people's everyday activities³¹. The concept of "political forest" was a critical part of the colonial state-building process both in terms of territorialization of the forest and institutionalization of forest management as an instrument of state power³². Territorial control was implemented through demarcation of specific territories as forestlands, claims on all the resources in these territories as state property under the jurisdiction of a forest department and through patrols of forest guards and regular police or military personnel³³. Territorial control was followed by resource control, a process by which government monopolized, taxed, or otherwise limited the legal trade and the transport of certain species³⁴. To enforce the political forest, the state employed different instruments of power such as zoning and mapping, the establishment of laws establishing the legal and illegal practices, and the creation of authorities responsible for ensuring com-

 ²⁹ Baird, I.G. 2009. "Controlling the margins: Nature conservation and state power in northeastern Cambodia".
 In: Bourdier, Frédéric (Ed.). *Development and Dominion: Indigenous Peoples of Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos*.
 Bangkok: White Lotus Press: 216

 ³⁰ Sack, Robert D. 1986. *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press:
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³¹ Peluso, Nancy L., Vandergeest, Peter. 1995. "Territorialization and State Power in Thailand". *Theory and Society* 24 (3): 390

³² Peluso, Nancy L., Vandergeest, Peter. 2001. "Genealogies of the Political Forest and Customary Rights in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand". *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60 (3): 762

³³ *ibid*: 765

³⁴ *ibid*: 765

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pliance with these laws. Maps were particularly important instruments by which state agencies drew boundaries, created territories, and made claim enforced by their courts of law³⁵. The creation of the political forest followed a four-stage process: first, the state started by asserting its sovereignty over the entire territory; then it normalized the idea of "forest" as an biological entity that requested or deserved to be managed under a different form of management than the agricultural lands; once the forestland defined, the state differentiated between "protected species" and agricultural species; finally, just when the forest had become scientifically defined and categorized, the fauna and flora were politically defined and managed through laws, policies, and controls.

The establishment of the WMNP is the continuation of this policy. The United Nations Law of the Sea Convention of 1982 allowed the Indonesian State to claim all the surrounding waters up to 200 nautical miles from its coast line, asserting at the same time property over the waters of the today Wakatobi Park. Then, the State declared the WMNP as a "natural monument" which has to be preserved for research and tourism.³⁶ The coral reef, scientifically defined, required to be protected under a specific

form of authority and a special regime of law because of its uniqueness and because it was jeopardized by external threat. Teams of scientists identified particularly endangered species. After a long process, a zoning plan for the park was put into place in July 2007. Under this plan, the majority of the park is a "local use zone", with only fishing by small-scale, local fisherman using traditional methods (such as hook and line and small gill nets) allowed. The zoning also includes no-take zones, "protected areas" and "tourist areas"³⁷. Some fishing practices are prohibited and fishermen have also to register their boat and their catches. Coast guards patrol regularly³⁸. The park authorities, as legal basis for declaring any activities as illegal, monitor and regulate day-to-day village behavior³⁹. Conflicts have then aroused over resource use and management, as the Bajau are denied certain traditional fishing zones and practices. The sea is therefore seen as a contested resource, a social arena where meanings and values on natural resources are constructed and fought over through processes of interactions. It has acquired a political status hence the "political sea".

Although many parallels can be drawn between the "political forest" and the "political sea", there are some differences.

- ³⁷ De Alessi, Michael. 2014. "Archipelago of Gear: The Political Economy of Fisheries Management and Private Sustainable Fisheries Initiatives in Indonesia". *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies* 1 (3): 581
- ³⁸ Shepherd, Samantha, Terry, Alan. 2004. "The Role of Indigenous Communities in Natural Resource Management: The Bajau of the Tukangbesi Archipelago, Indonesia". *Geography* 89 (3): 207

³⁵Peluso, Nancy L., Vandergeest, Peter. 1995. "Territorialization and State Power in Thailand". *Theory and Society* 24 (3): 389

³⁶ Peluso, Nancy L., Vandergeest, Peter. 2001. "Genealogies of the Political Forest and Customary Rights in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand". *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60 (3): 783

³⁹ Aguilar, Filomeno V. Jr., Uson, Ma. Angelina M. 2005. *Control and Conflict in the Uplands*. Manila: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University: 56

First, the ways the state claimed property on the land and on the sea differ. On land, the state declared that all wasteland or abandoned land should be state property and the villagers had to register their land⁴⁰. Yet when it comes to the sea, claim to ownership of a plot of sea is hardly possible, especially because the sea is seen as the common property of all⁴¹. This leads to a difficult question of the maritime borders. Although a forest territory is relatively easy to define, by building barriers around, for instance, the maritime borders, however, are more difficult to discern. They require the possession of suitable technological tools such as GPS, tools that simple Bajau boats do not necessarily possess⁴². The size of the forest itself limits the freedom of movement of forest inhabitants but the seas have countless entry points⁴³. Conflicts also emerge in relation with the zoning system, which imposes boundaries based purely on ecological "scientific" considerations. However, the mobile character of the fish complicates the problem of apportioning

exploitation rights and enforcing exclusion rules⁴⁴. Last but not least, Vandergeest and Peluso (2001) emphasizes the existence of various legal exemptions called Customary Rights. However, the difficulty in the WMNP case is to determine whether the Bajau are an indigenous people. Internationally recognized definitions of indigenous people associate indigenous communities with a specific territory on which they depend, but no mention of the sea as specific territory is made. Nevertheless, the Bajau are deeply affected by the presence of the WMNP.

The creation of a national park has both social and economic impacts⁴⁵. Ban on fishing has discriminatory effects on the poorer inhabitants of the Park, especially on the Bajau who rely on fisheries for subsistence⁴⁶. Tourism related activities are not sufficient to replace the revenue loss. Moreover, the Tukang Besi islands are relatively infertile islands and they can only support a limited amount of small-scale agriculture⁴⁷. The establishment and protection of national parks and nature reserves

⁴⁰ Peluso, Nancy L., Vandergeest, Peter. 2001. "Genealogies of the Political Forest and Customary Rights in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand". *The Journal of Asian Studies* 60 (3): 774

⁴¹ Russell, Denise. 2010. *Who Rules the Waves?: Piracy, Overfishing and Mining the Oceans*. London ; New York: Pluto Press: 137

⁴² *ibid*: 135

⁴³ Boomgaard, Peter, Henley, David, Osseweijer, Manon (Ed.). 2005. *Muddied Waters: historical and Contemporary Perspectives on Management of Forests and Fisheries in Island Southeast Asia*. Leiden: KITLV Press: 188

⁴⁴ *ibid*: 9

⁴⁵ Pomeroy, Robert S., Mascia, Michael B., Pollnac, Richard B. 2006. "Marine Protected Areas: the Social Dimension". *Background Paper 3*. FAO Expert Workshop on Marine Protected Areas and Fisheries Management; Christie, Patrick. 2004. "Marine Protected Areas as Biological Successes and Social Failures in Southeast Asia". *American Fisheries Society Symposium*

⁴⁶ Cullen, Leanne C. 2010. "Marine resource dependence and natural resource use patterns in the Wakatobi". In Unsworth, Richard K. F., Clifton, Julian, Smith, David J. (Ed.). 2010. *Marine Research and Conservation in the Coral Triangle: The Wakatobi National Park*. New York: Nova Science: 162

⁴⁷ Stacey, Natasha. 2007. *Boats to Burn: Bajo Fishing Activity in the Australian Fishing Zone*. Canberra: ANU E Press: 12

on land have often been done at the expense of forest-dwelling communities who are forced to vacate their lands in the name of conservation⁴⁸. It is the same for the Bajau who have been pressured to settle down on land. Forced settlement and state's discourses and practices represent a form of violence that can be defined as symbolic violence⁴⁹ as they discriminately threaten the traditional Bajau way of life. The loss of traditional fishing knowledge and cultural identity has already occurred since settlement⁵⁰ and several medias have written about the "last sea nomads"⁵¹. The ideas of backwardness and primitiveness found in the Program for Development of Social Prosperity of Geographically Isolated Customary Law Communities literature have become an almost standardized way of thinking about indigenous minorities among Indonesian bureaucrats⁵². These ideas are

part of a process of "simplification"53, meaning the rationalization and standardization of knowledge through maps, census, cadastral lists or standard units of measurement. Cultural precepts and practices of the Bajau are denigrated by imposing on them authoritative scientific knowledge and practices structured by the state or international bodies⁵⁴. The state does not see the cultural significance of the sea and perceives it only as a revenue-generating resource⁵⁵. Furthermore, little recognition is given to the Bajau historical presence in the Park's waters. Ignoring histories of the Bajau leads to a feeling of deterritorialization among the Bajau, as if the area did no longer belong to their communities⁵⁶. As Gérard Clarke argues, mainstream development strategies tend to generate conflicts between states and ethnic minorities and such strategies are, at times,

⁴⁸ Duncun, Christopher R. 2004. "From Development to Empowerment: Changing Indonesian Government Policies toward Indigenous Minorities". In Duncun, Christopher R. (Ed.). 2004. *Civilizing the Margins: Southeast Asian Government Policies for the Development of Minorities*. New York: Cornell University Press: 102

⁴⁹ Bourdieu, Pierre. 1979. *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement.* Paris : Les Editions de minuit. 672p.
⁵⁰ Majors, Chris, Swiecicka, Joanna. 2005. "Missing the boat?". *Inside Indonesia* 82

[;] Pilgrim, Sarah. 2010. "Marine and coastal resource knowledge in the Wakatobi". In Unsworth, Richard K. F., Clifton, Julian, Smith, David J. (Ed.). 2010. *Marine Research and Conservation in the Coral Triangle: The Wakatobi National Park.* New York: Nova Science: 218

⁵¹ Langenheim, Johnny. "The last of the sea nomads". *The Guardian*. September 18, 2010

[;] Kaye, Melati, Orland, Brian. "Indonesia's last nomadic sea gypsies". Aljazeera, October 6, 2012

 ⁵² Duncun, Christopher R. 2004. "From Development to Empowerment: Changing Indonesian Government Policies toward Indigenous Minorities". In Duncun, Christopher R. (Ed.). 2004. *Civilizing the Margins: Southeast Asian Government Policies for the Development of Minorities*. New York: Cornell University Press: 87

⁵³ Scott, James. 1995. "State simplifications: Nature, space and people". *Journal of Political Philosophy* 3 (3): 191-233

⁵⁴ Aguilar, Filomeno V. Jr., Uson, Ma. Angelina M. 2005. *Control and Conflict in the Uplands*. Manila: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University: 56

⁵⁵ *ibid*: 13

⁵⁶ Baird, I.G. 2009. "Controlling the margins: Nature conservation and state power in northeastern Cambodia". In: Bourdier, Frédéric (Ed.). *Development and Dominion: Indigenous Peoples of Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos*. Bangkok: White Lotus Press: 234

ethnocidal in their destructive effects on the latter⁵⁷. To ensure conformity to a certain ideology of conservation and development expressed by the bureaucracy, the state create and maintains structures and mechanisms that entail the surveillance of communities through system of power relations that interacts and conflicts with the beliefs and practices of the Bajau⁵⁸. This power relationship leads to cultural domination and meets resistance from the local people. After all, the sea is the center of their world, not at the margins.

The Bajau have a long history of escaping any state authority. But nationbuilding processes have led the Indonesian state to increase its control over the peripheral areas and communities. One way of extending state power has been the use of national parks, inherited from colonial forest politics. Inevitably concerned with sea areas, the Indonesian insular state has extended the territorialization process on the sea by establishing marine protected areas such as the Wakatobi Marine National Park. The creation of the Park has not been neutral and economic and social impacts have altered permanently the Bajau's way of life. Conflicts have arisen on meanings attached to the sea and on the use and management of marine natural resources. Therefore, the sea has become a contested resource between the central government and the Bajau community and has acquired a political status. As in every conflict,

violence occupies an important part. In this case study, it takes the form of symbolic violence. Integrated conservation and development policies have eventually resulted in ethnocidal effects. Moreover, projects attempting to integrate conservation with development have extended state power into South-East Sulawesi. Discursive tools also have a very important role. By depicting the people living in the park as either destroyer of the environment or backward, official discourses justify the takeover of areas for the establishment of marine national parks, the sometimes heavy-handed treatment of local people and their exclusion from important decisionmaking processes. The nomadic nature of the Bajau livelihood has made the recognition of their fundamental rights to live on the sea very difficult. Nevertheless, their lives remain intricately linked to the sea by livelihood, culture, and history. The Wakatobi Marine National Park is therefore a symbol of state power over what was once their place.

One important factor, globalization, has given little development in this essay, although mentioned several times. International scrutiny on conservation programs and development policies, as well as international networks for conservation play an important role on defining Indonesia policies and shaping the conflict in the WMNP. International environmental aid has not only fueled the direction and the extent

⁵⁷ Clarke, Gerard. 2001. "From Ethnocide to Ethnodevelopment? Ethnic Minorities and Indigenous Peoples in Southeast Asia. *Third World Quarterly* 22 (3): 413

⁵⁸ Aguilar, Filomeno V. Jr., Uson, Ma. Angelina M. 2005. *Control and Conflict in the Uplands*. Manila: Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University: 26

of the establishment of numerous national parks, but inadvertently legitimizes state territorial strategy⁵⁹. All the international organizations have failed to consider the implications of increased state control over the parks. Conservation and development policies are considered as "noble causes" and only a few people dare questioning the prevailing discourse⁶⁰. We cannot deny that national parks are needed but perhaps a more community-based management should be advocated to address marine national parks issues.

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⁵⁹ Sowerwine, Jennifer C. 2004. "Territorialisation and the Politics of Highland Landscapes in Vietnam: Negotiating Property Relations in Policy, Meaning and Practice". *Conservation and Society* 2 (1): 98
⁶⁰ McKinnon, John. 1997. "The forests of Thailand: strike up the ban?" In McCaskill, D., Kampe, K. (Ed.). *Development or Domestication? Indigenous Peoples of Southeast Asia*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books: 117-131

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Fishing the "Last Frontier":

Connections and Dis-connects between Fisheries in Southern Palawan and the Coral Triangle

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Abstract

The Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) and the Live Reef Fish (LRF) trade in southern Palawan provide a case to explore dynamics of place-based fishing operations and distant consumer markets. In particular, Balabac and Quezon—communities in southern Palawan—allow for theoretical ruminations on identity, transnational markets and sovereignty. The delineation of CTI is premised on coral species diversity and ecoregions in maritime Southeast Asia. The exclusion of the territorially disputed Spratly Islands in the South China Sea (SCS) is equally premised on seemingly clear coral species thresholds. However, there is an egregious lack of data on species diversity in SCS, problematizing the decision for excluding this space from CTI. This exclusion could have direct political, environmental and social ramifications, particularly for fishers in the Philippines. Fishers in southern Palawan face to

My preliminary research trip to the Philippines in August 2015 was evolving into a fiasco. Until the final week of the trip, I made vain attempts to locate fishers from southern Palawan who traversed the disputed South China Sea (SCS), ocean space known as the West Philippine Sea in the Philippines. The literature and data about fisheries in southern Palawan indicate fish are becoming increasingly scarce, arguably a sign of unsustainable fishing practices in this maritime region.¹ The Coral

¹ Michael Fabinyi et al., "Luxury seafood consumption in China and the intensification of coastal livelihoods in Southeast Asia: The live reef fish for food trade in Balabac, Philippines," *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, Vol. 53. No. 2 (August 2012): pp. 118-132; Fabinyi et al., "Fisheries Trade and Social Development in the Philippine-Malaysia Maritime Border Zone," *Development Policy Review*, Vol. 32, No. 6 (2014): pp. 715-732 and Herminie P. Palla, "Fish Catch Monitoring in Quezon, Palawan: Final Report," Western Philippines University-Puerto Princesa Campus, Puerto Princesa City.

Triangle Initiative's (CTI) 10-year Regional Action Plan (RAP) includes sustainable management of Live Reef Fish (LRF) in the Coral Triangle.² However, despite the tremendous biodiversity in the SCS, this region is not included in the Coral Triangle boundaries as articulated by CTI.³

The exclusion of the SCS from CTI's focus is alarming in the face of continued LRF practices in the region. The seemingly insatiable market for LRF in Hong Kong perpetuates this practice, a fishing practice that oftentimes includes the use of cyanide. Furthermore, the decision to not include the SCS in the area targeted by CTI could have implications for the Chinese Navy's systematic destruction of coral reefs in the SCS to construct artificial islands. Such wanton destruction of coral reefs further menaces the biodiversity of this seascape. These activities would probably have caused a cacophonous, global condemnation if this destruction occurred within the area the CTI focuses on. This is not the case. While the coastal waters of Palawan are included in the CTI, the disputed waters adjacent to Palawan in the SCS are not. This destruction occurs beyond the delimitation of the Coral Triangle. While Chinese activities in the SCS have been

condemned repeatedly, the environmental consequences are not typically articulated. Plans to exploit hydrocarbon in the SCS poses different dangers, including oil spills. This issue is especially striking since enormous portions of Southeast Asian communities rely on fisheries in the coral triangle for calorie intake. For example, it is estimated that fish provide approximately 65-percent of animal protein for Filipinos, Indonesians and Malaysians.⁴ Incorporating the SCS in the Coral Triangle could provide opportunities to mitigate consequences of hydrocarbon mining in this crucial ocean space.

In Palawan, bureaucrats from a variety of different government agencies and non-governmental organizations as well as several scholars from different academic institutions seemed to perceive me as a nuisance.⁵ Most concurred that fishers from Palawan, small-scale fishers in particular, did not venture to the troubled and disputed waters around Spratly Islands due to cost, distance, and the diminishing value of Leopard Grouper, a species driving the transnational LRF trade in the region. I was informed that the only fishing operations that ventured that far were not from Palawan. Rather, capital intensive, large-

² Mary George and Azhar Hussin, "Current Legal Developments South East Asia," *The International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law*, Vol. 25 (2010): p. 447.

³ J.E.N. Veron et al., "Delineating the Coral Triangle," *Galaxea, Journal of Coral Reef Studies*, Vol. 11 (2009): p. 94.

⁴ Craig C. Thorburn, "The House that Poison Built: Customary Marine Property Rights and the Live Food Fish Trade in the Kei Islands, Southeast Maluku," *Development and Change*, Vol. 32 (2001): pp. 151.

⁵ Government agencies include branches of the Office of Agriculture in Puerto Princesa and Quezon, the Officer of Fisheries in Quezon, the Office of the Mayor of Kalayaan in Puerto Princesa. Universities include Palawan State University and Western Philippines University. NGOs include Palawan Council for Sustainable Development.

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scale fishers hailing from Cebu, Manila and Batangas were the only Filipino nationals operating in the Spratly Islands.

One local academic contradicted the message I repeatedly received, stating four years prior he had contacts in Quezon, a municipality in southern Palawan, who were active participants in the LRF and travelled as far as the Spratly Islands in search of Grouper.⁶ In Quezon, I established contacts with the owner of a middle-scale fishing operation targeting LRF. I learned that LRF fishing operations were dictated by seasons. Part of the year, fishers target LRF in Tawi-Tawi on the periphery of the Sulu Sea and situated within the targeted area of the CTI. The other part of the year, LRF fishers from southern Palawan target the Spratly Island region. Again, these LRF operations in the Spratly Island region fall outside the targeted area of the CTI. The business owner emphasized the fishers he employs are becoming concerned by the increasing militarization of this maritime space by the Chinese Navy. This anecdote illustrates a disconnect between knowledge of local state bureaucracies and the actual practices of local fishers.

Ironically, these fishers risk safety in the face of Chinese naval vessels to procure LRF for markets in China. Reports of Chinese naval vessels blasting Filipino fishermen with water cannons illustrate this.⁷ Although including the SCS in the Coral Triangle may be politically prohibitive, it could also furnish a framework to provide more security to these marginalized Filipino fishers.

This article consists of four sections, including this introduction. The second section explores the relationship between fisheries in Palawan and the transnational LRF trade. This section focuses on different epistemologies of fisheries, processes of integrating local communities into global markets and site-specific geographies of southern Palawan. The third section introduces the CTI and the exclusion of the SCS from its delimiting boundaries. The fourth section is a conclusion, highlighting the politicization of the CTI and its ecological and geopolitical consequences.

Fisheries of Palawan and Live Reef Fishing

To understand the nature of fisheries in southern Palawan vis-à-vis the LRF Southeast Asian seafood trade, it is helpful to explore processes of integrating placebased fisheries into larger seafood trade networks. This section is further divided into subsections. The first deals with general histories and themes of fisheries, particularly shifting epistemologies of fishing science. The second section deals with the current state of fisheries globally, attempting to connect dynamics of localized place with the wider space of capitalized seafood

⁶ Herminie Palla, PhD candidate at Western Palawan University.

⁷ Natashya Gutirrez, "PH Coast Guard confirms Filipino fishermen harassed by China," *Rappler*, April 20, 2015; Jose Katigbak, "US Condemns China's use of water cannons," *The Philippine Star*, April 23, 2015 and Manny Mogato, "Philippines accuses China of turning water cannon on its fishing boats," *Reuters*, April 21, 2015.

trade networks. The third subsection provides a brief overview of the nature of fisheries in southern Palawan. These dynamics remind us that species taxonomies and geopolitics are not the only factors to be considered when assessing the CTI. Economic factors drive production, trade, markets, and livelihood in the region. Fishers and fish move inside and outside the Coral Triangle, connecting local fisheries to global markets, transcending the boundaries of the CTI.

Epistemologies of Fishing Science

Historically, the relationship between humanity and fisheries was consistently shaped by social, political, economic, and even sacred contexts. The most extreme evolution in this relationship occurred over the past 100 years, a timeperiod that witnessed a tremendous industrialization of fisheries. This shift to capital intensive, industrialized fisheries was dependent on the commoditization of fish, a process characterized by hyper-fluid capital and mobile fishing methods. Looked at another way, this shift responds to dynamics between place, space and the movement of people and fish. Fish and large-scale, industrial, human fishers are not stationary. Rather, this relationship traverses vast distances. Indeed, Blue-fin Tuna can swim up to 60 miles per hour and are

labelled as a "highly migratory species". Bestor points out that this designation as a highly migratory species is "not only a statement about behavioral biology, it is a statement about politics...'Highly migratory species' are those that swim across multiple national jurisdictions".8 Because of this classification as highly migratory, Bestor humorously writes that the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna's ultimate task is to "impose political order on stateless fish".9 The fluidity and stateless nature of tuna reflects the fluidity and transnational nature of the global seafood industry. Furthermore, it echoes similar challenges facing the CTI-6 (Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste) in Southeast Asia.

Different communities attach different forms of value to fish. Citizens of highly industrialized societies commoditize fish while members of different communities may endow different forms of value to fish. These different values could take the form of reverence of a particular place, an ontology which could result in different ways to catch fish. Lam and Pitcher trace the development of fishery production through archeological and historical evidence, arguing that the Roman Empire signposts the first instance of the commoditization of fish.¹⁰ More than Roman fishing

⁸ Theodore C. Bestor, "Supply-Side Sushi: Commodity, Market, and the Global City," *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 103, No. 1 (Mar., 2001): p. 86.

⁹ Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁰ Tony J. Pitcher and Mimi E. Lam, "Fish commoditization and the historical origins of catching fish for Profit," *Maritime Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2015): pp 2-4.

excursions, Pitcher and Lam argue that post-WWII technologies such as sonar and radar altered the human/fish relationship, technologies which contributed to the near extinction of North Sea herring in the 1960s.¹¹

Finley also argues that post-WWII marked a radical shift in the human/fish relationship, tracing the relationship of American hegemony, politicized scientific paradigms, and various conceptions of maximum sustained yield (MSY).¹² American federal fishing policies were shaped by the faulty notion of MSY, an epistemology which encouraged reckless fishing practices. Disturbingly, core documents used as empirical evidence lacked any quantitative metric¹³ a fact which tautologically strips any semblance of scientific integrity to numerical charts and graphs. This dependence on rational production and industrialized fishing operations threatened the durability of global fisheries.

This American hijacking of deluded scientific understandings illustrates Lam and Pitcher's distinction between modern modes of fishery production and conceptions of "cultural property".¹⁴ Lam and Pitcher argue two solutions to the commoditization of fish and the consequences of threats to species diversity. One is a value shift which emphasizes cultural property, a concept defined as:

> a way of knowing shared among community members that recognizes, in addition to possessions and rights, social relations and place attachments, both integral to the particularized and rooted ecological knowledge, customs, and livelihood practices of indigenous and traditional cultures.¹⁵

They argue the importance of attachment to place warrants the usage of a "generational index" to quantify degrees of attachment to place.¹⁶ However, in the context of Balabac and, possibly, Quezon, this index seems less applicable. Fabinye et al. point out the current population of Balabac only began arriving during the 1970s and was tied to religious and political unrest in Mindanao.¹⁷ Consequently, it could be argued that fishing practices in Balabac are shaped not only by integration into regional seafood trade networks, but by a lack of generational attachment to adjacent fisheries.

The second strategy to combat the species destruction spurred by the commoditization of fish is shifting governance as well as channeling financial incentives to

¹¹ Ibid., p. 12.

¹² Carmel Finley, "The Social Construction of Fishing, 1949," *Ecology and Society*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2009).

¹³ Ibid., 6.

¹⁴ Mimi E. Lam and Tony J., "Pitcher Fish Commoditization Sustainability Strategies to Protect Living Fish," *Bulletin of Science Technology Society*, Vol. 32, No. 1 (February 2012): p. 36.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 36.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 37.

¹⁷ Fabinye et al., 2012, pp. 124-125.

local communities.¹⁸ Berkes et al. accentuate the tensions between attachment to place¹⁹ and large-scale, industrial fishers with boundless, global vison. They write:

> Existing marine protected areas (MPAs) and no-take areas (NTAs) are often too small and too far apart to sustain processes within the broader seascape, and monitoring and enforcement are often inadequate.²⁰

Despite the existence of MPAs and NTAs, "roving bandits" or highly industrialized fishing operations can efficiently (and destructively) catch fish and other marine species beyond the spatial extents of these areas. Furthermore, the highly mobile nature of these fishing operations increase the potential for illegal harvesting within these protected areas.

At the heart of challenges to sustainable fishing is the roles played by place, space and movement. Lam and Pitcher's advocacy of a generational index and emphasis on attachment to place highlights one dimension of these spatial dynamics. However, in the case of Balabac and other villages in southern Palawan, there could be a significant lack of attachment to place since much of the population is made up of migrants. Furthermore, Berkes et al. notion of "roving bandits" illustrates the challenges to sustainable fishing practices posed by highly industrialized and mobile fishing operations.

Integrating local Fisheries in the Global Seafood Trade

Understanding the links between place-based fisheries and large-scale seafood trade networks poses the most significant hurdles to formulating strategies for mitigating practices which undermine the durability of fisheries and damage marine ecologies. As local communities and small-scale fisheries are increasingly integrated into global trade networks, fish often become commoditized and the actual costs of fishery production is not understood by consumers. This problematic dynamic inherent to place-based fishery production and the vast space connected through the global seafood trade network "masks" from the consumer the real cost of fish production in particular locations.²¹ Despite the oftentimes detached role of the consumer, assuredly, the effects of globalization and the commoditization of local fish production have tangible consequences for local communities and ecologies. The expansion of LRF in Palawan provides an example of the oftentimes detrimental effects integration into the global economy

¹⁸ F. Berkes et al., "Globalization, Roving Bandits, and Marine Resources." *Science*. Vol. 311, No. 5767 (2006): pp. 1557-1558 and Lam and Pitcher, 2012, p. 36.

¹⁹ Berkes et. al., 2006, p. 1558.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 1558.

²¹ Beatrice I. Crona et al., "Masked and drowned out: how global seafood trade weakens signals from marine ecosystems," *Fish and Fisheries* (2015 A): pp. 1-8.

has on local communities in developing countries.²² For instance, data collected by scholars from Western Philippines University indicate that fish catch is declining for local fishers.²³ While the transnational LRF may not be the sole driver of this decline, it certainly plays a role.

Crona et al. attempt a sweeping meta-analysis of fisheries and seafood production sites globally in order to assess the impacts of integrating small-scale fisheries into global markets. Recognizing the exceeding complexity of this topic, they suggest employing "syndromes"—based on the Greek meaning "flowing together of many factors"—to "identify local recurring patterns of social and ecological outcomes in relation to the development of international trade in marine commodities" to overcome the tendency for sectoral, singlefaceted and single-scalar approaches.²⁴

Crona et al. assessed literature for 18 sites spanning the globe, including the global South and the global North. One of the sites considered was the LRF trade of the Philippines. They distinguished three syndromes—Syndrome A which was characterized by healthy stocks, Syndrome B which was characterized by declining stocks and rising conflict between fishery actors, and Syndrome C which was characterized by declining stocks and elite wealth accumulation. The healthy state of the fisheries of Syndrome A were attributed to well-functioning and enforced institutions along with the presence of infrastructure.²⁵ Some of the main reasons attributed to declining stocks and increasing conflict in the cases of Syndrome B were a lack of well-functioning and enforced institutions along with the absence of patron-client relationships.²⁶ Similar to Syndrome B, Syndrome C fisheries are characterized by declining fish stocks. In addition, this syndrome is characterized by "decreasing incomes for fishers and an accumulation of wealth among traders".27 These sites were recently integrated into the global seafood market and were oftentimes characterized by destructive fishing practices including the use of "cyanide and blast fishing that have caused collateral damage on the ecosystem as well as negative health issues associated with diving".²⁸ The Philippine LRF trade is included in Syndrome C. Furthermore, LRF fishers in southern Palawan frequently use cyanide and dynamite fishing as well.²⁹ One outcome of this study was cases within each syndrome generally represent fisheries on multiple

²⁸ Ibid., p. 169.

²² Fabinyi et al., 2012.

²³ Palla, 18.

²⁴ Crona et al., "Using social–ecological syndromes to understand impacts of international seafood trade on small-scale fisheries," *Global Environmental Change*, Vol. 35 (2015 B): p. 163.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 168.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 168.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 169.

²⁹ Fabinye 2012, p. 122.

continents, "suggesting that similar outcomes can be produced through common causal pathways across multiple geographic and cultural contexts, lending support to the notion of tele-connectivity".³⁰

In a perfect world, when a particular fishery is facing environmental degradation or threats to sustainability because of overfishing, consumers would see explicit signals such as drastic price increases. These signals would make the consumer aware of unsustainable fishing practices. However, there are specific mechanisms, which hide these true costs from consumers such as "masked", "diluted", and "drowned out".³¹ They write:

> Thus, despite publicity campaigns about the dire state of stocks and eco-systems, the consistent availability of fish at afford-able prices sends contradictory signals to consumers, limiting what transformations consumer driven demand alone can achieve.³²

The consumer lack of understanding of the real cost of fish production has disastrous implications for the durability of a fishery in a particular place.

They argue three overarching mechanisms inherent to global seafood

networks hide the true cost of local fishing production from the consumer. The first mechanism is "masking". One part of this masking mechanism is "collateral ecological impacts" which are external to the specificity of the site of production. One example would be that "fisheries may lead to habitat damage...and by-catch of endangered megafauna with no effect on yields or costs...unless regulation or certification specifically internalizes them".33 The second mechanism is "dilution" which functions on an aggregate scale. They write that dilution occurs when the substitution of fish from one source hides depletion of fish from another source.34 Their notion of "drowned out" encompasses different market factors such as changes in consumer spending patterns and government subsidies.35

They suggest three strategies to closing this feedback loop. The first is to strengthen feedback signals by implementing traceability schemes to link consumers directly with information on source production.³⁶ The second involves the potential furnished by horizontal and vertical integration of seafood networks. Such integration could lead to key market actors to promote more sustainable

³³ Ibid., p. 3.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 3.

³⁰ Crona et al., 2015 B, p. 172.

³¹ Crona et al., 2015 A.

³² Ibid., p. 2.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 3.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 5.

fisheries.³⁷ This is particularly interesting because it suggests further centralization of fishing operations could a positive development, a notion strongly opposed by other scholars.38 The third strategy is targeting policy makers and political elites to enact change. One example is the recent European Union discard ban.³⁹ It is difficult to predict how effective such a strategy would be in the Philippines or Palawan, political landscapes often characterized by patron-client relationships. One point emphasized by Crona et al. is the critical role of small-scale fisheries to local communities. Fisheries provide poverty reduction, employment and food security, benefits which are particularly important to communities in developing countries such as the Philippines or communities geographically disadvantaged by distance from markets such as Balabac and Quezon.⁴⁰

Fabinye et al. trace the myriad dimensions to the LRF trade in Balabac.⁴¹ They use the concept of intensification, an idea typically affiliated with agriculture. They write intensification is a "means of increasing production from a constant area

of land or obtaining the same production from less land".⁴² One factor contributing to this intensification is increasing population growth along coastal areas. They argue that migration plays a crucial role in this coastal population growth, adding that in "many parts of SEA [Southeast Asia], fishing livelihoods, mobility and migration are closely linked".43 This is certainly true for Balabac. Groups indigenous to Palawan recently began migrating from upland Palawan to coastal areas to seek better opportunities as fishers.44 However, anecdotally, in Quezon I observed the prominence of Bisayan, a language not native to Palawan. Furthermore, I lived with a respected healer and his family who migrated from Mindanao in the 1990s. In addition to discussing the role of migration, Fabinye et al. employ a theoretical approach that includes the concept of ecologically unequal exchange as a lens to observe links between Southeast Asia and China. They write, "...viewed in terms of large-scale flows of marine resources the process is clear - Chinese consumption of luxury seafood is a direct driver of ecological

³⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

³⁸ For example, see Bavington et al., 2004.

³⁹ Crona et al., 2015 A, p. 5.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴¹ Fabinye et al., 2012.

⁴² Ibid., p. 120.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 120.

⁴⁴ Wolfram H. Dressler and Michael Fabinyi, "Farmer Gone Fish'n? Swidden Decline and the Rise of Grouper Fishing on Palawan Island, the Philippines," *Journal of Agrarian Change*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (October 2011): pp. 536-555.

degradation in SEA [Southeast Asia], with likely long-term consequences".⁴⁵ Despite this, Fabinye et al. concede that commodity fisheries such as the LRF trade provide livelihood for many coastal communities.⁴⁶

However, this seems slightly at odds with Crona et al. description of their third social-ecological syndrome, of which the Philippine LRF trade is categorized. Crona et al. emphasize Syndrome C typically includes "decreasing incomes for fishers and an accumulation of wealth among traders".47 Perhaps, it would be more accurate to claim that some fishers in southern Palawan witness increased incomes because of connections to the regional LRF trade while others experience diminished incomes and increased exploitation. Despite this seeming disagreement, Fabinye et al. seem to closely agree with Crona et al. over the problems of global market dynamics undermining local institutions, writing, "...often, the strength of the market demand from China guite simply overwhelms any local institutions for sustainability that may exist".48 Despite local politics and recent United States Agency for International Development (USAID) initiatives, the driving force behind fishing activities in southern Palawan is the integration of the region with consumer markets in China.

One interesting element to the Balabac LRF trade is the strengthening of transnational trade networks. Fishers and traders in southern Palawan are often more oriented culturally, economically and religiously toward Malaysia than the Philippines proper. This is particularly true with the overall Muslim community in Balabac. It is interesting to note that processes of globalization and reconfigurations of international relations to translocal relations are not the only factors influencing this multiplicity of identity in Balabac and LRF fisheries in southern Palawan. Historical, political, colonial, and religious histories are just as influential for this construction of community identity. LRF commodities produced in the SCS and other waters surrounding Palawan flow south to Sabah. Because of Malaysian government subsidies, Malaysian commodities are oftentimes cheaper than commodities in southern Palawan, a place quite distant from larger urban centers in the Philippines. Consequently, Malaysian products are often seen in Balabac and southern Palawan.49 Fabinye et al. conclude that the connections between demand for LRF commodities in China and Southeast Asian fisheries display many characteristics of ecologically unequal exchange. They write the LRF trade is "arguably an example of how at a broad scale, the East Asian region is consuming or

⁴⁵ Fabinye et al., 2012, pp. 120-121.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 122.

⁴⁷ Crona et al., 2015 B, p. 169.

⁴⁸ Fabinye et al., 2012, p. 122.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 127.

'appropriating' the marine resources of SEA [Southeast Asia], yet the long-term environmental cost of this consumption is borne by SEA".⁵⁰ Reports of declining fish catch in Quezon could reflect this ecological unequal exchange in other fishing villages in Palawan.⁵¹ A broader introduction to fisheries in southern Palawan and site descriptions of Balabac and Quezon is provided below.

Site Descriptions of Balabac and Quezon: Two municipalities in southern Palawan and their key similarities and differences.

The 2010 Census reported a population of 771,667, excluding the main city of Puerto Princesa.⁵² Palawan is known as the "Last Frontier" of the Philippines. The communist New People's Army (NPA) reportedly has minor operations on the island and in southern Palawan. ⁵³ Nalzaro's research on fishing villages in Palawan provide a useful overview of the fishery landscape of the island, particularly organizational membership of fisherfolk in a variety of cooperatives and other organizations.⁵⁴ Other influential factors on fisheries in Palawan are USAID and the Coral Triangle Support Partnership (CTSP). This initiative's objective is to encourage more sustainable fishing practices in Palawan (USAID).

Quezon is a municipality of medium size in southern Palawan. The 2010 Census reports a population of 55,142.55 A study affiliated with the Ecosystem-based Fisheries Management (EBFM) Component of the USAID-funded CTSP was published in 2009. It should be pointed out that the data collected is gender-skewed, with an overwhelming percentage of respondents being male. In Quezon, 100 percent of respondents were male. The report estimates 250 LRF fishers operate out of Quezon.56 It is difficult to discern the portion of these 250 fishers who traverse the more dangerous and militarized waters deep in the SCS. Indeed, it should be emphasized that the figure of 250 is an estimate only. However, during my discussions with the owner of a fishing operation in Quezon in August 2015, I was informed that perhaps over 100 LRF fishers based in Ouezon actually travel to these distant reefs in the Spratly Islands in search of grouper. Again, this figure is difficult to verify and is based on anecdotal evidence. The EBFM study reports residents of Quezon spend around

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 129.

⁵¹ Palla, p. 18.

⁵² "Palawan's Population Increased by 180 Thousand," 2010.

⁵³ Redempto D. Anda, "Police nab top NPA commander in Palawan," *Inquirer Southern Luzon*, February 2014.

⁵⁴ Oscar G. Nalzaro, "Organizational Membership of Fisherfolks in Fishing Villages in Palawan, Philippines," *Asian Journal of Business and Governance*, Vol. 3 (January 2013): pp. 115-128.

⁵⁵ "Palawan's Population Increased by 180 Thousand," 2010.

⁵⁶ Raoul Cola, "Income Profile of LRFF Fishers in Palawan and Tawi-Tawi." *WWF-CTSP Palawan report* 2009, July 2009.

six years in school. The mean number for income sources for respondents in Quezon is two. In addition to fishing, respondents also reported alternate sources of income, mostly from livestock and poultry. The report also provides in-depth quantitative data detailing a variety of fishing methods used in Palawan and Quezon. The mean annual income from LRF fishing sources in Quezon was reported as P 252,096 (Pesos). This is approximately 5,300 USD. Balabac is the southernmost point of Palawan. In this sense, it could be romantically characterized as the outer-edge of the "Last Frontier" of the Philippines. The 2010 Census reports a population of 35,758.57 Very little demographic information exists about Balabac.

While the integration of fishing villages of developing countries like the Philippines into the global seafood trade provides certain economic benefits to some members of those communities, there is potential for irreversible environmental damage. Unsustainable fishing practices, oftentimes masked by larger seafood trade network dynamics, threaten food security for local littoral communities in Southeast Asia. Fishing villages in southern Palawan provide examples of how the commoditization of fish threaten food security for these communities.

As mentioned above, LRF fishers in these communities target two areas—the

Spratly Island area and Tawi-Tawi. Essentially, their activities straddle multiple boundaries. First, their trade of LRF spans across the national borders of the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, and China. Second, LRF operations in the SCS traverse spatial claims of several states-Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Third, their LRF operations straddle the border demarcating the area of focus for the CTI. LRF fishers in southern Palawan operate within and outside of the area of the CTI, illustrating potential problems of not including sections of the disputed SCS in the CTI. Below, the CTI will be explained in more detail.

Coral Triangle Initiative

The Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security (CTI) is a multilateral partnership of sixnations formed in 2007 with the overall objective of addressing the "urgent threats" facing the coastal and marine resources of "one of the most biologically diverse and ecologically rich regions on earth".58 CTI-CFF is managed through a Secretariat based in Jakarta, Indonesia. Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono spearheaded the organization of the CTI.⁵⁹ In September 2007, 21 Heads of State at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Summit approved the CTI.⁶⁰ In December 2007, the CTI was officially launched during the 13th

⁵⁷ "Palawan's Population Increased by 180 Thousand," 2010.

⁵⁸ "About CTI-CFF." Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security.

⁵⁹ "About CTI-CFF" and George and Hussin, 2010, p. 443.

⁶⁰ George and Hussin 2010, p. 443.



Map of the CTI-CFF Implementation Area and the Coral Triangle Scientific Boundary. Image from "About CTI-CFF".

Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (Ibid., p. 443). In May representatives of Indonesia, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, the Solomon Islands and Timor Leste signed the CTI-RAP.⁶¹ These CTI-6 states envision an "ecosystem-based approach" to protecting marine biodiversity as well as mangroves.⁶² However, it should be mentioned this is not a binding treaty and there is no legal obligation. The Coral Triangle encompasses approximately 6 million square kilometers of ocean-space, including more than half of global coral reefs and nearly all mangroves on earth.⁶³ The Coral Triangle includes 76% of known coral species.⁶⁴ The Coral Triangle is said to act as a "catch-all" for larvae moving towards the region.⁶⁵ This catch-all is fed by the South Equatorial Current and the North Equatorial Current. Dispersion away from the Coral Triangle is observed. In all directions away from the

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 443-444.

⁶² Ibid., p. 443.

⁶³ George and Hussin 2010, p. 444.

⁶⁴ Annick Cros et al., "The Coral Triangle Atlas: An Integrated Online Spatial Database System for Improving Coral Reef Management," *Plos ONE*, Vol. 9, No. 6 (June 2014): p. 1; Simon Foalea et al., "Food security and the Coral Triangle Initiative," *Marine Policy*, Vol. 38 (March 2013): p. 175; George and Hussin 2010, p. 445 and Veron et al. 2009, p. 91.

⁶⁵ Veron et al. 2009, p. 97.

Coral Triangle, waters become increasingly cooler and species diversity progressively decreases, indicating the region is the most diverse marine space in the central Indo-Pacific.⁶⁶ All surrounding regions have less species. This tremendous biodiversity is threatened by anthropogenic factors. Indeed, the Reefs at Risk report predicts that 85% of the Coral Triangle's coral reefs are at risk to degradation due to high level of anthropogenic stresses and climate-impacts.⁶⁷

In 2010, scholars reported "One third of the CTI region's population (approximately 363 million people) is directly dependent on coastal and marine resources for its livelihood".68 Four years later, scholars set this figure more conservatively, stating 130 million people "directly depend on these resources for their livelihoods and well-being".⁶⁹ It is reported that 50 million of these people are "poor".⁷⁰ The CTI reports these resources provide "significant benefits to the approximately 363 million people who reside in the Coral Triangle, as well as billions more outside the region".⁷¹ While there may be some discrepancies with the precise number of people directly and indirectly dependent on this ocean-space, it is clear that millions of people depend on it for existence. Food security, one of the objectives of the CTI, can be a vague concept. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN uses the definition of food security adopted from the World Food Summit of 1996:

> Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.⁷²

The objective of food security is premised on species conservation on a wide-scale, spanning the waters of six countries.

The CTI-6 states articulated priority areas and specific target sites of focus within the Coral Triangle for each country. In the Philippines, these include sites in Palawan and Tawi-Tawi.⁷³ The 10-year RAP adopted in 2009 includes nine principles and five overarching goals. Principle 1 states "CTI should support people-centered biodiversity conservation, sustainable development, poverty reduction and

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 97.

⁶⁷ Cabral et al., "Crisis sentinel indicators: Averting a potential meltdown in the Coral Triangle," *Marine Policy*, Vol. 39 (May 2013): pp. 241.

⁶⁸ George and Hussin, 2010., p. 444

⁶⁹ Cros et al., 2014, p. 1.

⁷⁰ Cabral et al., "Opportunities and Challenges in the Coral Triangle," *Environmental Science Technology*, Vol. 46 (2012): pp. 7930.

^{71 &}quot;About CTI-CFF".

⁷² Annabelle Cruz-Trinidad et al., "Linking Food Security with Coral Reefs and Fisheries in the Coral Triangle," *Coastal Management*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (2014): p. 162.

⁷³ George and Hussin, 2010, p. 444.

equitable benefit sharing".74 Principle 3 states tangible time-tables and quantitative goals should be adopted at the highestpolitical level.⁷⁵ Principle 5 emphasizes aligning CTI initiatives with international conventions while Principle 6 cautions states to recognize transboundary fish stocks and inter-state boundaries. These two principle are particularly relevant to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and the establishment of Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ). George and Hussin write the CTI operationalizes duties and rights under UNCLOS and the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity.⁷⁶ The five RAP goals include establishing sound investment plans, employing and ecosystem approach to fisheries management, implementing a region-wide Coral Triangle Marine Protected Area System, implement climate-change adaptation and protecting endangered species.⁷⁷ Goal 2 specifically mentions a "well-managed and sustainable trade in live-reef and reef-based ornamentals".78

CTI projects manifest in different forms on the ground in different countries. The Philippines focuses on mangrove management and reforestation in the context of climate-change adaptation.⁷⁹ USAID Philippines also contributes to local projects.⁸⁰ In 2009, the US Department of State sponsored the first of several workshops attended by stakeholders in the Asian LRF trade.⁸¹

Scholars have argued CTI could more effectively strive to meet its objectives, particularly in relation to food security. Foale at al. point out CTI does not articulate clear strategies to improve food security and how this improvement will be measured.⁸² They suggest "a more explicit impactpathway analysis could guide such thinking".⁸³ This involves critically assessing the complex food security-biodiversity conservation linkages before implementing conservation methods.⁸⁴ Additionally, they cite the problems posed by the continued need of land reform in the Philippines.⁸⁵ Similarly, Cabral et al. suggest the "CT6

- ⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 454.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 446-447.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 447.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 451.
- ⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 451.
- ⁸¹ Ibid., p. 452.
- ⁸² Foale et al., 2013, p. 175.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 445.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 446.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 180.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 174.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 180.

would benefit from the establishment of programs that will integrate socioeconomic and ecological outcomes to the CTI-CFF strategies in conjunction with the regular monitoring and evaluation procedures at all governance levels".⁸⁶ Cabral et al. use Crisis Sentinel Indicators (CSI) to outline problems posed by ecological, socioeconomic, and governance pressures.⁸⁷ They conclude the scores of the CSI reveal three typologies:

> (1) good governance and socioeconomic state with alarming ecological state (Malaysia); (2) alarming ecological and socioeconomic state with moderate governance state (Philippines and Indonesia); and (3) alarming governance and socioeconomic state with moderate ecological state (Timor-Leste, Papua New Guinea, and Solomon Islands).⁸⁸

They point out countries characterized by lack of food and weak government oftentimes are in a situation of exporting high-level seafood to well-nourished countries with strong governments.⁸⁹ Relatedly, Fabinye et al. write the transnational LRF trade centered on Filipino fishers is an ecologically unequal exchange between Southeast Asia and China.⁹⁰ Tellingly, protein consumption involved with dietary energy requirements of Indonesia and the Philippines is below recommended levels.⁹¹

One crucial objective of the CTI is to facilitate exchanges of technology in realtime between the CTI-6. In 2009, the Coral Triangle Atlas was created with funding from USAID through the Coral Triangle Support Partnership.92 One principle use of the Atlas is to support the CTI Monitoring and Evaluation Technical Working Group in tracking the progress of the CTI Regional Plan of Action.⁹³ The Atlas is largely an online GIS database, providing government agencies, NGOs and researchers with spatial data from the CTI-6 countries that is critical to successful implementation of CTI goals.⁹⁴ For instance, different GIS layers represent different spatial data such as sea surface temperature, surface chlorophyll concentration and current speed.95 Interestingly, certain GIS layers represent

⁸⁶ Cabral et al., 2012, p. 7931.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 242.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 242.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 242.

⁹⁰ Fabinye et al., 2012, 129.

⁹¹ Cabral et al., 2013, pp. 243-244.

⁹² Cros et al., 2014, p. 2.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 5.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 6.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 3.

spatial night light patterns. Despite the potential value of night light distribution, the marine scientific community is only using it recently.⁹⁶ Light distribution on land reflects density of human habitation. On ocean-space, "they summarise the distribution of boats, and ships, many engaged in commercial fishing".⁹⁷ Marine scientists are beginning to use this technique to trace fishing patterns in the SCS in an effort to increase knowledge on sustainable fishing patterns.⁹⁸

The Exclusion of the SCS from the Coral Triangle

The supreme importance of the Coral Triangle only became undeniable within the scientific community in the late-20th Century when global coral distributions of species were compiled. Suddenly, the Indonesian-Philippines archipelago was revealed to exceed the biodiversity of the Great Barrier Reef. Consequently, the international focus on coral reef conservation "shifted from the highly regulated World Heritage province of the Great Barrier Reef to the relatively under-studied region to the north, where reefs were largely unprotected, and where human population densities and consequent environmental impacts were high by most world standards".⁹⁹ The Coral Triangle is not only the home to the largest diversity of coral on earth. An enormous number of people are directly dependent on it for sustenance and livelihoods, increasing the vulnerability of this marine space.

Biogeographic distributions influenced the delimitation of the Coral Triangle. A comprehensive database of GIS-based maps called the Coral Geographic traces biogeographic distributions which influenced the current delimitation of the Coral Triangle as administered by CTI.¹⁰⁰ The database includes maps of zooxanthellate coral distributions that can be analyzed to compare geographic regions and trace patterns of diversity.¹⁰¹ This data seems to demonstrate each of the sub-regions of the Coral Triangle have more than 500 species.¹⁰² This is the litmus used to incorporate or not incorporate a specific marine region into the ocean-space targeted by the CTI.¹⁰³ According to Veron et al., 2009, the SCS region falls shy of this benchmark with 435 species.¹⁰⁴ However,

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 4.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 4

⁹⁸ Rollan Geronimo, PhD student in the Geography Department, UH Mānoa, is doing this.

⁹⁹ Veron et al., 2009, p. 92.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 93.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 93.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 95.

¹⁰³ Alison L. Green and Peter J. Mous, "Delineating the Coral Triangle, its Ecoregions and Functional Seascapes," *Version 5.0. TNC Coral Triangle Program.* Report No 1/08, September 2008, p. 5 and Veron et al., 2009, p. 95.

¹⁰⁴ Veron et al., 2009, p. 94.

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Green and Mous 2008 assert a different justification for excluding the SCS from the CTI. They write the "Spratly Islands were not included, because the limited anecdotal information available indicated that the high biodiversity of the Coral Triangle does not extend west to this area".¹⁰⁵

This nuanced distinction in justifications for excluding the SCS is troubling. The former seems to assert an extensive knowledge of the coral species diversity in the SCS. After all, 435 seems like an exceedingly specific figure. Despite this, Green and Mous depict the information on the SCS as embryonic, referring to it as "limited anecdotal information". It is difficult to imagine how "limited anecdotal information" could result in the precise figure 435.

These seeming contradictions seem to challenge the validity of the reasoning for excluding the SCS. Green and Mous write that due to a lack of data for many of the sites in the region, "these boundaries were considered a hypothesis for future research, rather than a final product".¹⁰⁶ For example, the CTI boundary was moved further east to include the main island of the Solomon Islands following the Solomon Islands Marine Assessment.¹⁰⁷ Increasing knowledge of the SCS could reveal a significantly higher diversity of coral, raising the possibility of formally including it in the CTI. However, the increasing geopolitical tension involved with the Spratly Islands diminishes the likelihood that a comprehensive observation of species diversity will occur.

The primary criteria for determining the boundary of the Coral Triangle is species diversity, oceanography, and currents.¹⁰⁸ Secondary criteria include geomorphology, bathymetry, sea level fluctuations, and habitat type. Criteria explicitly excluded were plate tectonics and socioeconomic factors. However, one could speculate political factors were considered when deciding on the exclusion of the SCS, especially considering the uncertainty surrounding the number of coral species in the region.

Conclusion: The Politics of Excising the SCS from the CTI

The exclusion of the SCS from the CTI target region seems questionable. The figure of 435 species indicates tremendous biodiversity. Most other regions of the globe fall well short of the species diversity of the SCS. Furthermore, it is ocean-space contiguous to the region targeted by the CTI, making including this region theoretically feasible logistically. The North Philippines region is reported to have 510 species while the Southeast Philippines region has 533. The most significantly biodiverse region is Raja Ampat/Bird's

¹⁰⁵ Green and Mous, 2008, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 8.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 4.

Head Peninsula with 553 species.¹⁰⁹ The relatively similar extent of biodiversity in the SCS warrants rethinking the CTI target area.

One could speculate the SCS was excluded because the region is riddled with spatial and political disputes. Along this line of thought, including this geopolitically tumultuous seascape could have been seen as endangering the efficacy of CTI generally. This fear has validity. Despite this, excluding the SCS has profound ecological, economic, and political consequences for Filipino communities and Southeast Asia, in general. Myriad factors threaten the environmental durability of this bioregion. This includes the continued use of cyanide and dynamite among local smallscale fishers as well as unregulated harvests by large-scale fishers hailing from distant ports. The megalomaniacal militarization efforts of China pose different threats-the systematic destruction of coral reefs to create artificial islands. Inclusion of the SCS in the CTI targeted area could increase public awareness of these destructive practices and increase international condemnations of increased militarization of this fragile ocean-space. Fishers in southern Palawan traverse multiple, overlapping geographies. This article puts a human face to these multiple geographic imaginaries.

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¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 95.

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Public Participation Strategy for Sustainable Water Resource Governance in the Lower Mekong Basin:

A Policy Case Study from the Mekong River Commission

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Abstract

Public participation in water resources management is considered as the primary goal and value for realizing economically sustainable, socially just and environmentally sound governance. However, scant attention has been given to this area over the past decades. In the Lower Mekong Basin, previous studies have indicated that efforts by the Mekong River Commission to include a public participation strategy into its water governance framework were challenging. Nonetheless, no study, if any, has examined this policy uptake using a science-policy interface lens. Thus, this article aims to fill this gap, by exploring what made the MRC adopt this strategy, what challenges and opportunities it faced in doing this and in trying to implement the strategy, and what constitutes public participation in this context. The analysis has indicated various aspects of policy uptake in this context, including the political context within the MRC governance, roles of external influences and research evidence, and the role of knowledge brokers. Various lessons learned are also drawn in the concluding part.

Introduction

A total of 145 countries shares the world's 263 international basins,¹ covering

almost 50% of the earth's surface.² Managing such transboundary river basins has been difficult but is essential, for water

¹ Meredith A. Giordano and Aaron T. Wolf. 2003. "Sharing waters: Post-Rio international water management." *Natural Resources Forum* 27:163-171.

² Aaron T. Wolf, Jeffrey A. Natharius, Jeffrey J. Danielson, Brian S. Ward, and Jan K. Pender. 1999.

[&]quot;International river basins of the world." International Journal of Water Resources Development 15 (4):387-427.

is both a source of conflict and life.³ As such a rising number of river basin cooperation agreements have emerged.⁴ However, as Milich and Varady argue, no explicit provisions on public participation were found in most of these agreements,⁵ despite its crucial role and value for realizing economically sustainable, socially just, and environmentally sound governance.⁶ It is only until recently that public participation in water resources governance has gained significant attention.⁷

In the Lower Mekong Basin (LMB), studies by Chenoweth, Ewing, and Bird and Sneddon and Fox have indicated that efforts by the Mekong River Commission (MRC) to include a public participation strategy into its water governance framework were challenging⁸ However, no study, if any, has examined this policy uptake using a sciencepolicy interface lens. This article, thus, aims to fill this gap, by exploring what made the MRC adopt this strategy, what challenges and opportunities it has faced in doing this and in trying to implement the strategy, and what constitutes public participation in this particular context. Structured around these aims, the paper begins by looking at the meaning and importance of public participation. This is followed by the discussion of what science-policy interfaces are and how they work. It then provides the general context of the Mekong River and its sustainable development challenges before discussing factors leading up to the adoption of the strategy. A brief discussion on the creation of the MRC and its 1995 Mekong Agreement is also provided. With this necessary understanding, the paper then analyzes outcomes of the strategy, focusing on opportunities and challenges created by it. The concluding part examines how

³ Carl Bruch, Libor Jansky, Mikiyasu Nakayama, Kazimierz A Salewicz, and Angela Cassar. 2005. "From theory to practice: An overview of approaches to involving the public in international watershed management." In *Public participation in the governance of international freshwater resources*, edited by Carl Bruch, Libor Jansky, Mikiyasu Nakayama and Kazimierz A Salewicz, 3-18. Tokyo: United Nations University Press; Ian C. Campbell. 2009. "The challenges for the Mekong River management " In *The Mekong: Biophysical environment of an international river basin*, edited by Ian Champbell, 403-419. New York: Academic Press.

⁴ Oliver Hensengerth. 2009. "Transboundary river cooperation and the regional public good: The case of the Mekong River." *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 31 (2):326, 328-329.

⁵ L. Milich and R. G. Varady. 1999. "Openness, sustainability and public participation: New designs for transboundary river basin institutions." *Journal of Environment & Development* 17:215-246.

⁶ Erik Mostert. 2003. "The challenge of public participation." *Water Policy* 5 (2):179-197; Jerome Delli Priscolli. 2004. "What is public participation in water resources management and why is it important?" *Water International* 29 (2):221-227; Jona Razzaque. 2009. "Public participation in water governance." In *The evolution of the law and politics of water*, edited by J. W. Dellapenna and J. Gupta, 353-371. Springer Netherlands; Chris Sneddon and Coleen Fox. 2007. "Power, development, and institutional change: Participatory governance in the Lower Mekong Basin." *World Development* 35 (12):2161-2181.

⁷ Gul Ozerola and Jens Newig. 2008. "Evaluating the success of public participation in water resources management: Five key constituents." *Water Policy* 10 (4):423; Razzaque. 2009.

⁸ Jonathan L. Chenoweth,, Sarah A. Ewing, and Juliet F. Bird. 2002. "Procedures for ensuring community involvement in multijurisdictional river basins: A comparison of the Murray-Darling and Mekong River Basins." *Environmental Management* 29 (4):497-509; Chris Sneddon and Coleen Fox. 2006. "Rethinking transboundary waters: A critical hydropolitics of the Mekong basin." *Political Geography* 25 (2):181-202.

science-policy interfaces have occurred in the case, from which different lessons are drawn.

Public participation and its importance in water resource management

Public participation is the involvement of people or groups who are negatively or positively affected by, or are interested in, a proposed plan, project or policy that is subject to processes of decision-making.9 Public participation allows people, in collaboration with authorities, to share, negotiate, and regulate this decisionmaking.¹⁰ The authorities are to inform the public, who in turn reports its views back to them, about policy developments, in order to create a process potentially influencing decision-making.¹¹ However, not only does public participation require the exchange of information, but it also seeks to have the "true sharing of power and responsibility" between the public and authorities.¹² Public participation, as Creighton argues, has three essential goals.¹³ Firstly, it offers credibility

to the course of decision-making; secondly, it enables the recognition of concerns and values of the public; and, thirdly, it can stimulate consensus-building between the public and authorities. In the water sector, public participation is regarded as the initial basic feature for effective water governance.¹⁴ However, when it comes to the context of transboundary river basin management, encompassing scale and complexity issues of institutional arrangements, public participation becomes a particularly tough subject to both define and implement.¹⁵ This may be true for the MRC context.

Science-policy interfaces: how they are defined and how they work

Van den Hove defines science-policy interfaces (SPIs) as "social processes which encompass relations between scientists and other actors in the policy process, and which allow for exchanges, co-evaluation, and joint construction of knowledge with the aim of enriching decision making".¹⁶

⁹ Bert Enserink and Mariachiara Alberton. 2016. "Public participation in China: strengths, weaknesses, and lessons learned." *Journal of Environmental Assessment Policy and Management* 18 (1):1-21, 2; ECD. 2015. Stakeholder engagement for inclusive water governance. In *OECD Studies on Water*. (Paris: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Publishing), 32.

¹⁰ Ozerola and Newig. 2008; N. Videria, P. Antunes, R. Santos, and G. Lobo. 2006. "Public and stakeholder participation in European water policy: A critical review of project evaluation processes." *European Environment* 16:19-31.

¹¹ A. MacKay. 1998. Concepts and process of public participation: Conceptual briefing note. In *Public participation in electric power projects (an emerging issue in Asia)*, edited by UNESCAP. Bangkok; Mostert. 2003.

¹² Chenoweth, Ewing, and Bird. 2002.

¹³ James L. Creighton. 1981. *Public involvement manual: Involving the public in water and power resources decisions*. Cambridge: Abt Books.

¹⁴ Razzaque. 2009.

¹⁵ John Dore and Louis Lebel. 2010. "Deliberation and scale in Mekong region water governance." *Environmental Management* 46:60–80; Sneddon and Fox. 2007.

¹⁶ Sybille van den Hove. 2007. "A rationale for science–policy interfaces." Futures 39 (7):807-826, 810,811,824.



Fig. 1. The Mekong River Basin

Drawing on the studies of Vatn and Young, Koetz, Farrell, and Bridgewater offer an alternative definition of SPIs as "institutional arrangements that reflect cognitive models and provide normative structures, rights, rules and procedures that define and enable the social practice of linking scientific and policy-making processes".¹⁷ While van den Hove's definition seems broad but captures both formal bureaucracies and informal interactions between the science and policy sphere, the one offered by Koetz et al. is narrow and centers mainly around institutional arrangements. Never-

¹⁷ A. Vatn, A. 2005. 'Rationality, institutions and environmental policy', *Ecological Economics*, 55, 203-217; O.R. Young. 2008. 'Institutions and environmental change. The scientific legacy of a decade of IDGEC research' in: Young, O R, King, L A and Schroeder, H (eds.), *Institutions and environmental change: Principal findings, applications, and research*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 3-46; T. Koetz, K.N. Farrell, and P. Bridgewater. 2011. 'Building better science-policy interfaces for international environmental governance: Assessing potential within the Intergovernmental Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services', *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics*, 12, 1-21, 2.

theless, the notion of SPIs clearly underscores the intersection between scientists and policy-makers in the process of knowledge production for better-informed decision-making.

In an attempt to examine how SPIs operate, three theoretical approaches emerge: the rational, the constructivist, and the pragmatic approach. The rational approach, also known as the traditional, linear or technical model, is based on the central premise that policy-makers should systematically collect information and consider every alternative prior to making the best decision objectively.18 In other words, scientific evidence is called upon and used in the policy-making and implementing processes, which then creates an intersection between science and policy.¹⁹ However, this approach has suffered a serious blow as overtly plain and critically misleading,²⁰ primarily because the "reality tends to be much more dynamic and complex, with two-way processes between research, policy, and practice, shaped by multiple relations and reservoirs of knowledge".²¹

Such growing dissatisfaction has given rise to the constructivist perspective. Under this perspective, knowledge construction is viewed as not merely through the existence of objective truth, but through social assumptions and norms²² that involve creating interactive forms of decisionmaking where multiple views are sought.²³ Van den Hove sees this as "the co-evolution of subjective and objective knowledge" whose combination has the potential to create the interface between science and policy.24 Nonetheless, it has been acknowledged that a legitimate policy or decision cannot be made only through broad stakeholder engagement if it contradicts findings of the scientific community.²⁵

The pragmatic model seeks to address the complexity involved in the two perspectives. It acknowledges the know-

¹⁸ F. Fischer. 1998. 'Beyond empiricism: Policy inquiry in postpositivist perspective', *Policy Studies Journal*, 26, 129-146, 130-131.

¹⁹ Julius Court and John Young. 2006. "Bridging research and policy in international development: An analytical and practical framework." *Development in Practice* 16 (1):85-90, 85; S. Owens. 2005. 'Making a difference? Some perspectives on environmental research and policy', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 30, 287-292, 288; A. Smajgl and J. Ward. 2013. 'A framework to bridge science and policy in complex decision making arenas', *Futures*, 52, 52-58, 53; van den Hove. 2007, 811, 810.

²⁰ E.C. McNie. 2007. 'Reconciling the supply of scientific information with user demands: An analysis of the problem and review of the literature', *Environmental Science & Policy*, 10, 17-38; R. Sutton, 1999. The policy process: an overview. London: Overseas Development Institute.

²¹ Court and Young. 2006, 85.

²² A.L. Guske, G. Richards, J. Ferretti, E. Kunseler, W. van Enst, and L. Pettibone. 2015, Understanding sciencepolicy interfaces. *In:* Weiland, S and Podhora, A (eds.) *Research gaps impact assessment: Novel perspectives of young researchers*. LIAISEoffspring Network, 11-12.

²³ P. Healey. 2008. 'The pragmatic tradition in planning thought', *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 28, 277-292.

²⁴ van den Hove. 2007, 811, 810.

 ²⁵ S. Jasanoff. 1994, *The fifth branch: Science advisers as policymakers*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge;
 M. Hesse. 2015. 'The science-policy interface', *disP - The Planning Review*, 51, 4-5.

ledge, skills, and judgment of experts who consider stakeholder participation as a necessary means to accomplish credible scientific knowledge production and incorporates uncertainties of perspectives and values among stakeholders.²⁶ The experts, in ensuring the relevance of information, also heed attention about timescales, scope, and perceived legitimacy of the research produced.²⁷ It is in this model that "the strict separation between the functions of the expert and the politician is replaced by a critical inter-relation," which "precisely creates an intersection between science and policy".²⁸

General context of the Mekong River and sustainable water resources development challenges

Beginning its 4,800-kilometer journey on the Tibetan Plateau, the Mekong River flows through China's Yunnan province, Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam (Fig. 1).²⁹ It is the longest river in Southeast Asia and world's tenth-largest river, with 795,000 km² of catchment area.³⁰ The LMB is home to 65 million people, and by 2060 this may reach 83 million.³¹ About 80-85% of them are rural poor, who depend heavily on the river and its related resources for their livelihoods.³² Regarding biodiversity, the Mekong is considered the second most biodiverse river in the world.³³

³¹ MRC. 2016a. *Integrated water resources management-based Basin Development Strategy 2016-2030 for the Lower Mekong Basin.* Vientiane: Mekong River Commission Secretariat, 25, 2.

²⁶ B. Flyvbjerg. 2006. 'Social science that matters', *Foresight Europe*, 2, 38-42, 38.

²⁷ D. Cash, W. Clark, F. Alcock, N. Dickson, N. Eckley, and J. JägerJ. 2002. Salience, credibility, legitimacy and boundaries: linking research, assessment and decision making. *Faculty Research Working Papers Series: RWP02-046*. Cambridge: Harvard University.

²⁸ J. Habermas, J. 1971. *Towards a rational society: student protest, science, and politics,* Beacon Press, Boston, 66.

²⁹ MRC. 2011c. *Planning atlas of the Lower Mekong Basin*. Vientiane: Mekong River Commission Secretariat.

³⁰ Daming He and Hsiang-te Kung. 1997. "Facilitating regional sustainable development through integrated multi-objective utilizing management of water resources in the Lancang-Mekong River basin." *The Journal of Chinese Geography* 7 (4):9-21; Jeffrey W. Jacobs. 2002. "The Mekong River Commission: transboundary water resources planning and regional security." *The Geographical Journal* 168 (4):354-364; MRC. 1995b. Annual report 1995. Bangkok: Mekong River Commission Secretariat.

³² Ian C. Campbell. 2011. "Managing international river basins: successes and failures of the Mekong River Commission." In *Water Resources Planning and Management*, edited by R. Quentin Grafton and Karen Hussey, 724-740. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Patrick J. Dugan, Chris Barlow, Angelo A. Agostinho, Eric Baran, Glenn F. Cada, Daqing Chen, Ian G. Cowx, John W. Ferguson, Tuantong Jutagate, Martin Mallen-Cooper, Gerd Marmulla, John Nestler, Miguel Petrere, Robin L. Welcomme, and Kirk O. Winemiller. 2010. "Fish migration, dams, and loss of ecosystem services in the Mekong basin." *Ambio* 39 (4):344-348; MRC. 2016a, 25, 2.

³³ Kent G. Hortle . 2009. "Fishes of the Mekong - How many species are there." *Catch and Culture* 15 (2):4-12; Guy Ziv, Eric Baran, So Nam, Ignacio Rodríguez-Iturbe, and Simon A. Levin. 2012. "Trading-off fish biodiversity, food security, and hydropower in the Mekong River Basin." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 109 (15):5609-5614.

Name	Catchme nt (km ²)	Average inflow (million m ³)	Installed capacity (MW)	Annual energy (GWh)	Status (2012)	Commissi on year
Gongguoqiao	97,200	31,060	759	3,940	operation	2008
Xiaowan	113,300	38,470	4,200	18,890	operation	2010
Manwan	114,500	38,790	1,500	7,600	operation	1996
Dachaoshan	121,000	42,260	1,350	6,710	operation	2003
Nuazhadu	144,700	54,600	5,850	23,900	impounding	2016
Jinghong	149,100	58,030	1,750	7,620	operation	2010
Ganlanba	151,800	59,290	150	780	planned	n/a
Mengsong	160,000	63,700	600	2,890	cancelled	cancelled

Table 1. Chinese hydropower dams

Source: Hydropower project database³⁴

Since the 1950s, based on data from the MRC Secretariat, the Mekong has witnessed a spate of dam building proposals on the mainstream (Fig. 2).³⁵ In China – the upper basin – five dams are already in operation and three others are at various stages of development (Table 1). In the LMB, at least 11 dam sites have been proposed for the mainstream and 135 others on the tributaries (Table 2). Potential impacts from these projects on environmental, social, and economic aspects can be substantial for the Mekong.³⁶

As the projects are moving ahead under the rhetoric of economic development, Rieu-Clarke suggests that it be critical that "all stakeholder interests are reconciled in an equitable, legitimate, and transparent manner" to achieve sustainable water

³⁴ MRCS. 2014. Hydropower project database. Vientiane: Mekong River Commission Secretariat ³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ DR and DHI. 2015. "Study on the impacts of mainstream hydropower on the Mekong River ("Delta Study"): final report". Hanoi: Vietnam's Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment; Louis Lebel, Po Garden, and Masao Imamura. 2005. "The politics of scale, position, and place in the governance of water resources in the Mekong region." *Ecology and Society* 10 (2):1-19; Seungho Lee. 2015. "Benefit sharing in the Mekong River Basin." *Water International* 40 (1):139-152.

resources development.³⁷ Being the single intergovernmental organization in the LMB, the MRC has an essential role to play here, serving as the "platform for regional

cooperation on the management of waterrelated resources for sustainable development of the LMB".³⁸

Country	Project summary	Project status (as of 2014)					
		In operation	Under construction	Under license	Planned	Total	
Cambodia	Project	1	1	0	18	20 (18 in tributaries)	
	Capacity (MW)	1	400	0	4,739	5,140	
	Annual energy (GWh)	3	1,954	0	22,400	24,356	
	Investment (Million U\$)	7	943	0	17,106	18,056	
Laos	Project	22	24	17	39	102 (95 in tributaries)	
	Capacity (MW)	3,226	4,625	3,823	5,814	17,487	
	Annual energy (GWh)	15,265	18,581	19,885	22,956	76,687	
	Investment (Million U\$)	3,869	7,967	7,288	18,692	37,816	
Thailand	Project	7	0	0	0	7 (all in tributaries)	
	Capacity (MW)	745	0	0	0	745	
	Annual energy (GWh)	904	0	0	0	904	
	Investment (Million U\$)	1,940	0	0	0	1,940	

Table 2. Hydropower dams in the Lower Mekong Basin

³⁷ Alistair Rieu-Clarke, Alistair. 2015. "Transboundary hydropower projects on the mainstream of the Lower Mekong River - The case of public participation and its national implications for basin states." In *Public participation and water resources management: Where do we stand in international law?*, edited by Mara Tignino and Komlan Sangbana, 91-97. (Geneva: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), 93.

³⁸ Tuan Phan Pham. 2016. "Letter to the editor: The MRC, a platform for cooperation" *The Phnom Penh Post*.

	Investment (Million U\$)	2,948	304	0	97	3,349
Laos- Thailand	Project	0	0	0	2	2 (all in mainstream)
	Capacity (MW)	0	0	0	2,951	2,951
	Annual energy (GWh)	0	0	0	13,752	13,752
	Investment (Million U\$)	0	0	1,788	2,452	4,240
Total	Project	43	26	17	60	146 (135 in tributaries)
	Capacity (MW)	6,329	5,275	3,823	13,562	28,988
	Annual energy (GWh)	27,356	21,591	19,885	59,289	128,121
	Investment (Million U\$)	8,764	9,213	9,076	38,347	65,401

Source: Hydropower project database³⁹

³⁹ MRCS. 2014.



Fig. 2. Existing and planned hydropower projects in the Mekong River⁴⁰

⁴⁰ MRCS. 2014.

The Mekong River Commission (MRC), the 1995 Mekong Agreement and its public participation strategy

The Mekong cooperation history dates back to 1957 when the Mekong Committee (MC) was founded under a statute endorsed by the United Nations, allowing Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam to work together on the development of the Mekong River.⁴¹ This 1957 Mekong Agreement was shaped by political goals and motivated by economic rationale, especially in the hydropower potential of the river and its tributaries.⁴² Despite warfare in Cambodia and Vietnam during the 1960s, the MC and its Secretariat still managed to craft plans to transform the Mekong waters into development assets as a key to boosting economic growth through hydropower for advanced industrialization and improved irrigation.43 However, as Sneddon and Fox point out, the MC member countries and its donors took little heed to the adverse environmental and social impacts, potentially resulting from dam construction.44 As the war and violence continued to intensify, Cambodia withdrew its membership from the MC, leaving the other three countries to establish the Interim Mekong Committee (IMC) in January 1978.⁴⁵ The core focus of the IMC at that time remained largely the same – dam building⁴⁶ – although with little funding from donors.⁴⁷ During the periods of MC and IMC, development in the LMB was neither participatory nor inclusive, where policies to include public concerns and those who would be affected by the development in decision-making had never been a priority.⁴⁸

It was not until 5 April 1995 when Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam adopted the *Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin,* which established the MRC, did public participation and participatory governance polices begin to gain attention.⁴⁹ The 1995 Mekong Agreement, though without precise reference to public participation, does oblige its member countries to "cooperate in all fields of

⁴⁴ Sneddon and Fox. 2007.

⁴⁵ Jacobs. 2002.

⁴¹ Jacobs. 2002; MRC. 1995b; MRC. 2013. *Mekong basin planning: The story behind the Basin Development Plan*. Vientiane: Mekong River Commission Secretariat.

⁴² Philip Hirsch . 2001. "Globalization, regionalization and local voices: tThe Asian Development Bank and rescaled politics of environment in the Mekong region." *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 22 (3):237–251, 3-5; Philip Hirsch and Kurt Mørck Jensen. 2006. National interests and transboundary water governance in the Mekong. Sydney: The University of Sydney.

⁴³ Hirsch and Jensen. 2006.

⁴⁶ Jeffrey W. Jacobs. 1995. "Mekong Committee history and lessons for river basin development." *The Geographical Journal* 161 (2):135-148.

⁴⁷ Campbell. 2011.

⁴⁸ Sneddon and Fox. 2007.

⁴⁹ Hensengerth. 2009.

sustainable development, utilization, management and conservation of the water and related resources of the Mekong River Basin".⁵⁰ It also sets out the institutional framework to support the Agreement implementation, with the MRC comprising of three permanent bodies: the Council, the Joint Committee (JC), and the Secretariat (Fig. 3).⁵¹ The Council is composed of one representative at the ministerial and cabinet level from each member country and makes all policy decisions. The JC, made up of one representative at head of department level or higher from each member country, implements the Council's decisions. The MRC Secretariat, managed by a Chief Executive Officer (CEO), renders technical and administrative services to the Council and JC.

Mekong River Commission Governance Structure



Fig. 3. MRC governance structure [MRC. 2010a.]

⁵⁰ MRC. 1995a. Agreement on the Cooperation for the Sustainable Development of the Mekong River Basin. Chaing Rai: Mekong River Commission Secretariat, 3.

⁵¹ MRC. 2010a. Annual report 2010. Vientiane: Mekong River Commission Secretariat.

Following the signing of the 1995 Mekong Agreement, the JC approved a proposal to conduct a Study on Public Participation in the Context of the MRC in late 1996, recognizing that the "involvement of public and the public opinion in the work of MRC is [...] a prerequisite for the overall aim and vision of our Mekong Agreement".⁵² A team of international consultants was com-missioned to undertake the study. which was completed in mid-1998.53 At the 9th Meeting of the JC in March 1999, a statement on public participation was endorsed and, later in 2003, an MRC Public Participation Strategy was approved.⁵⁴ The strategy defines public participation as "a process through which key stakeholders gain influence and take part in decision making in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the MRC programs and projects," and includes four levels of participation: information gathering, information dissemination, consultation, and participation.55 It also categorizes participants into two primary groups: the MRC and its government line agencies as "internal" and all others as "external". Although some scholars⁵⁶ view this strategy

as crude and vague, it has become the primary foundation to guide the inclusion of a participatory approach into the Basin Development Strategies (BDS) 2011-2015 and 2016-2020 for the LMB. The BDS is a five-year strategic action, which "provides an integrated basin perspective for the assessment and improvement of national plans and projects to ensure an acceptable balance between economic, social and environment outcomes in the basin, and mutual benefits to the MRC member countries," where "regional and national stakeholder participation will be built and enhanced upon the development processes of the strategy, respecting community and wider popular participation approaches in each country".⁵⁷

It is worth examining some narrative development leading up to the adoption of the public participation strategy and the inclusion of the participatory approach in the BDS. Throughout the MC and IMC periods up to 1995, the prominent anti-dam International Rivers Network and Thai NGOs advocated strongly for a major overhaul of the Mekong water governance vision. They used adverse impacts and

⁵² MRC. 2003. Public participation in the context of the MRC. Phnom Penh: Mekong River Commission Secretariat, 1, 3-5.

⁵³ Yasunobu Matoba. 1999. "Stakeholder participation and Mekong River Commission." The Regional Seminar on Institutional Options for River Basin Management, Manila.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ MRC. 2003, 1, 3-5.

⁵⁶ Chenoweth, Ewing, and Bird. 2002.

⁵⁷ MRC. 2016a, 25, 2; MRC. 2011a. *Integrated water resource management-based Basin Development Strategy* 2011-2015 for the Lower Mekong Basin. Vientiane: Mekong River Commission Secretariat, 32.

experiences from numerous dam and water diversion projects in Thailand, particularly the Pak Mun Hydropower Project,58 to lobby the MRC donor community, arguing that the Mekong governments simply excluded the affected communities in their decision-making process and largely resisted suggestions and critiques.⁵⁹ Subsequently, the donor community made a condition in their funding to the organization, calling it to take an appropriate action to have a policy on public participation. With the increased pressure from the civil society organizations (CSOs) and the donors, the MRC Secretariat managed to convince the JC to adopt the mentioned public participation strategy in 2003.

These CSOs, however, did not stop there. Thailand's Project for Ecological Recovery and the Southeast Asian Rivers Network, to name just a few, used different experiences from other hydroelectric projects in the Mekong to direct their advocacy campaigns toward the MRC and donors.⁶⁰ These experiences were predominantly the research findings and recommendations from the World Commission on Dams on the value of incorporating a participatory approach in decision-making at every stage of large-scale infrastructure projects. The donor community then bought in, calling for the MRC to include in its future develoment planning the opinions and concerns of those previously excluded.⁶¹ With the repeated pressure and the political and economic changes in the region, the MRC Secretariat's CEOs were able to bring the new chapter of public participation and participatory governance into the development planning of the MRC – that is the BDS – with the approval from the JC and Council.⁶²

Analysis of outcomes of the MRC public participation strategy

The MRC public participation strategy has enabled the participatory approach to grow within the Mekong water governance, allowing the historically excluded groups (e.g., affected communities along the Mekong) to participate in the development planning and decision-making processes. The MRC consulted extensively with different stakeholder groups (e.g., government agencies, CSOs, community representatives, research institutions, etc.) in its member countries during the develop-

⁵⁸ Skachai Amornsakchai, Philippe Annez, Suphat Vongvisessomjai, Sansanee Choowaew, Prasit Kunurat, Jaruwan Nippanon, Roel Schouten, Pradit Sripapatrprasite, Chayan Vaddhanaphuti, Chavalit Vidthayanon, Wanpen Wirojanagud, and Ek Watana. 2000. Pak Mun Dam Mekong River basin Thailand: World Commission on Dams case study. Cape Town: Secretariat of the World Commission on Dams.

⁵⁹ Sneddon and Fox. 2006.

⁶⁰ Sneddon and Fox. 2007.

⁶¹ MRCS. 1999. Minutes of the 4th Meeting of the MRC Council (classified). Phnom Penh: Mekong River Commission Secretariat.

⁶² Hensengerth. 2009; Joern Kristensen. 2002. "Civil society and river basin development." *Mekong Update & Dialogue* 5 (2):4-5.

ment processes of its BDS⁶³ and the prior consultation processes of the proposed Laos' Xayaburi and Don Sahong Hydropower Projects.⁶⁴ This participatory approach with enhanced public participation strategy was also the essence of the 2011-2015 and 2016-2020 strategic plans,⁶⁵ and was welcomed by the organization's donors at the 22nd Meeting of the MRC Council.⁶⁶

Nonetheless, given the parochial political and economic interests and dynamics, and historical contexts among the riparian countries, implementing the MRC public participation strategy effectively has been, and will continue to be, confronting for the organization. For example, the fact that there are no common interests for water usage, that there is unequal power relation, and that there are unequal benefit sharing among members are some of these challenging factors. In fact, the rudiment and vague public participation strategy did not happen by chance. While Thailand is chiefly intrigued by water for irrigation and

favors Chinese dam construction in the upstream so that it can divert and suck up additional water from the Chinese dams without having to build ones for itself, Laos, with its long-time vision of becoming the "battery of Southeast Asia,"67 is predominantly interested in hydropower development and seeks to attract hydropowerrelated investments from China, Thailand, and Vietnam.^[5] Both Laos and Thailand favor no strict rules on dam construction and water diversion, and prefer a loose cooperative structure. Plus, the fact that there is a categorization of participants in the public participation strategy has left a lot of room for the riparian governments to manipulate the MRC as a primary vehicle or, as Mitchell calls it, the "object of development", to achieve and sustain their developmental goals.68

Although the MRC has appeared to extend and include what Gaventa calls "invited spaces" of participation,⁶⁹ this participation has occurred only in the form

⁶³ MRC. 2010a; MRC. 2010b. State of the basin report. Vientiane: Mekong River Commission Secretariat; MRC. 2008. Stakeholder consultation on MRC's Basin Development Plan Phase 2 (BDP2) and its inception report. Vientiane: Mekong River Commission Secretariat.

⁶⁴ MRC. 2014. Prio consultation for the poposed Don Sahong Hydropower Project. Vientiane: Mekong River Commission Secretariat; MRC. 2011d. Prior consultation project review report: Volume 2 – stakeholder consultations related to the proposed Xayaburi dam project. Vientiane: Mekong River Commission Secretariat.

⁶⁵ MRC. 2016b. *MRC Strategic Plan 2016-2020*. Vientiane: Mekong River Commission Secretariat; MRC. 2011b. *MRC Strategic Plan 2011-2015*. Vientiane: Mekong River Commission Secretariat.

⁶⁶ Australia, European-Union, Denmark, Finland, Germany, IUCN, Japan, Luxemburg, Sweden, Switzerland, United-States, and World-Bank. 2016. Joint Development Partner Statement. In *22nd Meeting of the MRC Council*. Phnom Penh: Mekong River Commission Secretariat.

⁶⁷ IR. 2008. Power surge: The impacts of rapid dam development in Laos. California International Rivers, 13.

⁶⁸ T. Mitchell. 1995. "The object of development: America's Egypt." In *Power of development*, edited by J Crush, 129-157. London: Routledge.

⁶⁹ J. Gaventa. 2004. "Towards participatory governance: Assessing the transformative possibilities." In *Participation: From tyranny to transformation? Exploring new approaches to aprticipation in development*, edited by S Hickey and G Mohan, 25-41.(London: Zed Books), 35.

of one-way consultation, "window-dressing ritual, where people are primarily perceived as statistical abstractions, and participation is measured by how many come to meetings".⁷⁰ Seldom are their voices taken for serious consideration. Nor are they informed of the reasons why a decision is made or what factors are taken into account.⁷¹ This was clearly exhibited during the official six-month public consultation process of the Xayaburi Hydropower Project under the MRC Procedures for Notification, Prior Consultation and Agreement (PNPCA), where seven national stakeholder consultations took place in all MRC member states, except Laos.⁷² Laos, as the proposing country, took no follow-up action, if any, on concerns and suggestions raised at the public consultations, and simply proceeded with the construction of the dam.⁷³ This brought further protests organized by CSOs and communities in some of the member countries that led the Lao government to address the issues of fish migration and sediments by installing additional fish passages.74

Also, CSOs who have been vocal and critical to the Mekong development are almost always excluded from MRC consultations, particularly at the national level. Even though the MRC Secretariat would want to establish dialogues with some prominent critics, such as the International Rivers, etc., some of the member governments tend to view this engagement with the groups as hampering the economic development aim of the MRC through large-scale infrastructure development.⁷⁵ Such an undemocratic way of treating participation from the public as subverting to economic development clearly poses a critical threat to the future of sustainable development of water and related resources of the Mekong.

Conclusion

When examining the presented case of the MRC public participation strategy through the lens of a science-policy interface (SPI), we have observed three prominent factors that have facilitated the uptake of this strategy, from which different lessons can similarly be drawn.

First is the political context within the MRC governance, which, arguably, is the most important factor. When the MRC member countries signed the 1995 Mekong Agreement, this means they already acknowledged the political, economic, social, and environmental changes that had taken place in the LMB countries. When adopting the public participation and participatory governance strategies, the JC

⁷⁰ Sherry R. Arnstein. 1969. "A ladder of citizen participation." *AIP Journal*:216-224, 219.

⁷¹ Chenoweth, Ewing, and Bird. 2002.

⁷² MRC. 2011d.

⁷³ Rieu-Clarke. 2015, 93; Alistair Rieu-Clarke. 2014. "Notification and consultation procedures under the Mekong agreement: insights from the Xayaburi controversy." *Asian Journal of International Law* 5 (01): 143-175.

⁷⁴ MRC. 2015. 20 years of cooperation. Vientiane: Mekong River Commission Secretariat.

⁷⁵ Hirsch and Jensen. 2006; Sneddon and Fox. 2007.

also recognized the importance of involving the pubic in the work of the MRC and considered it as the prelude to realizing the 1995 Mekong Agreement for sustainable development of the Mekong. This political will has landed strong foundation and support for the strategy to be implemented.

Second are the roles of external influences and evidence. The CSOs, in their role as external influences, used research results from the Pak Mun Hydropower Project and others and recommendations from the World Commission on Dams to direct their lobbying efforts toward the MRC donors and the MRC itself. The donors, also in their role as external influences, used their legitimate power as the funding agencies to put pressure on the MRC to adopt the public participation strategy. In combination, the CSOs and donors created strong and cohesive pressure for the MRC.

Last, but not least, is the role of knowledge brokers, cast by the MRC Secretariat. In this context, the Secretariat served as the intermediary between the CSOs, its donors and the MRC governance body in affecting the public participation strategy uptake. In fact, the CSOs could also be seen as playing this role by way of bringing research evidence and voices from the affected communities to the MRC and the donors and advocating for a change.

We have learned that scientific research findings may not necessarily enable

a policy uptake by decision-makers although the research may be conducted by a creditable institution. A proper medium needs to be engaged, translating and bringing the findings to the policy-makers,⁷⁶ either by peaceful means or, as in this case of the MRC, through campaigns organized by those CSOs. In the event where the public lacks skills necessary to make their voices heard and debate readily on issues that affect them, CSOs have an important role to play on public's behalf. We have also learned that bilateral donor agencies have the positive and potent power to influence the uptake of policy. Moreover, when policy-makers are not willing to adopt an acceptable policy suggested by the community of scientists and lay persons, mediators "can stabilize and order interactions"⁷⁷ between the two groups, the action of which can affect the chance of policy adoption. We have also learned that despite their vested political, economic, and national interests, MRC member governments can still work together when they have a political will and put the common needs and interests of the basin's residents before them. Most importantly, however, the extent to which the MRC and its Secretariat can promote genuine public participation lies firmly, now and in the foreseeable future, in the hand and level of openness of the member governments that comprise its membership.

⁷⁶ van den Hove. 2007, 811, 810.

⁷⁷ Shardul Agrawala, Kenneth Broad, and David H Guston. 2001. "Integrating climate forecasts and societal decision making: Challenges to an emergent boundary organization." *Science, Technology, and Human Values (Special Issues)* 26 (4):454-477.

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NOTES FROM THE FIELD Learning to Talk Weather in the Coastal Philippines

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Abstract

In these notes from the field, I illustrate some impressions from my research on disaster communication in Tacloban City, a highly urbanized area on an island coast in the central Philippines. Coastal residents vulnerable to storm-related hazards (particularly storm surges, flooding, and landslides) gather weather information daily, from multiple resources —texting; radio; television; contact from government authorities; and knowledge shared with family, friends, and neighbors. Residents navigate scientific terminology, such as Low Pressure Area, and refer to their own experiences with storms to mitigate their risk. In this essay, I show that "weather talk" in this location takes a level of "know-how" that I am still trying to learn.

Residing in Tacloban City, Philippines, I find that I must consider information from a variety of media and my own past experiences to calculate my risk with each passing storm. These notes from the field provide an illustration of the daily juggle of weather updates that aim to ensure personal safety in the coastal Philippines.

At 6:18 AM, I wake up to the following text message: "TACLOBAN WEATHER: Jan. 16, 2017: Thick clouds cover with a drenching Thunderstorm. Highest Temp: 26 Degree Celsius. Chance of Rain: 62% -CCGR Do Not Reply" Since I registered my mobile number to the Community Climate Guide and Response (CCGR) service, I have received weather updates almost daily usually around 6:00 AM. Casual weather updates will say something like: "Mostly cloudy with a little rain," or "Generally sunny and beautiful." Today's weather update, however, forebodes a storm. I open my window and look out to find the popular street below drenched, but humming with traffic as usual. Pedi-cab operators have donned rain ponchos and placed plastic tarp over the open front of their passenger cabs.



Image: A flooded street in Tacloban City after heavy afternoon rain. Photo by the author.

People are taking the usual precautions against traveling in rainy weather.

Community Climate Guide and Response (CCGR) is a text-blast emergency response initiative introduced by the Tacloban City government in August 2016.¹ Tacloban City's mayor, Cristina Romualdez, was elected to office in July 2016 with Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) at the heart of her campaign. After the traumas caused by Supertyphoon Yolanda (Haiyan) only three years ago, Disaster Risk Reduction has been at the forefront of peoples' political and everyday concerns. Bright red billboards advertising the CCGR service are hung up along main roads and central areas of the city. Cell phone use is high in the Philippines, and CCGR has been designed with this in mind. The program received over 3,000 registrants within the first two months of operation, and has already gained national and international recognition.

¹ In this essay, "texting" refers to the telecommunication feature Short Message Service (SMS).



Image: Map showing Tacloban City in the central Philippines. Photo courtesy of Google Maps.



Image: A CCGR registration notification billboard posted along a major highway in Tacloban City. Photo by the author.

Throughout the morning, the rain modulates between light sprays and heavy buckets, but never ceases. I am eager to get out of my apartment; but, as most people do here, I'll wait out the rain if I can. I turn on my radio and tune into DYVL Aksyon Radyo ("Action Radio"). DYVL presents mostly community-centered programming in the local language of Waray-Waray: local news and issues (maybe coverage of how a family is adjusting in their new resettlement home, or a discussion on what should be done about garbage on the streets of one neighborhood), a Catholic mass (perhaps related to current events such as the dangers of illegal drug use, a message addressing President Duterte's war on drugs), and an hour-long radio drama about the everyday joys, jokes, emotional bonds, love crises, money problems, and intergenerational conflicts of one fictional family in Tacloban City. This morning, the host is giving listeners updates on the weather. There are landslide warnings in effect; those who are at risk of landslides are advised to evacuate. I assume most those at risk of landslide already know who they are-possibly people living next to a hillside-but I do not know off-hand whether I am at risk, and the host does not name the affected areas.

I am worried that the heavy rains might be an indicator of a rough storm on the way. I open my laptop and check the PAGASA website. PAGASA is an acronym for Philippine Atmospheric, Geographical and Astronomical Services Administration. The acronym, however, doubles in meaning: "pag-asa" is a noun in the Filipino language that can mean hope, anticipation, expectation, or confidence, depending on context. PAGASA is looked to as the national authority on typhoon monitoring. Radio stations will report updates gained directly from PAGASA as an assurance they that are obtaining the most reliable information.

There is a slight break in the rain around 12:00 PM and I take the opportunity to finally leave my apartment and walk 15 minutes to the nearest café. I duck inside the building just as the rain starts up againheavy bullets of raindrops thudding under clouds that darken the noon sky seemingly into twilight. When I finish up at the café just two hours later, the street has become flooded for about two blocks in my direction home. People are trudging through the calf-deep waters, but I am wary of warnings I have received about contracting leptospirosis from flood waters here. I hire a pedi-cab to traverse the water. When I look down from the pedi-cab, the water looks muddy, concealing unknown hazards.

By the evening, plans for tomorrow are being cancelled; the day-to-day is being disrupted by the ceaseless rain. At 10:00 PM, I receive the following text message from CCGR: "Work in all Govt Offices/ Agencies & Classes at all levels in TAC City are suspended tom Jan 17, 2017 due to extensive flooding, order by Mayor Cristina Romualdez."

I am not sure whether or not to be alarmed for my safety at this news. My apartment is on the second floor of a stone building that withstood Typhoon Yolanda's high-speed winds. I am about 0.5 kilometers (0.3 miles) from the coast, with several hundred buildings blocking me from any potential storm surge. This neighborhood is flat and is probably not at risk of landslides. I have bottled water, canned food, a battery-powered radio, and flashlights. I sense no immediate danger for myself. In a neighborhood more vulnerable to these hazards and with a less sturdy house, though, I could not accept the risks involved with remaining at home. I would consider evacuating.

Overnight, the rain continues pouring; but by morning it slows down and only an overcast drizzle lingers. Children are at home today, because school was cancelled, and many adults are likely using the day to deal with flood damages. The morning radio talk shows are dedicated to topics concerning the floods and landslides. A DYVL host is interviewing a government official who warns of the dangers of diseases that can be caught in floodwaters, and the trash that flows into flooded areas from the sea. He says, keep your children from playing in the floodwater.

At around 8:00 AM, I receive the following text from CCGR: "01/17/2017 [smiley face with sunglasses emoji] 4AM, the LPA was estimated based on all available data at 70km east Northeast of Zamboanga City, Tail-end of a cold front affecting Visayas – CCGR"

I gather from this message that the threat has passed, but I feel that there is more being communicated in this message– and the emoji–than I am aware of. I wonder how other residents of Tacloban are interpreting this latest update.

Talking about the weather gathering information, deciding what is reliable information, and disseminating information to others-is an everyday life skill here and elsewhere in the coastal Philippines that requires a significant amount of know-how and resourcefulness. I know that other people here are just as nervous as I am about how today's weather could develop into something more property damaging or life threatening. Like me, people are tuning into the same radio stations and receiving the same text-blasts. Unlike me, though, they are bouncing information off one another-comparing notes with their families, friends, coworkers, and neighbors. They are perhaps discussing whether they are comfortable staying in their homes with an "LPA 70km Northeast of Zamboanga." They are taking information from multiple sourcesscientific measurements, local reports of flooded streets, word of mouth information and opinions-and making it mean something to their everyday lives.

The "Typhoon Belt"

The Philippines is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. The archipelago is part of the "Pacific Ring of Fire," and also lies in the "typhoon belt" of the northwest Pacific, an area in which tropical storms typically affect the Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, China, Japan, South Korea and islands in Oceania, like Guam. Residents are therefore vulnerable to all sorts of hazards from seismic activity (earthquakes, volcano eruptions, tidal waves) and storm activity (flooding, storm surges, high winds). The Philippines is also one of the countries most connected by media—in recent years, the country has been named the texting and social media capital of the world.² I arrived here in Tacloban City, therefore, with the expectation that I could form an ethnographic project around disaster and media.

Filipinos prepare for an average of 20 typhoons per year, which mostly range from Signal 1-3 on a 4 signal scale.³ Typhoon Yolanda, however, presented wind speeds higher than a signal 4 storm, and so was dubbed a "super-typhoon," and recorded as the first Signal 5 typhoon ever to make landfall. Filipinos who were accustomed to preparing for Signal 3 and 4 typhoons did not know what differences would make up a Signal 5 typhoon. So, they prepared themselves as best they could, based on their past experiences with storms and information coming through media, local government leaders, family, friends, and neighbors.

Typhoon Yolanda affected 14.1 million people across multiple islands and municipalities in the Philippines.⁴ Death estimates range from 6,000 to 10,000 people and an estimated 4 million people were displaced from their homes.⁵ Tacloban City was the center of most media and humanitarian attention after the storm, since it is the most densely populated and highly urbanized area nearest the storm's initial landfall.

The storm came with unprecedented challenges in survival, immediate disaster relief, and long-term recovery. One of the ongoing challenges of recovery has been conceiving of and implementing plans for Disaster Risk Reduction, including effective disaster communication. Communicating about storms is a DRR strategy that involves multiple actors from the national to community levels. Here in Tacloban City, weather monitoring is intimately tied to experiences of Typhoon Yolanda. When people monitor the weather now, they are also preparing themselves for a recurrence of Typhoon Yolanda.

Storm Surges: Measurements and Experiences

The day before Typhoon Yolanda made landfall, PAGASA issued a press release warning of the storm's impact.⁶ The two-page document started with a paragraph description of the storm's last reported location, wind speeds, and projected movement though the Philippine Area of Responsibility. The next page was filled almost entirely by a table describing wind speeds for each of the four Public Storm Warning Signals (PSWS), and potential effects in each major Philippine region

² According to Wave7 social media research, the Philippines retains its position as "social media capital of the world" in 2014: https://sg.news.yahoo.com/research-confirms-philippines-still-social-033045566.html.

³ See PAGASA (2009).

⁴ See OCHA Philippines (2013).

⁵ See OCHA Philippines (2013).

⁶ See PAGASA (2013).



Image: A jeepney in Tacloban City. Jeepneys become dangerous debris when they are lifted by storm surge waters. Photo by the author.

(Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao). At the very end of the document, five additional notifications were grouped together in bullet points. One bullet point read: "Residents in low lying and mountainous areas under signal #4, #3, #2 & #1 are alerted against possible flash floods and landslides. Likewise, those living in coastal areas under signal #4, #3 and #2 are alerted against storm surges which may reach up to 7 meter wave height."⁷

The storm surges are remembered as much more than a bullet point for Yolanda survivors. As predicted by PAGASA, seawaters swelled inland up to 5 meters deep in affected coastal areas.⁸ The predicted measurement of seawater, however, could not translate into how that water would be experienced by people on-theground.

In just 15-20 minutes, water swept up the coast in a "whirl" motion, crumbling weak "shanty" houses and completely submerging the first floor of larger structures. The force was so strong that large water vessels, including a cargo ship, were swept aground and tore right through houses in their path. People became pinned or crushed when the water lifted and toppled heavy objects like "jeepneys," or public buses. Those who sought shelter in the single-level elementary schools that act as official evacuation centers had to find ways to break through ceilings to escape the rising waters that quickly surpassed single stories. People climbed street lamp poles,

⁷ See PAGASA (2013).

⁸ See Lagmay et al. (2015).



Image: Map outlining Barangay San Jose in Tacloban City, the first point of storm surge impact in the city. Photo courtesy of Google Maps.

clung to debris and each other, swam the rushing waters, and got swept out to sea.

The storm surges hold a prevalent place in peoples' memory of Yolanda. It was during the storm surges that people tend to recall stories of fighting for their own safety and the safety of others. When coastal residents decide to move their families to evacuation centers, it's the storm surges especially that they want to avoid.

San Jose Beach: Sociality and Locality of Weather

San Jose is a neighborhood (*barangay*) of Tacloban City, 7 kilometers south of the downtown hub.⁹ Some refer to San Jose as "ground zero" of the storm on Leyte Island. San Jose includes a small peninsula so thin at its land bridge to Leyte Island that it almost looks like a small island on its own. The peninsula sits at the mouth of the San Juanico Strait, which is a body of water separating Leyte Island and Samar Island. The storm surge traveled San Juanico Strait: first through San Jose, and then to downtown Tacloban City. The peninsula in San Jose was almost entirely inundated by storm surge waters. Coastal areas were inundated 3-5 meters, and inland areas inundated 1-2 meters.¹⁰

On a bright beautiful day in January, I visit a small neighborhood in the San Jose peninsula to meet some residents and learn about how they monitor storms with communication technologies like cell phones, radio, television, and internetaccessing devices like tablets and laptops.. In this neighborhood, all houses were

⁹ Barangay is a governing unit in the Philippines that is used within the city level.
¹⁰ See Lagmay et al. (2015).

completely destroyed. Only the concrete floors of some lots remain of the original structures. Atop the remains of these concrete platforms, plywood houses have been constructed. These are permanent shelters constructed with assistance from two non-governmental organizations. The houses are lined neatly in rows, stretching only about a quarter kilometer (0.15 miles) from the highway to the seaside.

Here at San Jose Beach village, I can feel the difference in location from my own residence, which is nearer the city hub.¹¹ The highway cuts through the middle of the peninsula. Standing on the road, I can see both coasts clearly. The wind from the ocean hits me directly-no multilevel structures in its way. It's quiet; there are just not that many people around. I note the many problems I would have in keeping safe if a storm surge were to sweep up here suddenly. There's nowhere high enough to get to, except palm trees. We are far from community resources like hospitals, police stations, and churches. It is clear that people here have to count on those around them

Ever since Typhoon Yolanda, many survivors here in San Jose make it their duty to stay informed about the need to evacuate. They do this by checking media throughout the day, and talking to family, friends, and neighbors. In a survey I distribute, I ask: how often do you check the weather? (Waray-Waray: *Masukot ba kamo manginano hiton kahimtang hiton aton panahon*?) Respondents choose from a

selection of: every day, sometimes, never (adlaw-adlaw, talagsala, diri gud). All but one of the 33 respondents mark "every day." Several also mark that they check for weather updates more than once per day (often, morning and afternoon). One respondent, a fisherman, strikes me as spending the majority of his day checking news and weather updates across all media types. In addition to checking media like radio and television, he even checks updates from a Navy satellite posted in an area further west (Guiuan, Eastern Samar), where weather on its way to Tacloban City will tend to hit first by a few hours. If he is uncertain whether or not there is a storm coming, he will consult the city's Disaster Risk Reduction Office or City Hall. From these coastal residents, I start to see that weather talk can be regarded as a "life or death" activity. People spend more time accumulating weather information than I initially anticipated. There is also a certain know-how in gathering and exchanging weather information, which I hope to continue learning about during my field research

Additionally, I notice something about weather: threat and location. It is becoming clear to me that weather here in San Jose Beach is a different thing from that in my more inland residential neighborhood. We may receive similar warnings, but the consequences of a storm will be vastly different. I am starting to think of weather as having a "locality"—weather looks, acts, and is experienced differently by people

¹¹ Village name has been changed to protect participants' identity.

based on location. In addition, I am beginning to think of the "sociality" in weather. Sharing information about the weather is an everyday social interaction, and here, in a neighborhood as close-knit as San Jose Beach, that sociality of weather does not look the same as it might in downtown Tacloban City.

Conclusion

In these notes from the field, I have tried to share a context for understanding the role water plays in the everyday lives of some Filipinos. In stormy weather, water becomes a threat through flooding, landslides and storm surge. An individual synthesizes information from several sources and must imagine his or her possible risk to these hazards. I learn, by being here, that trying to match my weather experiences with media information is not an intuitive task. "Weather talk" takes persistence and know-how. Because the Philippines is highly connected by media, information gathering takes places across a variety of platforms: mass media like radio and television, national meteorological authorities like PAGASA and the Navy, local government text messaging, personal text messaging, phone calls, and face-toface communication. Hazards from water (flooding, landslides, and storm surges) are particular concerns people have when monitoring weather. Through continuing participant-observation, I hope to gain greater insight into the social networks of storm monitoring and disaster communication, and what these activities mean for coastal Filipinos in their everyday lives.

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BOOK REVIEW

Writing the South Seas: Imagining the Nanyang in Chinese and Southeast Asian Postcolonial Literature by Brian Bernards Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015

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Despite a growing number of literary anthologies featuring writers from across the region, postcolonial literary discourse in Southeast Asia largely remains within the confines of national borders. This also seemed to be the case in Sinophone studies until recently, with a growing number of theorists such as Shih Shu-Mei expanding the definitions of "Sinophone" to include regional as well as diasporic inflections. In Writing the South Seas, Brian Bernards continues this line of thought by both critiquing the homogenizing project of "national culture" in postcolonial Southeast Asia, as well as by resituating "Chinese literature" beyond national, territorial, and linguistic borders, and into the Chinese diaspora in the Nanyang (the "South Seas"). He proposes the literary trope of the Nanyang in the understanding of diasporic Chinese litera-ture that renegotiates the boundaries of national literatures: "it is just



as capable of expressing Malaysianness, Singaporeanness, and Thainess as it is

Chineseness".1

Deviating from the traditional landbased "continental imagination" that focuses on a singular point of origin as the cultural capital of a particular nation, Bernards' novel approach draws from Stuart Hall and Epeli Hau-ofa, envisioning this contact point of Southeast Asian and Sinophone literature as a multi-sited, multivalent, and multilingual space where identities are negotiated and formed not through the unilinear passing down of culture, but through the creolization of cultures from multiple points of origin. This "archipelagic imagination" reemphasizes the importance of transcolonial, transnational maritime networks and exchanges across China, Southeast Asia, and the West, in the development of creolized, heterogenous identities in the archipelagic Nanyang. As Bernards analyzes the literary works of Nanyang authors writing the South Seas, he engages the reader to go riding the South Seas with him, taking us on a literary journey across the archipelago: from the "orientalist" gaze of Imperial China look out to the "primitive" Nanyang; to the emergence of Sinophone Malay literature; to the disillusionment of ethnic nationalism in postcolonial Malaysia and the yearning to sail back to an imagined Chinese homeland (Taiwan); to mainland topographies transposed onto the new motherland of Borneo; to a translingual, transethnic understanding of belonging through kampong (village)

nostalgia; to a more flexible, creolized retelling of the narrative of Thai nationhood.

This book is highly recommended for scholars studying the diaspora and its literature, who may find Bernard's alternative, sea-oriented framework valuable for the understanding of these texts outside nationalist discourse. By featuring the works of diasporic Chinese who have historically been excluded from the nationbuilding process in the countries of Southeast Asia, this book is also useful in engaging with questions of nationhood and the role that literature has in its formation as well as deconstruction. Through engaging prose and thought-provoking examples, Bernards deftly navigates these literary crossings for the reader, enabling the conceptualization of the Nanyang Imaginary. At a time when the seas surrounding Southeast Asia are increasingly becoming politicized and territorialized, this book serves to remind us of the multiple maritime trajectories and fluid, creolized nature of postcolonial nationhood.

¹ Brian Bernards, *Writing the South Seas: Imagining the Nanyang in Chinese and Southeast Asian Postcolonial Literature* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2015), 9.


Fresh Caught Sardines in Timor-Leste Photo by Imelda Auxiliadora Da Conceicao Carlos



Chao Praya River docks in Bangkok Photo by Soksamphoas Im



Meet the Authors



Adrian Alarilla is a filmmaker, community organizer, and film scholar interested in film history and Southeast Asian Cinema. He was a Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellow and Thomas W. & Mary C. Gething Fellow while studying at the University of Washington, where he obtained his MA in Southeast Asian Studies in 2018. He helps run various community film festivals in Seattle, and his video essays have been shown at various festivals in the Philippines, Mexico, and the United States.



Dylan Beatty is a political geographer with a background in history and a first-generation student from New Jersey. He is interested in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, particularly its relationship with American imperialism. In recent years, he has become interested in the Spratly Island dispute in Southeast Asia, particularly how it affects both the Philippine state and local Filipino communities. He is currently working on a manuscript about how the Philippine state uses historic cartography to justify claims to the South China Sea.



Anh Liên Do Khac earned a master degree in Political Sciences and Southeast Asian Studies from Sciences Po Lyon, in France, in 2016. She has a particular interest in state policies towards ethnic minorities and how those policies affect behavior of the group's members. She has especially researched on the Cham in Vietnam and Cambodia. Currently volunteering in Laos as a university teacher, she thinks that Laos might well become her next research field in a near future.



Steven James Fluckiger earned his master's degree in history at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in May 2018. His research emphasis is in early modern Philippines and Southeast Asia, focusing on gender, sexuality, religion, and colonization. Fluckiger received his bachelor's degree from Brigham Young University in history with emphases in both Mormon history and Asian history. While working at the Church History Library of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Salt Lake City, Utah with the Women's History Team, he researched for the book At the Pulpit:

185 Years of Discourses by Latter-day Saint Women, published by the Church Historian's Press. He also published the article "Caquenga and Feminine Social Power in the Philippines" in the journal World History Connected.



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how expectations of "Dutch expertise"; in water management, urban planning, and architectural restoration are constructed and challenged by Indonesian activists, professionals, and bureaucrats. Her fieldwork, carried out in Indonesia and the Netherlands over a period of several years, was funded in part by the Fulbright Foundation.