

**KALLUMAN MA TAHIK: HOUSEHOLD STRATEGIES, GENDER,  
AND SEA TENURE IN A SAMA DILAUT (BAJAU) COMMUNITY IN  
KABUUKAN ISLAND, SULU**

*- Wilfredo M. Torres III*

*Descriptive Summary*

*This study describes the household adaptive strategies of the Sama Dilaut in Kabuukan with special focus on the gender relations in the Sama family, their sea tenurial status, and the changes brought about by the advent of seaweed farming technology in the Sama community of Kabuukan island. The study aimed to find out how the Sama household reconstitute itself due to the nature and demands of seaweed farming by exploring the conditions, processes, and consequences of these changes, at the level of the household and at the level of the community in general.*

Household strategies are the actions that families devise to ensure their survival. This involves their production activities and their access to and utilization of resources. Inherent in the functions of a household is the concept of work. As families constantly renew themselves in the process of work, the distinctions on what is appropriate for a man and for a woman also encompasses the work they perform. Hence, this study deals with the division of labor between women and men, their decision-making processes and their differential access to and control of resources.

Since household strategies deals with resource allocation and eventually property relations, this study also explores how the Sama conceive their sea rights and how they form territories in home waters. What determines territorial rights and access to opportunities? How does the Sama determine where to fish and who can or cannot fish in specific locations? What grounds are off-limits to outsiders, and how does the Sama draw their boundaries? These are some of the questions that comprise the concept of sea tenure.

The way of life of the Sama Dilaut is a product of historical forces, as well as the forces within their natural environment. While their unique lifestyle has placed them in strategic locations beneficial to the budding maritime states, their dispersion has also relegated them to the margins of Sulu society. The emergence of seaweed farming not only presents an opportunity for the Sama to improve their way of life, but it also gives them the opportunity to emancipate themselves from previously held conceptions that debilitate them as a people. Yet, the Sama have differing views regarding the importance of seaweed farming as a livelihood activity. The seaweed farming Sama cite better living conditions as their incentive to engage in the activity, while the non-seaweed farmers indicate social, economic, and political constraints as their reasons for not engaging in it.

This study revealed that Kabuukan island and the waters within its vicinity are considered as ancestral waters by the Sama Dilaut who reside there, and that their livelihood activities are inseparably linked to their intimate knowledge of these areas. The study has also obtained an understanding of the interplay of the various livelihood activities of the Sama households, as these activities constantly shift and fluctuate depending on their needs at the moment. The analysis of the household strategies, gender relations, and sea tenurial status of the Sama households, indicate that there were indeed significant changes brought about by the advent of seaweed farming that occurred within and across households, which was also reflected on the community as a whole.

*A Brief Background on the Sama Dilaut*

The Sama Dilaut of the Sulu Archipelago belong to a wider sea-nomadic boat culture found throughout Southeast Asia. More popularly known as “Bajau” in the Philippines, the Sama Dilaut (or sea-oriented Sama) are typically subsistence fishermen and aquatic foragers residing near islands and coastal areas throughout Sulu, Tawi-Tawi, and Mindanao Island.

(Media has to some extent romanticized the seafaring nature of the Bajau, conjuring up their image as free and intrepid boat-dwelling sea voyagers in the popular mind. This popular conception of the boat-dwelling Bajau was evident during the last National Conference on the Culture and History of the Bajau at the Ateneo de Zamboanga, when some participants were surprised and even disappointed to find out that the Bajau or Sama Dilaut also lived in houses on land.)

While boat-dwelling and boat-nomadism was indeed practiced by the Sama Dilaut in the past, the Sama Dilaut have now become more sedentary, settling down in more or less permanent pile-houses. At present, because of many problems like grinding poverty, piracy, and violence in their places of origin, many Sama Dilaut families have increasingly migrated to urban centers. The researcher has personally encountered the Sama Dilaut in several areas of Metro Manila, Laguna, Batangas, and Pampanga.

It is this constant struggle for survival among the Sama, in the context of everyday problems they face, in a fast changing world, that this study explores. Hence the title “*Kalluman Ma Tabik*,” which is Sama or Sinama for “life at sea”. The sea is the lifeblood of the Sama Dilaut, as it is where they draw most of their livelihood. The sea also connects them to land, which also nourishes, heals, situates and orients the Sama—quite inseparable to their way of life at sea. The title “*Kalluman Ma Tabik*” aptly encapsulates the drama that is occurring in the lives of the Sama families in Kabuukan Island, as pervasive global market forces and new technology change and shape their lives.

### *Interethnic relations in the Sulu Archipelago*

To have a clearer understanding of the circumstances surrounding the Sama Dilaut, a brief statement must be mentioned on Sama ethnicity and their relationship with the Tausug.

The Sama of Sulu Archipelago share the islands with the Tausug. Though arriving more recently to Sulu compared to the Sama<sup>1</sup>, the Tausug have clearly become the more dominant group—socially, politically and economically (Stone 1962; Arce in Lynch 1963; Nimmo 1965, 1968a; Kiefer 1972). The Sama generally assume a subordinate status to the Tausug. The more sea-oriented Sama or the Sama Dilaut occupy a much lower social standing compared to the more sedentary Sama. Hence, because of their low position in society, the Sama Dilaut is considered to be the most socially, economically and politically deprived group among the peoples of Sulu. Their outcast position in society can be discerned from the various derogatory names ascribed to them by outsiders. Examples of such pejorative names ascribed to them are: *luwaan* which means “to spit out or vomit”; *pala’u*, which refer to the house boat; *kulapan*, which is a skin disease that makes the skin flaky; and the term *samal*, which has been unfortunately used in text books to distinguish them from the boat-dwelling Sama. The Sama of course, consider these outside ascriptions degrading for their people. In Sulu and in Tawi-Tawi, they prefer to be known as Bangsa Sama<sup>2</sup>, Sama Dilaut (sea-oriented Sama), or simply Sama.

The various Sama groups in Sulu have established a clientage relationship with the Tausug. Kiefer (1972:22) explained clientage as “a servile relationship in which one whole group is subservient to another in varying ways, quite often the status of a pariah group: a group which has been expropriated from its land by another ethnic group and stays on as ‘guests’ of the dominant group, being reduced to some form of economic dependence.” Thus, he observed that “the boat-dwelling Samal Laud or Luwaan, who live almost their entire lives on the water, are a pariah group in the sense that they do not control any territorial base necessary for their social order; rather, they are ultimately dependent on the Tausug for certain material goods as well as protection, at least in those areas where Tausug are numerically dominant.

At present, this “outcast view” toward the Sama Dilaut in Sulu is changing as there is now an increasing awareness of the Sama Dilaut communities of their rights, as well as an increasing pool of professionals among the Sama, and an increasing involvement of government, NGOs, and educational institutions on the plight of indigenous peoples like the Sama Dilaut.

### *Research Methodology*

This study focused on the Sama Dilaut community found in Kabuukan Island in Hadji Panglima Tahil municipality, province of Sulu (See maps in appendix). The island is approximately 8.35 miles by pump boat from the capital town of Jolo. Kabuukan Island is an atoll known for its rich marine resources. At the interior of this atoll is a lagoon

where the houses of the Sama are located. The lagoon is also where the residents conduct their shallow water fishing activities, aquatic foraging, and seaweed farming.

There are two communities or ethnic groups in Kabuukan Island—the Tausug community of Kabuukan Lupah, which is found on the land part of the island, and the Sama Dilaut community of Kabuukan Laud which are congeries of stilt houses situated on the submerged part of the island. Both communities are located only a stone's throw away from each other. The Sama community of Kabuukan Laud has a population of 697 people and consists approximately of 136 households.

At the community level, the key informants for the study included the village leaders and elders, community workers, government officials, and other members of village familiar with the community under study. At the level of the household, the key informants were from two groups: seaweed farming households and non-seaweed farming households. The informants from these two groups included household heads and household members pertinent to the data needed. The major data-collection techniques used in this study involved mapping, semi-structured interviews, focused-group discussions, and observations (both direct and participatory).

The mapping techniques were used to get an overview of Sama territory and resource use. At the level of the community, resource-mapping was employed to establish the extent of Kabuukan Laud's territorial boundaries and its resources as perceived by the Sama. It was used to discover how the community maintains their territorial boundaries and use the resources within it. The activity also helped in the selection of households for the case study, as it intended to distinguish between seaweed farming and non-seaweed farming households. The community resource-mapping activity was done with the help of several village representatives who were familiar with the territory. In addition, mapping was used at the level of the household to delimit the households' territories and its available resources, and also to determine the pattern of resource use. This was done with the participation of the household heads and with other household members. Maps from the Community Extension Service of Notre Dame and the Department of Agriculture were used along with direct observation to complement the information from community-made maps.

Semi-structured interviews and focused-group discussions were used mostly at the level of the household to gather data about family and kinship patterns, household activities and strategies, patterns of resource use, and their beliefs and practices pertaining to their environment and livelihood activities. It was first necessary to uncover some indicators of poverty or wealth from the people's viewpoint. These indicators were used in refining the semi-structured interviews. Seasonal activities calendars and labor schedules were the additional tools utilized in gathering data on household production activities.

### *Changes in household strategies and gender roles*

The Sama household is in a constant state of flux, as it shifts, rearranges, and adapts itself to the changes in their external environment and to the conditions within their households for the survival of its members. This is observed in the different livelihood patterns utilized by the household cases: (1) foraging; (2) fishing and foraging; (3) foraging, fishing and others; (4) foraging, fishing, and seaweed farming; (5) foraging, fishing, seaweed farming, and others; and (6) fishing, seaweed farming, and others. It is by no means that a Sama household permanently stick to one livelihood pattern. As the specific cases illustrate, shifting between different livelihood patterns frequently occurs, depending on the perceived needs of the households at a particular time, the availability of resources, and environmental conditions.

A focal point in these shifts, and one of the main concerns of this study, is the transition toward seaweed farming. Like any other production activity, the decision to adopt or not to adopt seaweed farming as a livelihood activity was influenced by forces external and internal to the Sama households. This agrees with several studies on family adaptive strategies. Peggy F. Barlett (1980) for instance, in her observations of the different studies on adaptive strategies, noted that factors affecting agricultural strategies usually include the natural environment, as well as the social, political, and economic environments. She further added that strategies are also influenced by the cycles and needs of the family itself (1980:558-559).

In the case of the Sama households, their decision to engage in seaweed farming seemed to depend on external factors like favorable market prices, suitable seaweed farming areas, and relatively stable peace and order situations. Their decisions also depended on factors internal to the households like the amount of available capital, available household labor and sea space, particular household needs, as well as the life cycles of the women in these households.

Women and the work they perform play a vital role in the survival of the Sama household. While it is the males who conduct fishing activities, the products of which cater mainly to the market economy, it is primarily the women who provide immediate nourishment for the family through aquatic foraging. Though when the men are not fishing, they may also accompany the women on their foraging activities. The versatility of women's foraging is illustrated at times when the men do not have enough capital for their fishing operations. During this period, the men largely depend upon the foraging activities of women, whose products can also be sold to provide capital for the fishing trips.

In most of the families studied, both men and women play an active role in deciding whether to become involved in seaweed farming or not. The participation of both men and women in decision-making is necessary to assess the available capital and labor within the family, and to make the necessary adjustments for the endeavor.

For the Sama families that have decided to engage in seaweed farming, their adoption of the activity has resulted to several changes in their households. First, some changes have occurred in the households' gender division of labor. In some household cases, the

adoption of seaweed farming has gradually resulted to the decreasing importance of foraging activities for the women in these households. In the past, the women's foraging activities played an important role in the survival of their households. As seaweed farming gained more importance as a source of income for their households, women became more involved in the activity until eventually some of them abandoned the less productive activity of foraging.

There are exceptions however. As other seaweed farming households illustrate, the absence of foraging in the daily activities of the women does not necessarily mean that they phased out these activities, but rather, they stopped foraging for various reasons, or did not engage in the activity ever since.

In general, there seems to be no significant change in the gender relations among the households studied. In both seaweed farming and non-seaweed farming households, the division of work is still very much the same as documented by the earlier studies of Nimmo and Teo (see Nimmo 1965:428; 1990:8; 2001:106, 113; Teo 1989:56). The only difference from the past division of work is the new kind of production activity performed by both men and women which is seaweed farming. In the area of decision-making, whether the family is seaweed farming or not, both the husband and the wife still very much consult (*isun*) each other specially if it involves very important purchases or investments. As the cases demonstrate, women whether from seaweed farming or non-seaweed farming households still have a say on family expenses and on important investments like the education of their children.

In addition, while women from seaweed farming households clearly have more personal needs that were met because of the added income from seaweed farming, there were no notable differences among women in the way they view themselves and the work they perform, whether they belong to seaweed farming or non-seaweed farming households. This can be attributed to the nature of seaweed farming work, which is not gender-specific, and is quite compatible with women's existing household activities. In seaweed farming, both men and women have a chance to contribute to the household income. In the case of foraging families who are not seaweed farming, aquatic foraging, which is primarily considered woman's work, is highly regarded as it contributes both to the immediate nourishment of the family and the family income. Knowledge of foraging and the versatile nature of foraging are valued by the family. This essentially translates to self-esteem for the women who are the ones mainly involved in the activity.

Second, the adoption of seaweed farming among Sama households has produced changes in the reciprocal nature of labor relations within Sama communities. This can be observed on certain occasions wherein members of non-seaweed farming Sama households would work for seaweed farming households in exchange for wages.

The emergence of seaweed farms has also given rise to what

seems to be a landlord-tenant relationship among the Sama of Kabuukan. It was revealed in this study how the heads of seaweed farming associations, or those who can afford to acquire huge farming areas, apportion seaweed farming space for the poorer Sama families to tend, on the condition that the seaweeds would exclusively be sold to the heads. The tenant farmers in turn are very much dependent on big time owners to secure for them the rapidly decreasing farmable areas in the island. At the same time, the tenant status of the farmers assures them of protection of their farms against the encroachment of outsiders especially the Tausug. This emergence of wage labor in seaweed farming and tenancy related to sea space has never been documented before among the Sama Dilaut.

*Sea tenure, technology and changing sociocultural orientations*

Sather in his study of the Bajau Laut of Semporna mentioned that the Bajau consider the sea or the fishing grounds they exploit as “unowned resource.” (1997:234-235). Contrary to this assumption, this study argues that the Sama Dilaut, like any other traditional fishermen, form territories at sea, and have a concept of ownership and rights with regards to fishing grounds. This is already substantiated by several studies dealing with sea tenure and traditional sea territories (See Acheson 1972; Alexander 1977; Cordell 1989; Nietschmann in Cordell 1989; Saragpunta-PAFID 1998). In this study the researcher has shown that Kabuukan island and its surrounding waters is ancestral home and traditional mooring site of the Sama Dilaut. This is proven in the Sama’s familiarity and sustained relationship with their territory, as well as the presence of indigenous institutions which regulated the access and use of these sea spaces.

The concept of forming territories and ownership however, is not merely confined to the economic activities of the Sama. Territoriality and ownership among the Sama of Kabuukan is also observed in their residential patterns. Among the Sama of Kabuukan, it was documented that a space previously occupied by a Sama household, is still considered the territory of the previous occupant despite the absence of physical structures in the area.

The advent of seaweed farming in Kabuukan, and its adoption by several Sama families have produced changes in the sea tenurial situation in the island (Compare Figures 2 and 3). Previous indigenous institutions that regulated the access and use of sea spaces are rapidly being replaced by new rules and regulations that suit the demands of seaweed farming. These previously existing institutions included customary laws on the inheritance of sea spaces, resource use and access, sanctions for interlopers, and conflict resolution mechanisms.

The high profitability of seaweed farming as a livelihood activity has in turn invited outsiders—mostly Tausug—to settle in Kabuukan to engage in the activity. Since the Tausug is the more dominant ethnic group, their influx into Kabuukan is gradually displacing the Sama from the islands. The exodus of numerous Sama families is happening due to the constant threats, intimidation, and violence they face from the newcomers. The Sama are also forced to transfer to other places

due to the continuing encroachment of seaweed farms on their traditional fishing and foraging grounds. The interlopers meanwhile, put these spaces up for rent, which eventually decreases the sea space available for Sama's livelihood activities.

The researcher would also like to note that this displacement is not only observed in the increasing number of Sama families that have migrated to other places, but is also evident in the changing names of the places in the islands. The *soangs*<sup>3</sup> *Sibayan*, *Tayuman* and *Apply* for instance are new names brought about by the Tausug to areas in Kabuukan which were originally known to the Sama as *soangs M'bob Agta*, *Pawema*, and *Sisalang*.

Aside from the encroachment of outsiders, seaweed farming has also caused problems among the Sama themselves. It is observed by the researcher that a rift has occurred among the Sama most especially between the seaweed farming Sama and the non-seaweed farming Sama families because of conflicting interests in the use of sea space. One can argue that while the added income from seaweed farming may have increased the gap between seaweed farming and non-seaweed farming households in terms of material possessions, the rift however, seems to be more of interpersonal in nature rather than of perceived physical improvements. This rift can be observed in the seaweed farmers' perceptions of non-seaweed farmers as lazy. The gap is also demonstrated in the fact that, on the one hand, seaweed farmers are now constantly suspicious of non-seaweed farmers stealing their plants, and on the other hand, non-seaweed farmers resent the fact that seaweed farms are eating them out of fishing and foraging space. Non-seaweed farmers resent it even more, that they are usually the ones blamed for lost or destroyed plants. This tendency to be accused of stealing has led non-seaweed farmers to be wary of seaweed farmers, which further results to a much wider gap between the two groups.

The changes in labor relations, such as the emergence of tenancy and wage labor in seaweed farming, as well as the changes in the sea tenurial status and interpersonal relationships of the Sama in Kabuukan, all reflect the adjustments of the households and the community to accommodate the new technology of seaweed farming. Seaweed farming like any other technological innovation brings about changes in the sociocultural orientations of people. Several studies lend support to these findings.

For instance during the development of New Rice Technology (NRT), Rigg observed that there were changes in orientation among rural communities, such as the rise of wage labor and the widening inequalities between the rich and poor (Rigg 1994). This accentuation in the differences between the rich and the poor also holds true for the Sama, as the richer seaweed farming households seem to exploit the relatively poorer non-seaweed farming households. Likewise, the changing property relations among the Sama also has its parallels in Alexander's study of fishing communities in Sri Lanka, wherein increasing population and the adoption of better equipment in



beachseining has created new systems of ownership in the communities (1977).

The high profitability of seaweed farming has also changed the Sama's perception of their sea space, as these spaces now have added cash meaning. Because of the possibility of sustained profits from seaweed farming, Sama farmers are now pressured to maintain this livelihood activity resulting in more competition for the resources in Kabuukan particularly in sea space. Changes in perceived needs and aspirations are already evident among the seaweed farmers as they have acquired new tastes and established new standards of living. The study of Barlett and Brown (1985) agrees with this, in the sense that the taste of a better life among the seaweed farming Sama has led to the increase in their perceived needs and eventually the purchase of more goods, which in turn provides the incentive for the Sama to work harder. The case of the Sama Dilaut also parallels with the study of Hefner on the Tengger highlands in East Java, when he observed that the added income from cash crops resulted to increases in consumerism and changes in lifestyle (1990).

### *Conclusions and Implications*

In the past, the Sama Dilaut played an important role in areas of commerce and communications. Their unique marine adaptation allowed them to specialize in activities such as the extraction of marine resources and the distribution of valuable trading commodities. These activities in turn, allowed the Sama Dilaut to form trading networks which was part of a much larger network that linked China, India, the Middle East and the Malay world. These networks, as well as the commodities they supplied were essential to the formation of early maritime states.

At present, as in the past, the networks and outside relations that link the Sama Dilaut with their external environment still very much determine their way of life. However, in this era of increasing commercialization and the globalization of markets, external forces seem to have a much more profound impact on the Sama Dilaut. This is witnessed for instance when the process of colonization and state formation defined and consolidated the boundaries of neighboring nations like the Philippines, Malaysia, and Indonesia, limiting the movements of the Sama Dilaut and affecting their life-sustaining networks. The implications of commercialization and globalization can also be seen in the advances of technology, allowing far-reaching communications, and the intensified extraction of resources. With the development of the motor engine and better fishing equipment for instance, other groups like the land-dwelling Tausug as well as people from Luzon and Visayas now have the augmented capability to also exploit marine resources, shattering the economic niche previously enjoyed by the Sama.

Like other technological innovations brought about by the globalization of demand, seaweed farming technology has forced Sama society to adapt and reconstitute itself. This study described the changes which were documented in the Sama's household strategies, gender relations and sea tenurial status. One of the changes

highlighted is the change in needs and aspirations. This particular finding seems relevant as it has certain implications on Sama Dilaut identity. The researcher argues that the Sama's experience of a better life through seaweed farming may have changed their aspirations in the sense they have become more aware of their right to self-determination. Hence, the researcher cannot but hypothesize that the presence of firearms and the application for seaweed farming licenses among the Sama is an indication of their desire to stay in Kabuukan. Unlike in the past wherein the Sama Dilaut were considered to have no territorial base of their own, the settling down of the Sama and their intention to stay in their areas may tell something about their changing identity and their changing ethnic relations with the Tausug. The researcher further believes that the establishment of seaweed farms among the Sama is also a form of identity renegotiation.

This phenomenon poses a challenge to the Tausug's traditional notions about the Sama. Already, several incidents of violence related to resource competition between the Sama and the Tausug have been documented in Sulu. In October 18, 1997, three Sama--two men and a woman--were hacked to death in full view of the residents of the community in Batu-Batu, Indanan. The motive for the killing allegedly was revenge. The following month, another Sama from Subah Bangas (near Kabuukan) was killed, this time by pirates out to steal the engine from the banca of the fatality. Because of these killings, the Sama Dilaut communities in Batu-Batu and Subah Bangas have abandoned their homes in these areas. For the year of 1998, two incidents of killings were again reported. In January 6, an attack occurred at the sea passage between the municipalities of Jolo and Hadji Panglima Tahil, killing three Bajau and leaving three others wounded. All of them were residents of Subah Bangas. In January 8 of the same year, another attack occurred along the islet of Lahat-Lahat in Kabuukan, killing three Sama--two children and one adult. The three fatalities are members of one of the household cases in this study. Many other deaths due to violence have occurred in the area since then.

Until further studies are conducted in this area, these recent spate of killings may not tell us anything yet about the changing ethnic relationships in Sulu and its connection to spatialities. However, the researcher does not discount the fact that these killings may be related to seaweed farming and the intense competition for decreasing resources. It may also be related to the desire of the Sama to permanently settle down. All of these pose a serious challenge to the dominant Tausug. Hence, it is argued that the Sama as well as the Tausug is now involved in a complex process of identity negotiation and renegotiation, that is articulated in their use of sea space.

Much like the establishment and consolidation of boundaries among nation-states that limited Sama movements and networks, the advent of seaweed farming has also created new boundaries that delineate the traditional sea spaces of the Sama in Kabuukan, further constraining their movements and relationships. The presence of seaweed farms has spawned fear and suspicion. It has also pushed

the non-seaweed farming Sama farther away from their community in utilizing their resources, further exposing them to environmental hazards and dangers like pirates. The increasing population brought about by seaweed farming has further aggravated the condition of the Sama, as well as the entire community in Kabuukan. It is apparent that this increase in population has put a strain on the carrying capacity of the resources in the island. This is proven in the observations of fishermen that there is now lesser fish catch and lesser edibles gathered from the sea as compared in the past. This may be attributed to the diminishing mangroves in Kabuukan which are commonly used for fuel by the residents. The Sama themselves attribute the decreases in resources to the increase in the people who utilize them in the island.

The increase of pollution due to population boom is well documented. While it has been argued by certain studies that seaweed farming technology is environmentally friendly,<sup>4</sup> this study seems to show otherwise. In Kabuukan, the increase in pollution is specifically witnessed when discards of seaweed farming materials like nylon ropes, tie-ties, plastics, styrofoams as well as other non-biodegradable materials are liberally thrown at sea. All of these may have certain implications on the environment.<sup>5</sup> Relying solely on a single type of crop like eucheuma<sup>6</sup>, may itself have adverse effects on the local biodiversity. This possibility was pointed out in the work of Roy Ellen when he mentioned that greater scale and specialization may reduce the diversity of local systems and affect the extent of flexible response. He further explains that:

...entire regions undergoing crop specialization may lead to increasing environmental instability, with the inability of the fewer species that are found there to combat effectively the pressures of natural selection without seriously affecting the balance of the system. It has been suggested that monocrop plots are representative of the most fragile ecosystems of which there is knowledge (Ellen 1982:273).

This imbalance in a system as a result of crop specialization was also cited by Ember and Ember as the possible reason for crop failure since crops may not handle fluctuations in weather, plant diseases, or pests (1993:237). With these in mind, the sustainability of seaweed farming as a livelihood activity is now in question. In the wake of the "ice-ice" disease,<sup>7</sup> which continues to plague the production of seaweeds, it is also possible that the area of Kabuukan may no longer be suitable for seaweed farming in the future as the increasing pollution may change the chemistry of the sea. More studies in this area are needed.

In relation to this, crop specialization which affects the biological diversity in Kabuukan may in turn have implications on the cultural diversity of the area, as there is an essential connection between the two (See Bennagen in Bennagen and Lucas-Fernan 1996:2). The place names, myths, and legends that are part of the Sama's collective memory as well the customary laws and rituals which ensured their sustained relationship with their environment are anchored on their sea territories. The entry of seaweed farming and

the resulting changes in the landscape upon which the cultural identity of the Sama is based, may have initiated a process of deculturation among the Sama. Hence, further investigation in the area of deculturation is also recommended on Sama society.

Finally, the question of where to draw the line in defining territories is often the main source of conflict between the government, private and corporate institutions on the one hand, and the indigenous cultural communities of our country on the other. This problem reflects the government's attitude towards indigenous peoples. How far can the government interfere with pre-existing indigenous institutions? By whose or what authority do corporations or private individuals exploit resources—resources upon which the lives of indigenous peoples depend? How do we reach a compromise in weighing the needs of the dominant groups against the needs of indigenous peoples?

While the government and the indigenous peoples have made some headway to a compromise with the signing of the Indigenous People's Rights Act of 1997 (IPRA), the proper implementation of this law still needs to be seen. The case of the awarding of the CADC (Certificate of Ancestral Domain Claim) to the Tagbanwa in recognition of their ancestral waters is an example that can be replicated for the Sama Dilaut. However, before this can happen more action research is needed not only on how the Sama can effectively engage the state, but also on how they can face their day to day problems.

The influx of the Sama Dilaut to the cities to engage in begging tells us that there is something happening in their places of origin. While seaweed farming has produced impressive changes in the living conditions of the Sama, it has also effected some negative changes within their families and their community in general. Shifts in resources were observed as well as the rise of seaweed farming-related wage labor and tenancy. These changes are further reflected at the level of the community, wherein the Sama's changing concept of sea space has increased the competition for resources, which in turn has resulted not only to changes in their sea tenurial status, but also to changes in their interpersonal relationships and identity. The exodus of the Sama from Kabuukan in search of better opportunities is an indication that not all of them are happy with the changes that seaweed farming has brought into their lives. Their constant search for sea space underscores the importance not only of fishing and foraging for most of them, but more importantly, their movements highlight the Sama's need to adapt or else be destroyed by the changes around them.

### *Endnotes*

1 See Pallesen 1985, Warren 1985, and Scott 1994.

2 The term *Bangsa* means "people, race, or nation."

3 A *soang* is a river, a passageway, or an underwater channel. Soangs play an important part in the economic life of the Sama as this is one of the places where they can fish, forage, and farm seaweeds. It is also where their bancas usually pass to get to their destination.

4 See the article of Gavino C. Trono in the Philippine Geographical Journal, vol. 32 no. 1, 1990.

5 This highly corroborates the study of Chua when he raised the possibility that the increase in seaweed farming activities could also increase pollution levels (1996:2-3).

6 This is the species of seaweed cultivated extensively in southern Philippines.

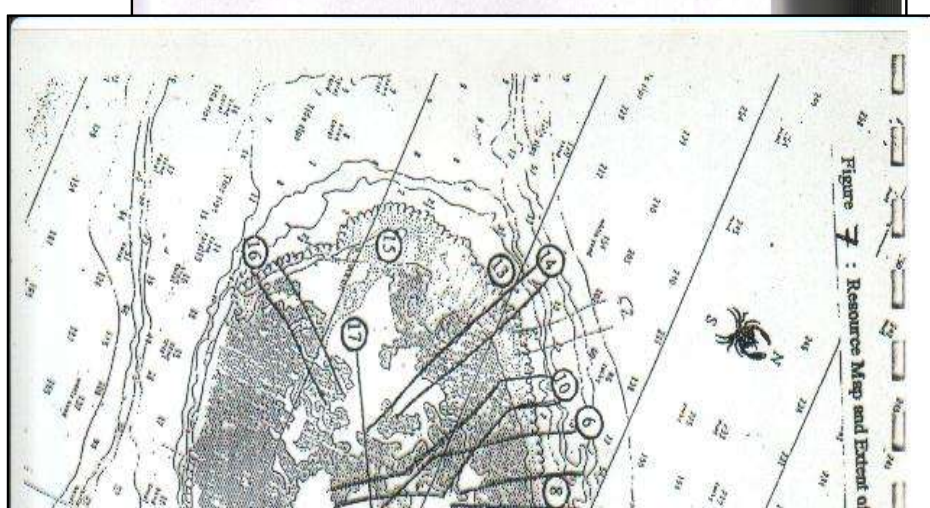
7 A local term to describe the disease that afflicts seaweeds. Seaweeds afflicted by *ice-ice* disease turn white and brittle.

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FIGURE 2  
LOCATION OF SULU IN THE PHILIPPINES



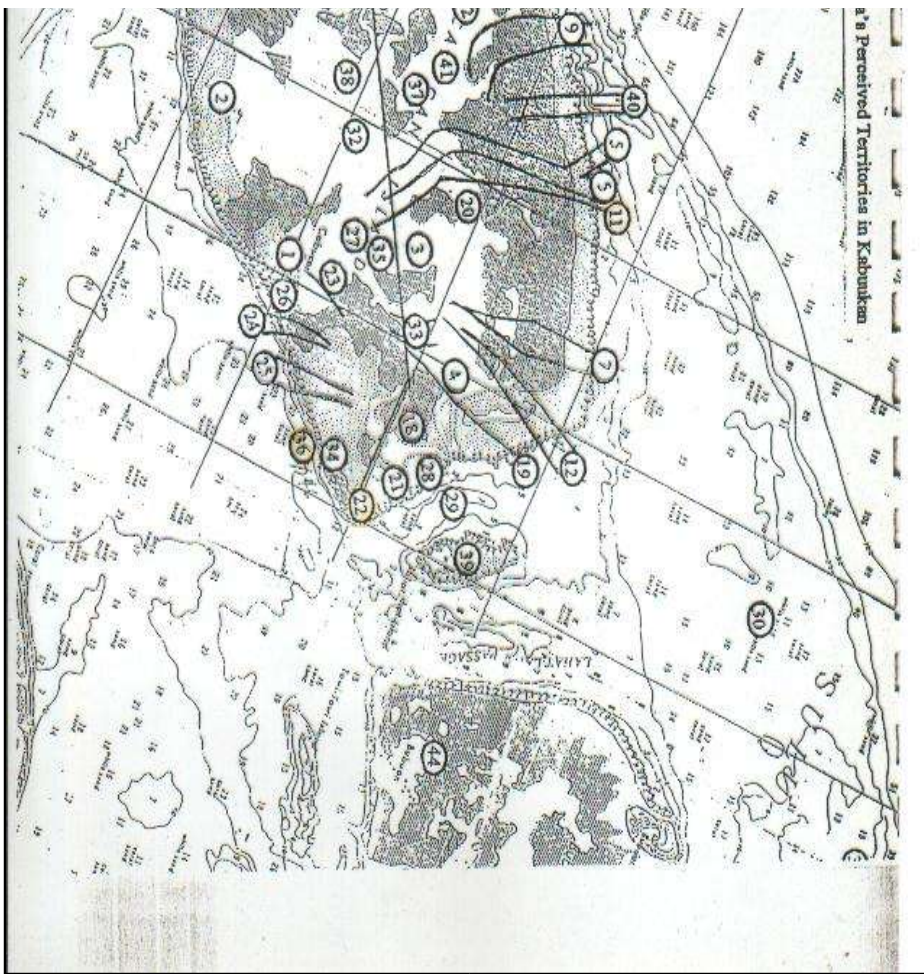
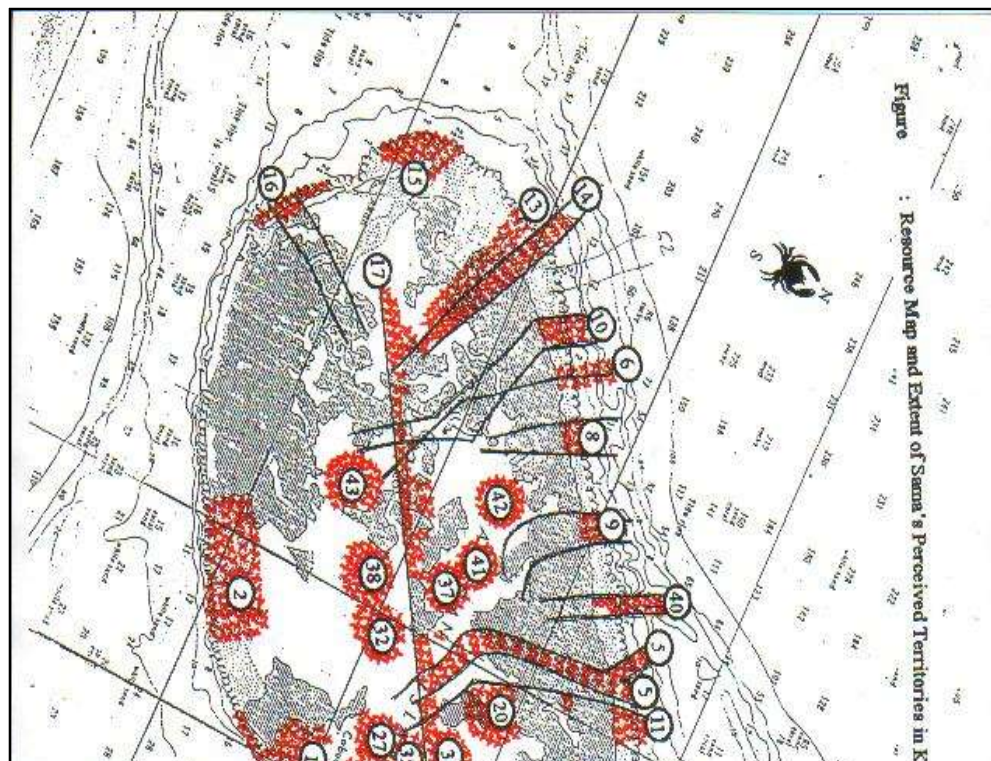
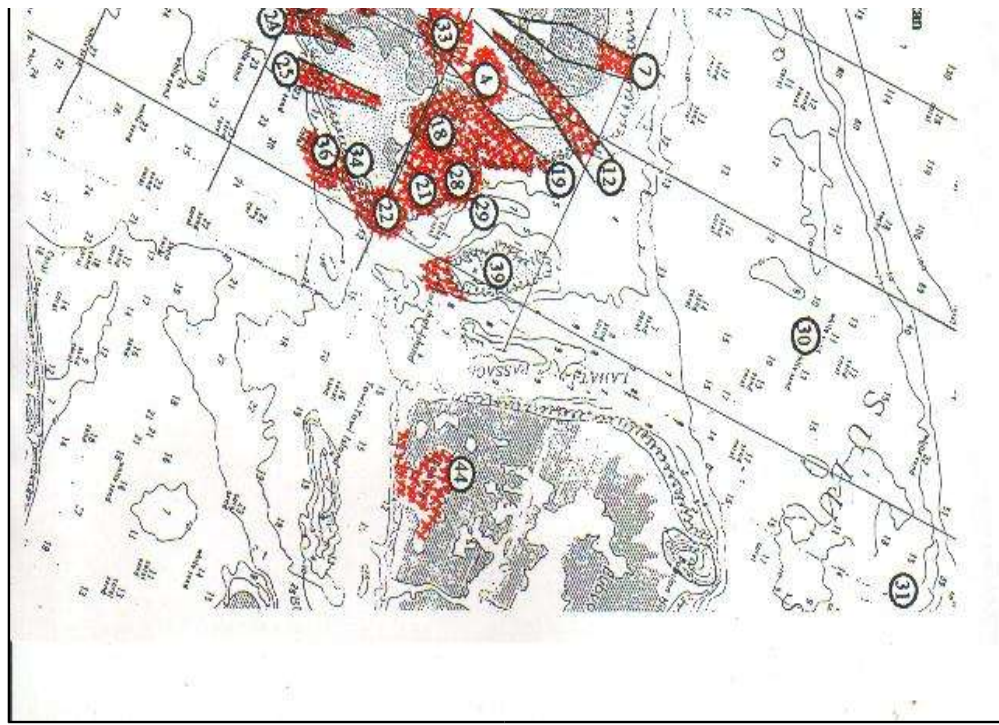


Figure 2. RESOURCE MAP OF KABUUKAN ISLAND.  
(The numbers correspond to place names of major areas utilized by the Sama.)







*Figure 3.* MAP SHOWING THE LOCATION OF SEAWEED FARMS IN KABUUKAN ISLAND. (xxx – seaweed farms)