
“Great is Our Relationship with the Sea¹”

Charting the Maritime Realm of the Sama of Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia

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Dispersed widely across the eastern seas of island Southeast Asia, Sama² peoples have long caught the attention of visitors to the region. Whether in the Southern Philippines, northern and eastern Borneo, or the numerous islands of eastern Indonesia, the unique sea-centered lifestyle of the Sama has inspired many observers to characterize them as “sea gypsies” or “sea nomads,” a people supposedly so adverse to dry land that they “get sick if they stay on land even for a couple of hours.”³ Living almost entirely in their boats and sailing great distances in order to fish, forage, and transport valuable sea products, Sama peoples were, and often still are, depicted as a sort of “curious wandering tribe” lacking strong connections to any one place.⁴ In the last few decades, however, historical and ethnographic research on Sama peoples has compelled scholars to rethink commonplace conceptions of Sama as “sea nomads,” and has led to a more nuanced understanding of Sama cultures and livelihood practices which takes into account the profound and long-standing attachments of Sama peoples to particular places within island Southeast Asia.⁵

A close reading of the ethnographic and historical sources has revealed that, rather than a peculiar “wandering tribe,” the Sama-Bajau ethnolinguistic

group is composed of a number of smaller subgroups, each with a slightly different dialect and cultural attributes, and each possessing an intimate knowledge of a particular littoral environment in which they live as well as a more general but still thorough knowledge of the broader maritime spaces in which they travel. Through lifetimes of carefully calculated long-distance journeys as well as daily interaction with and movement throughout a particular seascape, Sama peoples have developed a deep familiarity with vast expanses of the eastern seas of island Southeast Asia and have established far-ranging networks that criss-cross and connect those maritime spaces. Thus, while Sama peoples, both in the past and present, traveled widely in search of valuable sea produce and indeed many spent much of their lives afloat, the portrayal of Sama as nomads has tended to obfuscate the deep relationship Sama peoples have with the maritime spaces in which they live.

Given the centrality of the sea in Sama lives, it follows that any effort to comprehend their histories and cultures necessitates an understanding of the environments in which they operate and their relationship to those places.⁶ With that in mind, in this article I hope to contribute to the growing body of literature on Sama peoples in eastern Indonesia by

exploring practices and relationships which have made the eastern seas of island Southeast Asia into a network of familiar places for Sama peoples living in Southeast Sulawesi; a space I refer to as the Southeast Sulawesi Sama maritime realm.

In a broad sense, the Southeast Sulawesi Sama maritime realm consists of an informal network of historical and contemporary links between families, friends, fishing grounds, trading centers and trade routes, through which knowledge and goods are exchanged and an awareness of commonalities shared with other Sama communities in Southeast Asia is fostered. Within their larger maritime realm, Southeast Sulawesi Sama operate within smaller home-spaces, spaces which serve as a home and regular collecting range for a general group and which hold particular cultural and historical significance for that group. Spanning a vast portion of the eastern seas, this maritime realm is not a territorialized space or a precise area of exploitation which Sama claim as their own.⁷ Rather, the maritime realm of Southeast Sulawesi Sama is instead a fluidly defined space that Sama people have come to know with a high-degree of familiarity by way of generations of movement in and interaction with the marine environment. In this way, the maritime realm I refer to here is akin to what geographer Edward Soja has called a “thirdspace”: a space which “can be mapped but never captured in conventional cartographies, [and obtains] meaning only when practiced and fully lived.”⁸

In order to map out this space and evidence something of its meaning for the Sama, the first section of this article will use the example of Sama living in the Tukang Besi archipelago (Southeast Sulawesi, Indonesia), highlighting settlement narratives and historically and culturally significant features of the land and seascape as a means to demonstrate the historical and cultural relationship of Tukang Besi Sama peoples to their particular home-space. The next section will broaden its focus to some of the processes by which the larger maritime realm of the Southeast Sulawesi Sama has been created and connected. First, by describing a few examples of contemporary and historical fishing grounds, trade routes and markets frequented by Sama fishers and traders in relation to their role in the trade of sea resources such as sea turtles and trepang, I will not only demonstrate Sama familiarity with the seascape, but I will also try to

convey a sense of the mobile practices which have brought Sama peoples to various places in the eastern seas and the linkages that have resulted from such travels.

Interrelated with this system of trade routes, fishing grounds, and markets, are the informal social networks through which many Southeast Sulawesi Sama operate. Through kinship, friendships, and other social connections with other Sama and *bagai* villages and people in distant areas of their maritime realm, Southeast Sulawesi Sama fishers and traders have created an informal network which they can rely on for goods, shelter, and knowledge of the surrounding seascape. Similarly, it is through these social networks and mobile practices that some Sama living in Southeast Sulawesi have become more aware of “cultural commonalities” they share with other Sama groups in Southeast Asia.⁹

Home-spaces within the Maritime Realm: Sama Tukang Besi

The incredibly rich marine environment of the Tukang Besi archipelago explains in part the existence of Sama settlements in that area. In addition to the four major low-lying islands of Wangi-Wangi (also known as Wanci), Kaledupa, Tomea, and Binongko, the archipelago is home to over 600 square kilometers of some of the most biologically diverse reef complexes in Indonesia and numerous other habitats ideally suited for an astonishing variety of marine life.¹⁰ Mangrove forests line several of the islands, offering shelter as well as several coastal fresh water springs, and massive reef systems such as the Kapota, Kaledupa, Koromaha, and Tomea atolls are within a day’s sail given the right winds. Likewise, the relatively predictable weather patterns, shallow seas, abundant access points to deeper waters, and large varieties of fish, *trepang*, sea turtle, and other marine species make the archipelago an ideal home-space for Sama peoples. Now home to five Sama villages (Mola, Sampela, Mantigola, La Hoa, and La Manggau), the generous living conditions and abundant resources of the Tukang Besi seascape would have been a principal reason for initial Sama exploration and settlement in the area.

While there is generally limited information available on the history of Sama settlement in the Tukang Besi archipelago, an exception to this is the excellent work

of Pak Kasmin and Natasha Stacey, who have suggested that Sama from the Tiworo Strait area (the strait between the islands of Buton and Muna and the southeast peninsula of Sulawesi) first began settling in Tukang Besi around the mid-nineteenth century.¹¹ According to the narrative recorded by Kasmin, once the Sama discovered the area to be rich in ocean resources, they requested permission to move from the Sultan of Buton, who was overlord of the Tukang Besi area, and a pass was given. Led by two Sama *punggawa* (a type of Sama leader), named Puah Kandora and Puah Doba, Sama from the Straits of Tiworo region sailed into the archipelago, eventually settling in the area of southwest Kaledupa island sometime in the 1850s, where they lived on their *perahu lambo*, *lepa*, and *soppeq* until building permanent pile-houses.¹² Sama fishers alternated seasonally between their base on the southwest coast of Kaledupa and a shallow lagoon on the southeast coast during the east and west monsoon seasons.¹³

In addition to the narrative recorded by Kasmin and Stacey, oral histories I gathered in 2007 from Sama elders in the villages of Mantigola, Sampela, and La Hoa provide additional perspectives on the migration of Sama peoples into the Tukang Besi Archipelago. One narrative told to me by a Sama man tells that two *punggawa* named Mbo Kandora and Mbo Doba led the first groups of Sama to settle in the area of Mantigola, a movement which he dated to the time of his great-grandparents.¹⁴ According to this narrative and others, Sama families from near Bau-Bau (on the southern coast of Buton Island) sailed to the Kaledupa and Tomea Atolls with the west monsoon, where they lived on *soppeq* hunting fish, *trepang*, and variety of other sea produce for weeks and months at a time. These elders said that early Sama built semi-permanent pile-houses and anchored in the shallows where Mantigola now stands, and did so of their own accord. Although Sama from the Straits of Tiworo region acknowledged the authority of Buton, their initial voyages to Tukang Besi conducted in search of ocean resources and fishing grounds followed regional weather patterns and resource cycles more so than the commands of the Sultan. While searching for sea products desired in regional markets Sama fishers also explored the island chain and found places ideal for establishing new roots.

An additional settlement narrative that offers another historical perspective was told to me by Sama elders in

Tukang Besi. It refers to a figure named La Ode Denda as the one who initiated Sama migration from Tiworo into the archipelago sometime in the early nineteenth century. La Ode Denda—remembered as a laki (lord of the aristocratic estate) who lived in Wolio, the former capital of the Buton Sultanate on the island of Bau-Bau—purchased the island of Kaledupa from the Sultan of Buton.¹⁵ As the narrative goes, once La Ode Denda was in possession of Kaledupa Island he called on both Sama and *bagai* peoples living around the sultanate's center in Wolio to join him on Kaledupa Island.

Overall, local settlement narratives suggest that Sama peoples settled in Tukang Besi sometime in the early to mid-nineteenth century at the latest, although it is still not clear whether their original migration into the area was on their own accord as an extension of early fishing and collecting voyages or on the invitation of local *bagai* elites. Nevertheless, a few speculative comments may be ventured in regard to the narrative recorded by Kasmin and the La Ode Denda version described above. Movement into Tukang Besi could have been undertaken as a part of a larger migration led by a member of the *kaomu* (Buton aristocracy), as the Sultanate of Buton is known to have granted permission to members of the *kaomu* to establish new settlements in Tukang Besi in order to extend control into the peripheries. Another possibility, which seems to fit well with the narrative recorded by Kasmin, is that Sama groups under the leadership of two *punggawa* received a pass from the Sultan to either move into the area or operate as merchants in the realm of Kaledupa, which was then a *barata*, or vassal state, of Buton.¹⁶ Yet both of these possible explanations are complicated by the fact that Kaledupa was made into a vassal state of Buton sometime around the fifteenth century, and a substantial portion of those who settled in the area were slaves of the Buton aristocracy.¹⁷

Although many of the specific details are unclear, the Sama settlement narratives described above suggest that by the mid-nineteenth century at the latest, the waters of the archipelago had become a home-space for Sama peoples from the Tiworo region. Importantly, those who recounted these narratives consistently suggested that Sama peoples had seasonally explored and fished the waters of Tukang Besi prior to any major migration into the area. The coral reef complexes, especially the Kaledupa and Tomea atolls, the

mangroves and fresh water springs, and the copious marine resources of the archipelago were all cited by Sama elders as principal reasons the first Sama groups came into the area. With this perspective in mind, I suggest that regardless of the political circumstances which brought or called these particular Southeast Sulawesi Sama to settle in Tukang Besi, it seems that Sama peoples traveled into the archipelago and have lived there for two centuries or longer, in large part because of the rich environment they encountered there.

The Making of a Home-Space

The Tukang Besi Archipelago has become the regular collecting grounds and home-space of the Sama living there. As I demonstrate in the next section, Sama from Tukang Besi frequently make long-distance journeys, some as far as northwest Australia, but most spend their time in the waters of the Tukang Besi Archipelago. In general terms, Sama peoples I met in Tukang Besi classified this pattern of movement and activity within the archipelago as either *pallilibu* or *pongkeq*. Though by no means concretely defined practices, in my experience *pallilibu* was used to describe the almost daily practice of searching for fish and other sea resources in nearby environments, while *pongkeq* was used by Tukang Besi Sama almost solely in reference to longer journeys to the Kaledupa and Tomea atolls. These are seasonal trips usually made in small boats, with family, in groups, or alone, and which last up to one or two months at sea.¹⁸ It is these practices that have made the Tukang Besi seascape an intimately familiar home-space for Sama peoples living there.

Almost daily *pallilibu* trips into the variety of marine habitats surrounding Tukang Besi are a dominant feature in Sama lives, bringing them into frequent contact with the surrounding environment. In the village of Sampela for instance, men, women, and children are constantly coming and going in their boats, spending long hours fishing and gleaning the littoral. Many leave close to sunrise, heading off to either the seagrass beds which surround the village, the reef wall and deep water channel near the small island of Hoga, or to one of the many reefs to the southeast. Other fishers will set their nets in the evenings, pulling them in the next morning before sunrise, while other fishers will wait for the ideal tide in order to net fish in

the nearby sea-grass beds and deep water channels through which strong currents flow, bringing with them an abundance of marine life. Some Sama will free dive nearby reef areas, both in daylight and at night with a lantern, searching for trepang, trochus shells, octopus, and a number of other marine species.

Just as early *pongkeq* ventures by Sama peoples into Tukang Besi were made to harvest the rich resources of the nearby Kaledupa and Tomea Atolls, Sama living in Tukang Besi today still make seasonal voyages to the atolls. During the calm season in Tukang Besi referred to by Sama as *sangai teddo*, Sama fishers will *pongkeq* to Kaledupa and Tomea Atolls, living aboard boats for up to two months collecting and drying a variety of sea goods. Since the advent of motorized fishing vessels in Tukang Besi Sama villages, however, the practice of traveling to the offshore atolls has become much more frequent, and less time-consuming. Sama fishers can now easily travel alone to the atolls for shorter periods of time.

The above activities are only a few examples of the numerous practices under the headings of *pallilibu* and *pongkeq* which have allowed the Sama to become intimately familiar with all the intricacies of their aquatic environment and have made the waters of Tukang Besi into a regular collecting ground and home-space. Over time, Sama villages, fishing grounds, fresh water springs, burial grounds, and *sillangang pemali* (spiritually powerful or taboo places) have become spiritual, cultural, social, and economic centers for the Sama living there. By way of these interactions with the land and seascape, Sama in Tukang Besi have accumulated a store of knowledge about their immediate environs which is shared with future generations and perpetuated through a certain degree of continuity in Sama practices. Furthermore, countless hours spent on the water—whether on boats, in pile-houses built in the shallows, in the mangroves, or walking the reefs at low-tide—have marked the Tukang Besi seascape with a history.¹⁹ For Tukang Besi Sama, the majority of their past experiences have taken place in the waters of the archipelago and as such their histories are also embedded in the land and seascape, with the places of La Hoa, Mantigola, Sampela, and later Mola and La Manggau becoming important sites of memory and history for local Sama populations.



Figure 1. The Sama Maritime Realm, courtesy of the ReefBase Project

A number of areas in the Tukang Besi sea and landscape are of deep spiritual and historical importance. For example, a specific, hard-to-find rock outcropping in the thick of the mangrove forest near Sampela is a place to which local *sandro*, a spiritual guide and healer, bring offerings and conduct important spiritual rituals.²⁰ There are also a number of *sillangang pemali* known to the Sama of the region which are respected by way of careful propitiation and observance of appropriate behaviors. One example is that of Toro Gagallah, a cave and reef complex near the island of Binongko, which is home to *Ma' empa' engkah na*, a giant octopus with four tentacles. Since *Ma' empa' engkah na* is quite dangerous and spiritually powerful, many consider Toro Gagallah to be *pemali* and specific rituals and behavioral proscriptions need to be observed when in the area.²¹ While today proscriptions and obligatory offerings are sometimes ignored by local fishers, oral histories suggest that *pemali* spaces such as Toro Gagallah are still quite prominent features of history and memory for local Sama peoples. As such, one can get a sense of local Sama's attachment to the marine environment of Tukang Besi, as well as the historicity of that seascape.

A similar sense can be gleaned from additional places of historical significance, particularly specific places associated with legendary Sama figures from the past. The small strait between Kaledupa Island and the islet of Lintea Tiwolu, and a particularly large rock nearby, for example, are associated with a legendary Sama *bajak* (pirate) named Mbo Lonting.²² As Sama tell it, living alone on a *soppeq* anchored in a natural hiding place in the mangroves, Mbo Lonting would ambush any *bagai* vessels passing through the strait. Possessing a certain supernatural strength he could not be hurt or killed and this made him most feared among the local population as well as passing sailors. His prowess is legendary among Tukang Besi Sama and stories of his feats still circulate widely among local communities. Mbo Lonting reportedly only met his death as an old man, when he fell from a large rock outcropping that he had used as a lookout, and where one finds scattered offerings today.²³ The significance of these places can be inferred from current Sama practices. Even today, when one passes through the strait where Mbo Lonting once anchored, the history associated with his legendary person will often be recited, and those who claim Mbo Lonting as their

ancestor will often visit the rock where he fell to his death when some sort of help is needed.²⁴

The memory and reverence of Mbo Lonting by Sama in Tukang Besi, along with the many other historically important features of the local seascape, are an example of what constitutes a single home-space within the greater Southeast Sulawesi Sama maritime realm. At the most intimate level, the maritime realm is an assemblage of home-spaces similar to Tukang Besi. Rather than wandering without orientation toward a particular set of dwelling places, Sama in Southeast Sulawesi in fact maintain a close attachment to a particular home-space within the eastern seas—a space which a particular Sama community (or communities) is intimately familiar with and historically connected to based on their daily interaction with and movement through that environment. In the section that follows, a few key examples of the sort of larger historical and contemporary movements of Southeast Sulawesi Sama peoples will be drawn on to demonstrate the links that exist between the smaller Sama home-spaces as described above, and a larger, informal network of trade and social relations. By virtue of their movement throughout the marine environment, Sama fishers and traders have forged extensive links between their home-spaces and families and friends in other villages, distant fishing grounds, trading centers and trade routes throughout the eastern seas. In doing so, the seas have become a familiar space for the Sama of Southeast Sulawesi.

Trade Routes, Fishing Grounds, and Sea Products in the Making of the Maritime Realm

The majority of those Sama I interviewed in 2007 have traveled extensively throughout the eastern seas of archipelago Southeast Asia. Many spoke of movement as a necessary aspect of life, as something one does to find food and make a living. Much of their long-distance travel was done under sail and for the purpose of collecting marine produce and finding lucrative markets. Even so, the notion of travel for the sake of traveling is common as well. Many of the younger males spoke of a desire to journey to new places and new markets, just as their elders had done in years past. As the primary extractors of sea products desired in local, regional, and international markets, Sama have for centuries served a highly important

economic and social function.²⁵ Through their extensive movements and their specialized socio-economic niche, Sama traders and fishers have created and continue to create an informal maritime network of familiar places connected by social relationships and trade linkages. Based on interviews and, where possible on the written record, a brief look at some of the sea products collected, fishing grounds and trade routes used by the Southeast Sulawesi Sama may help to highlight something of the nature and extent of their maritime realm, while also underscoring both the antiquity and, to some degree, continuity of these practices in many Southeast Sulawesi Sama communities.

The trade in sea produce is an integral aspect of the formation and expansion of the Southeast Sulawesi maritime realm.²⁶ Of the many varieties of sea produce collected and processed by Sama fishers, sea turtle, tortoise-shell, and trepang are among the most important in the process of creating and extending the Southeast Sulawesi Sama maritime realm. The search for these goods in particular has sent Sama peoples as far west as the Karimun islands in the Java Sea, as far north as Sabah on the island of Borneo and the southern Philippines, as far east as the Bird's Head region of West Papua, and as far south as the northwest coast of Australia.²⁷ In the course of these journeys, Sama fishers and traders have incorporated these oceanic and littoral spaces into a maritime realm of familiarity and experience, connecting distant markets and communities with their respective home-spaces in the process.

Sama were crucial to the collection and trade of turtle and tortoise-shell in the eastern Indo-Malaysian archipelago because of their knowledge of the habitats, breeding patterns, and feeding habits of the sea turtles. Several recalled their travels to Bali, Surabaya, Kupang and Makassar, where they offloaded turtles caught in various places. One Sama man in his mid-80s, for example, remembered:

In the past I would *lamaq* [sail] by *perahu lambo* to Maluku to get *boko* [green turtle] and sometimes copra, and then go to Bali, Makassar, or Java to sell the goods there. [In the early 1950s] I lived in Serangan [Serangan Island, Bali] for a few years fishing turtle. There was a small group of Sama living there, around seven families. I worked for a Balinese boat and the *anakhoda* [owner and captain] would just sit and I would dive and spear

turtle. Sometimes we would go all the way to Karimun [Java Sea] hunting turtle to sell in Bena [harbor in eastern Bali]. We could sell a lot of turtle there.²⁸

As this segment of a particular Sama narrative suggests, the demand for green turtle in Bali, where it is an important part of religious ceremonies as well as a popular fare, brought Sama fishers into close contact with areas of Bali, the Lombok Strait, and the Java Sea.²⁹ In the 1950s, while in Bali to sell green turtles and copra he had caught in northern Maluku, Mbo Salang was offered a job hunting turtle on a boat owned and piloted by a Balinese *anakhoda*. Originally, he rented a room from the *anakhoda* on the coast of Serangan Island, off Bali, but he soon built a small pile-house on the nearby reef flats where other Sama families had congregated. From what Mbo Salang remembered, of the seven or so Sama families living on the coast of Serangan in the 1950s, three had traveled to Bali from around Pulau Selayar in South Sulawesi, and the others from various Sama villages in Southeast Sulawesi, namely around Tiworo. For over three years, Mbo Salang lived in Bali, netting as well as diving to spear green turtle which were sold in Bena harbor.

Several other Sama fishers recalled a similar experience of travel and trade as that described by Mbo Salang. These men collected turtle from a variety of areas in eastern Indonesia in order to sell in Bali, as well as Makassar and Surabaya. All of those interviewed stated that the best areas to collect large quantities and varieties of turtle are the numerous islands around Obi in north Maluku, Aru and Kei Islands, as well as areas of the Bird's Head and northwest Australia, areas which recent scientific research has demonstrated to be the breeding grounds for the largest numbers of hawksbill turtles and other species.³⁰ Sama fishers said that they usually sailed to these areas with the east monsoon, ideally timing their journey with the lunar cycle and the turtle's breeding pattern in order to ensure a large and profitable catch. This fact corresponds with M. Marhalim's assertion that over the last century Chinese and Balinese traders frequently offered loans to Sama fishers so that they could focus on hunting turtles, a large portion of which came from West Papua and Maluku.³¹ Sama oral accounts of their role in the turtle trade suggest that Sama fishers from Tukang Besi traveled widely, from the Karimun islands in the Java Sea to the Bird's Head region, in

order to capture sea turtles for regional and international markets. These accounts also suggest that much of their catch was sold to intermediaries and other buyers in ports such as Kendari, Bau-Bau, Makassar, Bena, and Surabaya, with whom they had established a trading relationship.

The search for tortoise-shell and *trepang* was also an important part of the creation and expansion of the Sama maritime realm to the far south of their home-spaces in Southeast Sulawesi. Several Sama from Tukang Besi recalled voyages to what is now Australian territory in order to collect sea products for trade in market centers such as Bau-Bau, Kendari, Makassar, and Surabaya. One such trip, recounted by an elderly Sama man in Sampela, was made sometime in the early 1940s on a *perahu lambo* from Mantigola in order to fish the waters around Cape Londonderry and the Admiralty Gulf (northwest Australia).³² Departing in early November, Mbo Dadi and four other Sama men sailed first to Kupang in order to stock up on supplies and repair a damaged sail. From there they sailed to the reefs and shoals of Cape Londonderry, collecting *trepang*, trochus shell, various fish, and hawksbill turtle, staying there over a month before returning.³³ As Mbo Dadi remembers it, the cargo from this trip was sailed to Makassar and sold to a Chinese trader with whom the *anakhoda* had established a relationship on previous ventures.

A similar narrative was related by a Sama man, Mbo Diki, who was born in Mantigola in the early 1930s. As he remembered it:

We would *lamaq* [sail] to Australia [northwest coast and offshore islands] to catch fish, shark, turtle, *trepang*, *trochus*, a lot of sea products. In the past I was *anakhoda* of a *perahu lambo*. I went to Australia often then; it is very good fishing there. I sold the dried fish, *trepang* and turtle to Bau-Bau or Makassar, and sometimes to Surabaya. It was easy to get *trepang* there. If the weather was right, we could make two trips during the season, but usually only one. Around the time of *PKI* [Indonesian Communist Party; referring to the 1965 coup] I made good money from *trepang*, tortoise-shell, and shark fin, selling it in Makassar. But, in the eighties I fished Seram [roughly 200km west of Papua]; it is good fishing there too. I have not gone to Australia since then.³⁴

As Mbo Diki's narrative describes, Australia has long served as a fishing ground for *trepang*, shark, turtles,

trochus, and a variety of fish. The sea produce collected on these trips was usually sailed to Bau-Bau, Makassar, or other ports and sold to one of the traders with whom Mbo Diki had established a relationship, unless the trip was made on credit in which case the goods were given to the financier at a prearranged price.³⁵

Where Sama oral accounts of the last half-century or more offer a sense of how trade and the search for sea produce served to create and expand the Southeast Sulawesi Sama maritime realm, more recently the written historical record helps to establish the long history of this trade and Sama interaction with, and movements throughout, the eastern seas. Soon after the arrival of Europeans in the Indo-Malaysian Archipelago, United Dutch East India Company (VOC) officials were already well aware of the important function Sama peoples in the eastern seas served in the acquisition of sea produce for regional trade.³⁶ The prominence of Sama fishers as the primary collectors of these goods was still apparent in the eighteenth century as VOC commentators noted that Sama groups from Sulawesi were traveling along the coasts of the islands of Sumba, Sumbawa, Flores and Timor in search of trepang, arguably one of the most desired sea products of that century.³⁷

In the nineteenth century, European travelers frequently mentioned, even if only in passing, the importance of Sama from Sulawesi for the procurement of key trade items, especially trepang and tortoise-shell, and the extent of their maritime voyaging. In 1815, for example, one astute observer noted that Sama fishers from Sulawesi were, “long accustomed to fishing for trepang” at Ashmore Reef.³⁸ In 1837, George Windsor Earl likewise noted that Sama peoples, “congregate in large numbers on the coast of Celebes [Sulawesi],” “[and] with the westerly monsoon they spread themselves over the eastern seas in search of trepang and tortoise-shell, extending their voyages to the north-west coast of Australia.”³⁹ Less than a decade later C. van der Hart discussed the function that Sama from the Banggai islands of central Sulawesi served in collecting tortoise-shell and trepang, goods which he noted would be “sold in the China market.”⁴⁰ Likewise, Dutch explorer and entrepreneur, Jan Nicholas Vosmaer’s plans to establish a trading center at Kendari Bay in the 1830s relied heavily on Sama fishers as the suppliers of profitable trepang and other

sea products, a fact which suggests something of the economic benefit to be gained from forming a trade relationship with Sama peoples.

While the importance of Sama peoples to regional trade may be obvious, these brief passages also intimate the long history of their movements through the eastern seas and their familiarity with those oceanic and littoral spaces. Overall, Sama activities of trade and travel, as well as those trade routes, fishing grounds, and market centers associated with important sea products like trepang, green turtles, and tortoise-shell, have served to widen the Southeast Sulawesi Sama maritime realm well beyond their respective home-spaces. Through their voyaging and highly specialized adaptation to the marine environment, Sama from Southeast Sulawesi and elsewhere have established vast social networks which connected the innumerable resource-rich islands and reef complexes of the eastern seas to one another and to large trade entrepôts such as Makassar and Surabaya.

Sama Social Networks

By social networks, I am referring to informal but nevertheless important and lasting connections between Sama communities across the eastern seas, which are often based on kinship as well as friendships, trading relationships, and cultural similarities. As Jennifer Gaynor has noted, “such networks follow shorelines and criss-cross archipelagic spaces,” but Sama people “do not all necessarily have to travel these interconnected spaces” in order to know that these connections exist, “as long as they hear about the movement of friends, family and prior generations to and from places near and far.”⁴¹ When sailing to areas such as eastern Java, Sabah, Flores, Maluku, or elsewhere in Sulawesi, Sama traders and fishers have often relied, and continue to rely on pre-existing relationships for a variety of needs, or they establish new relationships among the local population on which they could later rely. Likewise, in times of conflict and disturbance Sama peoples in Southeast Sulawesi have both relied on existing links and created new connections in their flight to safer places. In the process of these journeys, knowledge, stories, experiences, and sometimes blood-lines, are exchanged across vast distances much in the same way Sama collect and transport sea produce across the Indo-Malaysian archipelago. In what follows, I will

demonstrate that some of the same Sama voyages which have provided vital goods to regional markets for centuries have also served to establish and sustain important social and economic linkages between Sama communities across the eastern seas in the recent past.

While the relationship between Southeast Sulawesi and areas such as Maluku, Flores and northeast Borneo have a long history, here I will focus on more contemporary linkages which Sama oral histories can offer some insight. The long history of frequent interaction between Sama communities and the world of Maluku, for example, continues today in variety of forms.⁴² In the last century, Sama from Southeast Sulawesi made regular voyages to Maluku, particularly the islands around Obi and Seram, in order to fish turtle as well as collect copra for trade in various regional market centers. Oral histories demonstrate that Sama peoples in Southeast Sulawesi have continued to travel to Maluku for much the same reasons and they often rely on existing social connections as well as creating new ones in the course of their travels. As there are a number of Sama communities in Maluku, with relatively large numbers in North Maluku, Sama fishers and sailors from Southeast Sulawesi frequently call upon these villages for various types of support.

For example, Puto Daleng, a Sama fisherman from the Kendari region, has family members in the village of Bajo Guruapin in north Maluku, whom he often stays with when traveling to fish turtle.⁴³ According to Daleng, his father Bunuasing married a local woman in Maluku sometime before World War II, whom he had met as a result of his frequent voyages there for fishing and trade. Despite the fact that Bunuasing continued to live in the Kendari region, where he had a wife and two children, he maintained his relationship with the woman in Maluku through his regular stays there and the infrequent financial assistance he sent.⁴⁴ As a result of this kinship link to Maluku, Puto Daleng is able to rely on friends and family there for food, a place to sleep, and companionship. Equally important however, it is through these connections that Puto Daleng and other Sama were, and still are, able to exchange local knowledge about fishing grounds, weather conditions, trade, and employment opportunities.

As Gaynor has suggested, these networks are by no means limited to those who participate in them directly, but the benefits and knowledge are also

passed on to other Sama elsewhere through stories and conversation.⁴⁵ While the story of Puto Daleng is only one example, his experience is by no means a singular phenomenon. In the course of my research I noted several similar situations where Sama fishermen from Southeast Sulawesi had marriage ties to other areas, including East Java, Flores, Maluku, and elsewhere in Sulawesi. Furthermore, many of these Sama males had married more than one woman at a time and in more than one place. Centuries of interaction between Sama communities in Southeast Sulawesi and Maluku have resulted in the formation of numerous links between the two regions, many of which continue to be important today.

Similar connections exist between Southeast Sulawesi Sama and communities throughout the Indo-Malaysian Archipelago, linking fishers and traders from Southeast Sulawesi to areas of eastern Borneo. Like the links between Southeast Sulawesi Sama and the world of Maluku, there is also a long history of interaction between Sama in Sulawesi and eastern Borneo. From contemporary practices and oral histories we know that the Sama of Southeast Sulawesi continue to maintain these links. Today, as in the past, Sama fishers from eastern Indonesia travel to Sabah in order to fish and collect a variety of sea products. However, more recently Sama living in Indonesia have become an important, but now often illegal, part of the workforce for large fishing and ocean resource extraction companies based in Sabah. Sama from Southeast Sulawesi, for example, have found employment with Japanese owned commercial fishing fleets in Tawau, (Sabah). Sama males from Tukang Besi in particular, frequently travel to Tawau, sometimes with their families but more often with other males, where they work on purse-seine vessels fishing tuna.⁴⁶ Two Sama males in their mid-thirties from Sampela, named La Keke and La Demba, have been working on commercial tuna boats in Sabah since the age of fourteen and eighteen respectively.⁴⁷ When I met them in Bau-Bau on the island of Buton, both men and their families were headed to Tawau to work on purse-seiners. La Keke said that he would stay in Sabah as long as he and his family are happy, though he typically stays for at least one year. As a youth La Keke lived and worked in Tawau for nearly ten years before returning to Sampela and marrying there. Two of La Keke's children were born in Nunukan, a village on the

Indonesian side of the Indo-Malaysian border, as was one of La Demba's.

While this practice may not be exactly analogous to past economic and political relationships between Sama in Sulawesi and those in eastern Borneo, the migrations of Sama fishermen to the coasts of Sabah in search of new opportunities evidence a continuing Sama network. Furthermore, these more recent practices demonstrate the usefulness and importance of links between Sama communities through which important information is shared. Although the regional economy has changed in dramatic ways since the decline of maritime politics and trade entrepôts of earlier centuries, the exceptional maritime skills of Sama peoples have enabled them to adapt to new practices and markets, and thus, maintain an important position in the region's fisheries.

Another important aspect of Sama social networks is the creation of relationships which potentially can offer some sort of refuge when one is in trouble. In regard to Sama communities in Southeast Sulawesi, the frequency with which Sama peoples in the region have historically taken flight to avoid danger or find more accommodating spaces leads one to believe that this aspect of social networks is especially important to them. Though the written historical record mentions several occasions when Sama communities fled a home-space en masse in the face of violence and instability, the details of these movements are mostly absent.⁴⁸ Oral histories, however, can offer some clues as to how social relationships and previous travel experiences factor into these movements. Based on oral histories regarding instances of flight by Sama peoples in Southeast Sulawesi during the 1950s, evidence suggests that Sama peoples often relied on pre-existing relationships formed through family, friends, and previous travels, in their movements to find stability and safety. Additionally, these histories suggest that, in flight, Sama peoples also formed new ties with distant communities which continue to be important today.

One cannot speak of the role of social relationships between Sama communities in Southeast Sulawesi without discussing the large-scale movements that occurred in response to the Kahar Muzakkar Rebellion (or Darul Islam-Tentara Islam Indonesia, DI-TII) that took place in South and Southeast Sulawesi between 1950 and 1965. In her study on Sama communities

Gaynor mentions the "time-honored practice of flight" in the face of oppression or danger, and how this was a common response among Sama communities during tempo gerombolan (literally, "time of the gangs," which is the term commonly used by Sama to refer to this period). Throughout South and Southeast Sulawesi, Sama villages and bagai villages were uprooted and relocated as a result of the conflict which divided communities between those who supported the rebellion, those who supported the Tentara Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian National Army, or TNI), and those in-between, as many Sama were. In response to the traumatic events of those years, some Sama villages in the region were left abandoned for many years, some swelled with added "refugee" populations, and others formed in new areas.⁴⁹

While a detailed history of the rebellion is not necessary here, a brief description of some of the migrations that occurred will be sufficient to show the links that exist and those that were formed between Sama communities in Southeast Sulawesi and beyond as a result of the dislocation and relocation caused by the rebellion. An especially dramatic example is that of Mantigola, where hundreds of Sama families were displaced and the entire village was burned to the water as a result of fighting. One result of the movement from Mantigola can be seen in the village of Mola, where prior to the 1950s less than thirty Sama families lived, but in 1956-57 swelled in size as hundreds of families from Mantigola, Sampela, and La Hoa sought refuge there. Towards the end of the rebellion, a group of Mantigola and Sampela Sama moved to Pulau Tolandono roughly 30 km to the southeast of Mantigola, where they founded a new settlement known today as La Manggau.⁵⁰ During this chaotic period a number of Sama families, including those from the islands of Kabaena, Muna, and Buton, also fled to the islands of Flores and West Timor, especially the areas of Wuring and Sulamu.⁵¹ Families from Mantigola also fled to Sama villages in Labuha and Gane Barat in north Maluku, and Pulau Bungin near the island of Sumbawa, where they relied on distant relatives and friends for support.⁵² Likewise, several groups of Sama from villages in Tiworo resettled in Kendari Bay during the latter years of the rebellion, where many remain today.⁵³

Many of those Sama who fled did so to villages and areas where they had some sort of pre-existing

connection, be it family, friends, previous travel experience, or even just second-hand knowledge. Several of these Sama eventually returned to the home-spaces from which they fled, suggesting that the years spent in Sama communities abroad helped to establish new ties, through both marriage and friendship, which continue to connect these communities today. Similarly, in the case of those who remained in the villages to which they fled, links to their former home villages still exist. Aya Hami, for example, fled from her home-space in Mantigola to Wuring, West Timor in the late 1950s only to return to Tukang Besi in the late 1970s. Because she married in Wuring and lived there for nearly twenty years, Hami formed many lasting relationships with that community. Yet, when she returned to Mantigola after her husband's death, she was still able to rely on her natal community for support. These linkages between Sama communities are but one example of how the distant places and peoples in the eastern seas are connected as a result of Sama movements through these spaces, and how, in the process these distant places and peoples are incorporated into the Southeast Sulawesi Sama maritime realm.

A Sense of Cultural Commonality

Through their travels and stories of other's travels, Sama from various areas in Southeast Sulawesi have not only linked the vast maritime expanse of the eastern seas into an informal network of familiar places and social linkages, but such travels have also helped to create a sense of cultural commonality among the various Sama groups in the eastern seas.⁵⁴ Although there are many cultural differences among the numerous Sama groups in Southeast Asia, definite similarities in language, lifestyle, religion, and history do exist. When asked whether or not they perceived Sama from other regions of Southeast Asia to be of the same group or family as themselves, the Sama I interviewed in Southeast Sulawesi cited numerous reasons why they felt Sama in the Philippines, Malaysia, or elsewhere in eastern Indonesia were somehow of the same *suku* (tribe, ethnic group).⁵⁵ Trade, the search for sea products, shipping, migration, intermarriage, and numerous other mobile practices have brought Sama peoples into contact with Sama from other parts of Southeast Asia. These connections, in addition to helping form a Southeast Sulawesi Sama maritime

realm, have helped to instill or reinforce a sense of Sama identity which extends well beyond the confines of their respective home-spaces as well as the borders of modern nation-states. As Clifford Sather has suggested in regard to the Sama communities of Sabah, "through this pattern of voyaging, a larger sense of awareness was maintained of membership in a more inclusive community of 'sea people,' the outer extent of which no single individual, no matter how well-traveled, could fully comprehend."⁵⁶

Of the similarities noted by respondents, language was one of the primary elements contributing to a sense of belonging to a larger Sama community. Linguists have noted the high degree of similarity among the various dialects of the Sama-Bajau language group to which the Sama of eastern Indonesia belong. While there are indeed differences between regions, the level of similarity is great enough for a high-degree of mutual intelligibility.⁵⁷ In the course of their travels, and through stories of travels, Sama peoples in Southeast Sulawesi have become aware of this linguistic connection. As one Sama fisherman in Lemobajo (north of Kendari) explained, "Wherever I have gone, Sama speak the same language. Some words are different, but mostly they just say them differently. I can understand them well enough."⁵⁸ In La Keke's travels to Tawau he befriended a number of Sama from the eastern coasts of Borneo and the Southern Philippines. La Keke made it clear that he felt that they were "different" from Sama in Southeast Sulawesi in some ways, but when pressed if they were still "Sama," he explained, "They are Sama. They speak the same language, they live like I do, but they sound different and dress different...Maybe we are of the same past."⁵⁹ This awareness of belonging to a larger "Sama" group is cultivated much in the same manner as I have suggested a Southeast Sulawesi Sama maritime realm has been formed—through trade routes, the search for ocean resources, intermarriage, and migration. By coming into contact with Sama from other areas and recognizing traits in common, such as language, a sense of connection to other Sama communities is created and strengthened.

As La Keke's statement suggests, another key element in the recognition of cultural commonality is that of common practices. It is hard to pinpoint what La Keke meant by "they live like I do" because there is by no means a singular Sama lifestyle. While it can be

said that most Sama in the eastern archipelago are a sea-centered people, there are numerous exceptions to even this qualified statement. However, the fact that many of the Sama I met in Southeast Sulawesi referenced a distinct lifestyle common among Sama peoples leads me to believe that certain shared qualities do exist. Here, it will suffice to note that during their travels Sama from Southeast Sulawesi encounter Sama peoples from other areas in the eastern seas and recognize something related in their lifestyles—a similar sea-centered outlook and behavior that has historically given rise to such exonyms and endonyms as “sea peoples,” “aquatic populations,” and “Sama of the sea.”⁶⁰ At some point in their voyages, and by way of tales of such travels, an awareness of something similar developed in such a way that many Sama peoples in Southeast Sulawesi felt that they and the Sama Philippines and Sama Malaysia they encountered were somehow cut from the same cloth.

History is another element on which this awareness of commonalities might be based. Again, in this context the comments of La Keke are instructive. When he suggested that, “maybe we are of the same past,” La Keke was correct in more than one respect. For one, as mentioned above, based on linguistic studies it is clear that the Sama of eastern Indonesia are part of a larger Sama-Bajau ethno-linguistic group which also encompasses Sama peoples in what is today the Philippines and Malaysia.⁶¹ Secondly, among the sea-centered Sama-Bajau peoples wherever they may be found, similar historical traditions in the form of etiological narratives exist, namely those which relate a story about a lost princess of Johor and the Sama’s failed attempts at recovering her.⁶² These narratives are often related orally in fragments and were familiar to the majority of the Southeast Sulawesi Sama I interviewed. Alternatively, these narratives are sometimes recorded in *lontara*, Sama-owned Bugis language manuscripts originally written on sheets of lontar palm.⁶³ While *lontara* are extremely rare, and their possession usually limited to particular *lolo* (noble) Sama families, the origin narratives contained in some of these narratives appear to be known widely among the general Sama population.⁶⁴

In the course of my fieldwork it became apparent that these Sama narratives, which employ motifs similar to those recorded throughout Indonesia, Sabah, and the

southern Philippines, were known in one form or another by most Sama adults I interviewed.⁶⁵ Several knew the rough outline of the story, while some knew versions in great detail. What is more, several of those interviewed knew that Sama peoples from the Southern Philippines and Sabah had similar historical narratives; a fact they learned through their encounters with Sama peoples from these regions. As a young boy Mbo Nankang, for instance, learned from his father of the story of a lost princess from Johor whom the Sama had been sent to retrieve. In the late 1950s, during a trip to the Sangihe islands north of Manado, Mbo Nankang met several Sama males from the Semporna district of Sabah, who, to his surprise, shared with him a similar narrative which also spoke of a lost princess from Johor.⁶⁶ The sharing of historical narratives, such as in the exchange between Mbo Nankang and the Sama sailors from Sabah, is another way in which Sama from Southeast Sulawesi gain a sense of belonging to a larger group, recognized as Sama among themselves and by *bagai* as Bajo, Bajau, or Sama-Bajau.

Today scholars regard these narratives variously as “sea-based rationalization[s] of their presence in South Sulawesi,”⁶⁷ or as “cultural capital [which] signals connections with powerful others in the past,”⁶⁸ and as having “more to do with political ideologies and the subordination of maritime peoples... than they do with actual migrations or literal origins.”⁶⁹ To be sure, all of these definitions are well-thought out and accurate—especially in light of more recent linguistic and historical evidence put forth by scholars such as Pallesen—but, the fact that these narratives utilize highly similar motifs and serve comparable social functions in Sama communities throughout the eastern seas suggests a degree of cultural-historical similarity. Furthermore, the fact that Sama peoples in Southeast Sulawesi encounter while abroad narratives which are highly similar to those learned in their own communities, serves to reinforce or create a sense of cultural and historical connection among Sama populations throughout the eastern seas.

Just as Southeast Sulawesi Sama voyaging has created a vast space of familiarity in the eastern seas, travels for sea goods, trade, marriage, adventure, and safety have also brought the Sama of the region into closer contact with other Sama peoples from all over eastern Southeast Asia. In regard to a broader eastern Indonesian trade and cultural network, Leonard

Andaya has suggested that frequent movement and interaction in the form of trade, intermarriage, raiding, and migration, have helped to create a strong “sense of cultural commonality” in the region.⁷⁰ The existence of trade and kinship and other social networks among the Sama of Southeast Sulawesi, which connect them to numerous places within the eastern seas, serves a similar function.

Conclusion

Eveli Hau’ofa, a scholar of Oceania, has commented that the everyday spaces in which we operate, “Our landscapes and seascapes,” are inscribed with culture and history, with present-day meanings and past significance, and thus, “We cannot read our histories without knowing how to read our landscapes (and seascapes).”⁷¹ This oft-cited geographer’s contention—that landscapes (and seascapes) are sites of the historical and cultural, and to understand a people’s history we must be aware of their conception of the land and seascape which they interact with—serves as a theoretical basis for this article. I have argued here that the sea is central to Sama living in Southeast Sulawesi, and thus their perspective of that space is central to understanding their histories. Part of that perspective, I believe, is to understand the oceans, seas, and littorals as a lived-space for Sama peoples. For many Sama peoples in Southeast Sulawesi the eastern seas of island Southeast Asia are an intimately familiar space, full of historically, culturally, and spiritually significant places. In aggregate, I have referred to this lived-space as the Southeast Sulawesi Sama maritime realm.

Where the example of *Tukang Besi* demonstrated the existence of specific Sama home-spaces in Southeast Sulawesi, a large portion of this article has been an effort to demonstrate that the Southeast Sulawesi Sama maritime realm encompasses a much more vast area of the eastern seas of island Southeast Asia. By way of their voyaging, Southeast Sulawesi Sama peoples have become intimately familiar with nearly one and a quarter million square miles of sea space.⁷² Rather than only a space to be traversed en route from one body of land to another, for Sama peoples this maritime realm is replete with familiar reefs, shoals, mangroves, spawning sites, currents, wind patterns, and resource cycles. As others have argued, the search for fishing grounds, trading places and secure living spaces was a major factor in the wide dispersal of Sama peoples

throughout the eastern seas. In the course of their travels Sama fishers and traders established new settlements, discovered new collecting grounds, and formed relationships in new locales. In sum, these movements have expanded the Southeast Sulawesi Sama maritime realm and incorporated familiar places and peoples into an informal social and economic network, one which facilitated additional movements and fostered a further familiarity with the seascape. Importantly, this network of familiar places linked through a variety of social and economic relationships has also facilitated the exchange of goods, knowledge, and opportunities among Sama peoples.

Finally, oral histories regarding these movements and relationships with peoples and places in the eastern seas suggest that the networks which comprise the Southeast Sulawesi Sama maritime realm have also helped to foster an awareness of belonging to a larger Sama community among Southeast Sulawesi Sama. In the course of their travels, contact with Sama peoples from other areas has reinforced among Southeast Sulawesi Sama an awareness of linguistic, cultural, and historical commonalities and thus, of a larger Sama community which transcends any one particular home-space. The fact that during their travels Sama from Southeast Sulawesi encountered Sama peoples from other areas in the eastern seas and recognized something related in their lifestyles, histories, and cultures, is important to consider. Through travel, trade, intermarriage, and encounters with new and old faces, an awareness of cultural commonalities has been cultivated among Sama peoples in the eastern seas.⁷³

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End Notes

1 I have used pseudonyms for all interviewees cited in this article. Interview with Mbo Doba, Sampela, 19-06-2007.

2 The Sama of eastern Indonesia are a part of the Indonesian sub-group of the larger Sama-Bajau ethnolinguistic group that inhabits large portions of the southern Philippines and Sabah (northeast Borneo). Sama peoples in Indonesia are often referred to by non-Sama peoples as Bajo, Turijekne, and Bajau. I will refer to them as Sama because that is the endonym that they use in self-reference. See A. Kemp Pallesen, *Culture Contact and Language Convergence* (Manila: Linguistic Society of the Philippines, 1985).

3 Sixto Y. Orosa, *The Sulu Archipelago and its People* (Yonkers: World Book Company, 1923), 69.

4 H. von Dewall, "Aanteekeningen Omtrent de Noordoostkust van Borneo," *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 4 (1885): 445-447.

5 Celia Lowe, "The Magic of Place: Sama at Sea and on Land in Sulawesi, Indonesia," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* 159.1 (2003): 109-133 is an excellent example of this scholarship.

6 Yi-fu Tuan, "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective," *Progress in Geography* 6 (1974): 213.

7 Compare with the more territorialized "precise domains" and "maritories" common among Orang Suku Laut groups in the Straits of Melaka described in Leonard Y. Andaya, *Leaves of the Same Tree: Trade and Ethnicity in the Straits of Melaka* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008), especially 180-181.

8 Edward Soja, "Thirdspace: Expanding the Scope of the Geographical Imagination," in *Human Geography Today*, eds. Doreen Massey, John Allen, and Phillip Sarre (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), 276.

9 My ideas regarding the role of Sama trading and voyaging patterns as well as their social networks in fostering an awareness of "cultural commonality," has been influenced greatly by the recent work of Leonard Y. Andaya. See, Leonard Y. Andaya, "Conceptualizing the Maritime World of Eastern Indonesia," lecture, Asia Research Institute, National University Singapore, December 2007.

10 Marine Program, World Wildlife Foundation Indonesia, "Rapid Ecological Assessment: Wakatobi National Park," *WWF Indonesia* (1993): 20.

11 The thesis of Pak Kasmin (of Haluoleo University in Kendari, Southeast Sulawesi) contains detailed information on the settlement history of Tukang Besi derived from oral interviews in Mantigola and Mola in the early 1990s. Natasha Stacey's more recent work offers an informative section on Sama settlement in eastern Indonesia, focusing on Tukang Besi and the village of Pepela on the island of Roti. Kasmin, *Perlawanan Suku Bajo Terhadap Bajak Laut Tobelo di Perairan Kepulauan Wakatobi, Buton, Sulawesi Tenggara* (B.Sc thesis, Haluoleo University, Kendari, 1993); Natasha Stacey, *Boats to Burn: Bajo Fishing Activity in the Australian Fishing Zone* (Canberra: Australia National University E Press, 2007).

12 For a description of the *perahu lambo*, see Michael Southon, *The Navel of the Perahu: Meaning and Values in the Maritime Trading Economy of a Butonese Village* (Canberra: Australia National University, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, 1995) 40. For a discussion of the *soppeq* (or *sope*), see Nick Burningham, "Bajau Lepa and Sope: A 'Seven-Part Canoe' Building Tradition in Indonesia," *The Beagle: Records of the Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences* 10.1 (1993): 208-210, 219.

13 Kasmin, *Perlawanan Suku Bajo*, 32-3; see also, Natasha Stacey, *Boats to Burn*, 22-24.

14 Verheijen notes that "Puah" can also refer to females, as in "aunt." See, Jilis A.J. Verheijen, *The Sama/Bajau Language in the Lesser Sunda Islands* (Melbourne: Australia National University, Materials in Languages of Indonesia, no.32, 1986), 104.

15 One Sama woman in Mantigola, who claims kinship connections to the Sultanate of Buton, said that La Ode Denda bought Kaledupa from a figure named Tuan Tumbuang, but I have been unable to learn the identity of that person, his status, or what relationship he had with the Sultanate of Buton.

16 According to Schoorl, the Sultanate of Buton identified four vassal states as *barata* (meaning "that which is used for the binding of outriggers"): Kaledupa, Muna, Tiworo, and Kalingsusu. Schoorl also notes that *kaomu* had settled in Tukang Besi, but he does not mention the time period in which the settlement took place. J.W. Schoorl, "Power, Ideology, and Change in the Early State of Buton," in *State and Trade in the Indonesian Archipelago*, ed. G.J. Schutte (Leiden: KITLV Press, 1994), 28, 31.

17 Schoorl, 17-59; Susanto Zhudi, *Kerajaan Tradisional Sulawesi Tenggara: Kesultanan Buton* (Jakarta: Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan RI, 1996), appendix 2a and 2b.

¹⁸ The exact meanings of these classifications, along with the term *sakei*, are unclear and their usage likely varies from place to place. The descriptions offered here are based on my observations and conversations with Sama in Tukang Besi. However, my Sama friend and translator, Iskandar Halim, often used the term *pallilibu* to describe or question Sama in other areas of Southeast Sulawesi about daily fishing and collecting practices. On the confusion regarding these terms and their meanings, see Jennifer Gaynor, "Liquid Territory: Subordination, Memory, and Manuscripts among Sama People of Sulawesi's Littoral" (PhD Diss., University of Michigan, 2005), 76-84.

¹⁹ An excellent study of the way in which history is inscribed in the land and seascape by way of Sama activities is Celia Lowe, "The Magic of Place."

²⁰ A *sandro*, sometimes spelled as "*sanro*" or "*sando*," is a Sama shaman, healer, or *dukun* of sorts who is sought for spiritual guidance and to perform curing ceremonies as well as offerings to aid in fishing and travel.

²¹ Interview with Mbo Salang, Sampela, 08-06-2007. According to several *sandro*, in the past both Sama and *bagai* Tukang Besi islanders were afraid to cut down trees or harvest coral in the area around the cave. Likewise, if one desired to fish in that area, it was necessary to make an offering of betel nut, lime leaves and tobacco, as well as avoid using loud or foul language, spitting overboard, or making any aggressive actions, among other taboos, while in the area.

²² The term *bajak* or pirate was used by only a few Sama to describe figures such as Mbo Lonting, as most referred to him as simply a powerful person, or even a hero. Furthermore, the acts of "piracy" described by those interviewed were ambiguous and sometimes contradictory. Some said that Mbo Lonting never boarded passing vessels to steal goods or money, but only to demand food, tobacco, and demonstrate his power and bravery, while others said that Mbo Lonting often attacked vessels to steal goods and money, and usually killed those who crossed him. All sources, however, cited his supernatural power and fearlessness.

²³ The details of Mbo Lonting's death are complicated by the fact that several versions exist as to how he died, why he was atop the rock outcropping, and whether or not he died at all. Nevertheless, the places associated with Mbo Lonting are an important part of the history of Tukang Besi Sama and their environment. Interestingly, several of those interviewed said similar figures of legendary status, much like Mbo Lonting, are revered, or at least remembered, in numerous other Sama communities throughout eastern Indonesia. A few spoke of a Mbo Jahinang, who is reportedly held in high regard by many Sama around the island Muna (Tiworo Straits, Southeast Sulawesi). Interview with Halim and Puto Asi, Sampela, 15-06-2007; Interview with Mbo Hasna, Mantigola, 12-06-2007.

²⁴ For example, a 26 year old Sama male from Sampela who claims Mbo Lonting as his ancestor, visited the rock outcropping and made an offering there, which he explained as being made in hopes that his ancestor would help him to pass his university exit exams. Interview with Dono, Sampela, 06-19-2007.

²⁵ Jennifer Gaynor discusses the role of Sama as "*tangan pertama*" or "initial extractors" of sea resources in her essay, "The Decline of Small-Scale Fishing and the Reorganization of Livelihood Practices among Sama Peoples in Eastern Indonesia," *Michigan Discussions in Anthropology* 15 (2005): 90-149.

²⁶ See for example, Pallesen, 247; Christian Pelras, "Catatan tentang Beberapa Penduduk Perairan Nusantara," *Masyarakat Indonesia* 6.2 (1972): 169-197; James J. Fox, "Notes on the Southern Voyages and Settlements of the Sama-Bajau," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-en Volkenkunde* 133.4 (1977): 459-465; Arlo H. Nimmo, *Magosaha: An Ethnography of the Tawi-Tawi Sama Dilaut* (Manila: Ateneo De Manila University Press, 2001), 27-29.

²⁷ Sama peoples have traveled much further than the areas listed here. I am referring only to those journeys that were made by or remembered by Sama I met personally.

²⁸ Interview with Mbo Salang, Sampela, Session 2, 09-06-2007.

²⁹ According to M. Marhalim, "in the pre-Islamic era" green turtles were also considered to be of spiritual value by the Sama of Southeast Sulawesi. M. Marhalim, *Sejarah Perdagangan dan Konsumen Daging Penyus dalam Masyarakat Bajo di Selat Tiworo* (Unpublished Typescript, 1990).

³⁰ See for example, D. Broderick and C. Moritz, "Hawkbill breeding and foraging populations in the Indo-Pacific region," in *Proceedings of the International Symposium on Sea Turtle Conservation Genetics*, eds. Bowen, B.W. and W. N. Witzell (NOAA Tech. Mem.NMFS-SEFSC-396, 1996): 119-129.

³¹ M. Marhalim, *Sejarah Konsumen dan Perdagangan Penyus Hijau*, 3-4, 5.

³² Interview with Mbo Dadi, Sampela, Session 1, 11-06-2007. Mbo Dadi was only able to recall that the trip took place prior to *tempo gerombolan*.

³³ Sama sailors, like many other maritime communities in eastern Indonesia, refer to "north" as down or below, and "south" as up, or above. James Fox noted this spatial orientation in his, "Bajau Voyages to the Timor Area, the Ashmore Reef and Australia" (Paper presented at the International Seminar on Bajau Communities. Jakarta. 22-25 November 1993), 286.

³⁴ Interview with Mbo Diki, Sampela, Session 1, 07-06-2007.

³⁵ Interview with Mbo Diki, Sampela, Session 2, 16-06-2007.

³⁶ See, Leonard Y. Andaya, "Historical Links between the Aquatic Populations and the Coastal Peoples of the Malay World and Celebes," in *Historia: Essays in Commemoration of the 25th Anniversary of the Department of History, University of Malaya*, edited by M. Abu Bakar, et al., (Kuala Lumpur: The Malaysian Historical Society, 1984), 41.

³⁷ Fox, "Notes on the Southern Voyages," 461. For the importance of trepang to insular Southeast Asia's trade with China see, Heather Sutherland, "Trepang and Wangkang: The China Trade of Eighteenth-Century Makassar c.1720s-1840s," *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land-en Volkenkunde* 156.3 (2000): 451-472.

³⁸ M. Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*, vol. 2 (London: G. and W. Nichol, 1814), 257.

³⁹ George Windsor Earl, report attached to a letter from J. Mc Arthur to J. Stephen 20 September, 1842. Cited in, Peter Spillet, "A Race Apart: Notes on the Sama-Bajau People of Sulawesi, Nusa Tenggara Timur and Northern Australia" (Paper presented at the International Seminar on Bajau Communities, Jakarta. 22-25 November 1993), 195.

⁴⁰ C. van der Hart, *Reize rondom Celebes en naar eenige der Moluksche eilanden Gedaan in den jare 1850* (The Hague: K. Fuhri, 1853), 104. Bosscher and Matthijssen noted in 1852 that Bungku and Banggai Sama were selling trepang in Kendari and paying a small fishing tax to the rulers of the Bungku and Banggai polities in eastern Sulawesi. C. Bosscher and P.A. Matthijssen, "Schetsen van de Rijken van Tomboekoe en Banggai" *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal- Land- en Volkenkunde* 11 (1854): 63-107.

⁴¹ Gaynor, "Liquid Territory," 5.

⁴² The fact that the seventeenth century La Galigo cycle, a Bugis epic, makes reference to *Bajo Sérám* (Malukan Bajo) suggests a very early connection between Sama in Sulawesi and the world of Maluku. Christian Pelras, *The Bugis* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 74.

⁴³ Interview with Puto Daleng, Lapulu, 21-06-2007.

⁴⁴ According to Puto Daleng, his father eventually stopped sailing to Maluku sometime in the 1960's and his wife there eventually remarried with another Sama fisherman, though one who only fished locally and did not make long distance journeys.

⁴⁵ Gaynor, "Liquid Territory," 5.

⁴⁶ Because most enter Sabah illegally, those with families often rent a small house (usually several families sharing one house) on the Indonesian side of the border in order to avoid having to buy passports for family members. According to La Keke, the authorities in Tawau did not ask Sama fishermen, or their families, for passports prior to 2000, but since then they have demanded passports. La Keke believed that this was a factor in the increased instances of Sama males who leave their families behind in Sampela when they travel to Sabah for work.

⁴⁷ La Keke said that he learned of the employment opportunity from older Sama men from Tukang Besi who had worked for similar companies in the late 1960s, and it was La Keke who had shared the information with La Demba. Interview with La Beke and La Bemba, Bau-Bau, 01-06-2007.

⁴⁸ See Gaynor, "Liquid Territory," especially Chapters Four and Six; Esther J. Velthoen, "Contested Coastlines, especially Chapter Five.

⁴⁹ I place "refugee" in quotation marks because Sama respondents never used the term, or its Bahasa Indonesia equivalents, when referring to their status in the places they fled to. The Bahasa Indonesia term "*pelarian*" (which can be translated as refugee) was often used by *bagai* respondents in reference to these Sama communities however.

⁵⁰ This information is based on a number of interviews with Sama elders in Tukang Besi, mostly those from La Hoa, Mola, Mantigola and Sampela.

⁵¹ Burningham, "Bajau Lepa and Sope," 209; Stacey, *Boats to Burn*, 25.

⁵² Sama communities in South Sulawesi were also greatly affected. For instance, Christian Pelras noted during his travels there in 1970s that, starting around 1953 the scattered groups of Sama living along the western coast of the Gulf of Boné began migrating to Bajoé in South Sulawesi, where they built pile-houses along the inter-tidal zone. Pelras, "Catatan tentang Beberapa Penduduk Perairan," 184-185; David Sopher, *The Sea Nomads: A Study Based on the Literature of the Maritime Boat People of Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Memoirs of the National Museum, Singapore), 146.

⁵³ Sama "refugees" from various villages in Southeast Sulawesi originally settled in Kendari at a place called Sadoha, but were resettled by the government in an area called Lapulu. Interview with Aya Hami and friends, Lapulu, 28-06-2007; Interview with Mbo Danjong, Lapulu, 29-06-2007.

⁵⁴ Andaya, "Conceptualizing the Maritime World of Eastern Indonesia."

⁵⁵ The term used by respondents varied depending on the language used in the interview. Those using Baong Sama often said something along the lines of, "*sanggeh Sama*," which can roughly be translated as "[we are] all Sama."

⁵⁶ Sather, *The Bajau Laut*, 60.

⁵⁷ Verheijen states that there is "only small divergence at the dialectal-level" between the Sama language spoken in eastern Indonesia and the Sama languages spoken in Sabah and the Southern Philippines. Verheijen, 26-7; see also, Pallesen, 117.

⁵⁸ Interview with Puto Gane, Lemobajo, 01-07-2007.

⁵⁹ Interview with La Keke and La Demba, Bau-Bau, 01-06-2007.

⁶⁰ Sama peoples have been referred to by *bagai* as "sea peoples," "aquatic populations," and other names which emphasize their connection to the ocean. Among themselves, the Sama of the Southern Philippines, use the ethnonym "Sama Dilaut," which can roughly be translated as "Sama of the sea."

⁶¹ Pallesen, 117.

⁶² One gets a sense of both the similarities and the spatial range of these narratives by looking at the works of: Dewall, who recorded the story of the lost princess of Johor in 1849 on the east coast of Borneo; Helen Follett, who recorded a similar story of the Johor princess in 1945 in the Sulu archipelago; Thomas Forrest, who recorded another version of the story in what is now eastern Indonesia in the 1780s; as did Verschuer in 1883. M. Marhalim also notes a similar version originating from a Makassar-Goa oral tradition. H. von Dewall, "Aanteekeningen Omtrent de Noordoostkust," 445-7; Helen Follett, *The Men of the Sulu Sea* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1945), 129-130; Thomas Forrest, *A Voyage to New Guinea and the Moluccas from Balambangan* (London: G. Scott, 1780), 372; F.H. van Verschuer, "De Badjo's," *Tijdschrift van het Koninklijke Aardrijkskundig Genootschap* 7 (1883): 4; M. Marhalim, *Cerita yang Melegenda di Kerajaan Goa, suku Makassar* (Unpublished Typescript, nd.).

⁶³ During my fieldwork I was only able to obtain a photocopy of a photocopy of only the first page of the lontara' referred to in Gaynor's dissertation as *LB Lemobajo*. This copied page contains a section of a Sama origins story written in Bugis script, which Gaynor has translated in her dissertation. Gaynor, "Liquid Territory," 123.

⁶⁴ *Lontara'*, written in Bugis but owned by Sama (usually Sama-Bugis descent and/or those of *lolo* descent), are interesting historical sources. The known *lontara'* contain either genealogies which trace a *lolo* family line to a South Sulawesi kingdom, usually Goa or Boné, or they contain one version or another of the Sama etiological stories. According to researchers such as Gaynor, there are very few *lontara'* scattered around eastern Indonesia and those that do exist are considered to be sacred heirlooms by the families which own them.

⁶⁵ Of those interviewed, only one was widely considered to be of *lolo* descent and possessed a *lontara'*. Most respondents over the age of thirty (the target age group of my interviewees) knew at least some of the basic story of the lost princess, and the story of the *wélenréng* tree, which derives from the undated Bugis epic, the *La Galigo* cycle.

⁶⁶ Interview with Mbo Nankong, Bau-Bau, 01-06-2007. For some of the similarities and differences between the narratives of the Southern Philippines Sama, the Sama of eastern Kalimantan and Sabah, and those in eastern Indonesia, see, Sopher, *The Sea Nomads*, especially 124-125, 141-142, 311-313.

⁶⁷ Horst Liebner, "Four Oral Versions of a Story about the Origin of the Bajo People of Southern Selayar," in *Living through Histories: Culture, History and Social Life in South Sulawesi*, eds. Kathryn Robinson and Mukhlis Paeni (Canberra: Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, the Australian National University, 1998), 129.

⁶⁸ Gaynor, "Liquid Territory," 254.

⁶⁹ Sather, *The Bajau Laut*, 17-18.

⁷⁰ Andaya, "Conceptualizing the Maritime World of Eastern Indonesia."

⁷¹ Epeli Hau'ofa, "Pasts to Remember," *Remembrance of Pacific Pasts*. ed. Robert Borofsky (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000), 466.

⁷² Clifford Sather gives the number of one and quarter million square miles as the range for Sama peoples in Southeast Asia. Clifford Sather, "Sea Nomads and Rainforest Hunter-gatherers: Foraging Adaptations in the Indo-Malaysian Archipelago," in *The Austronesians: Historical and Comparative Perspectives*, eds. Peter Bellwood, James Fox, Darrell Tryon (Canberra: Australia National University Press, 1995), 257.

⁷³ See Andaya, "Conceptualizing the Maritime World of Eastern Indonesia."