

Impact of Weather Calamities to (Semi)sedentary Indigenous Communities in the Philippines

Gretchen L. Gonzaga, Center for Development Research, University of Bonn

INTRODUCTION

- Climate change affects Indigenous peoples by disrupting their traditional knowledge systems anchored on ecological connections and ties to their ancestral domain (Nurse-Bray et al., 2022).
- In the Philippines, the Sama Badjao Indigenous peoples who are former boat-dweller followed (semi)sedentary lifestyle since the late 1960s. Their restriction of mobility within the waters of Southeast Asia due to maritime boundary and sedentarization, denotes lesser capacity for them to adapt and absorb climate shocks (Stacey et al., 2018)
- Taking the case of Super-Typhoon Rai (category-five typhoon) which hit on December 16, 2021, it brought massive destruction (€200 million economic losses) to the central and southern Philippines.
- This study investigates how Sama Badjao experienced disasters and recovery efforts after a typhoon calamity.



Figure a. Off to the neighboring island to attend a wedding celebration; Figure b. Shelter reconstruction of Sama stilt houses; Figure c. Children loading the fishing gears.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Institutional discrimination: norms, rules, regulations, procedures plus defined positions that determine access to resources, fate control (Burns, 2008)
- Cultural discrimination: widely shared system of categorization, stereotypes, and social paradigms that distinguishes “Us” (in-group) and “Other” (out-group) (Burns, 2008)
- Othering: process of applying a principle that allows individuals to be classified into two hierarchical groups (“Us” and “Other”) (Staszak, 2008).

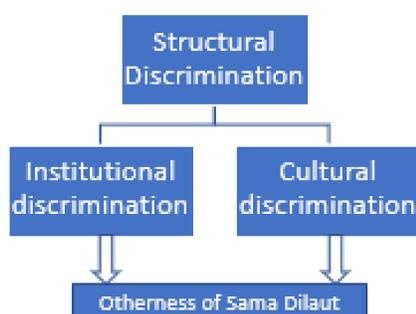


Figure d. Conceptual framework of the othering of the Sama Badjao community

MATERIALS AND METHODS



Figure e. In-depth interview of one of the Sama Badjao participants

- Research site: Bato, Leyte, Philippines
- Ethnographic approach
- Participant observation from December 2021-September 2022
- 31 in-depth interviews of Sama Badjao who lost their homes, 3 Focus Group Discussions
- Document analysis
- Thematic analysis using Atlas.ti

Results

Non-inclusive policies

1. Non-inclusive DRRM program

- Exclusion for the shelter reconstruction materials subsidy
- Bureaucratic processes for cash assistance payout
- Development phase of the Badjaos is complicated by the imperialist projects implemented by the collective intellectuals (Spivak, 1988)

2. Lack of agency for social articulation

- Lack a political voice in the majoritarian decisions (Macalandag, 2021)
- Integration of the community to the local government weakens the *Panlima* (Chieftains)
- Absence of political unity among Sama Badjaos

Cross-cultural conflict

1. Semi-sedentary lifestyle

- During typhoons and severe weather disturbances where income from fishing is low, everything are affected e.g., small-scale livelihood, education, and nutrition of the entire community
- *Magosaha* (lifetime of travel in search of livelihood within the sea) extends now to more land-based sustenance: jewelry vending, gadget buy and sell, and mendicancy
- Authorities have difficulties in tracking the Badjao residents for financial aids distribution because of their mobility



Figure f. A Badjao who decided not to rebuild her home for she could not afford it; Figure g. Some jewelries they sell in the streets and door-to-door; Figure h. Mother and son segregating what the father has caught at that day depending on the type marine species.

“I don't have money. My husband is long dead, so no one is supporting me. I can't afford to loan money since I don't have a job.”
-69 yrs old, widow with a grandson living with her

CONCLUSION

- Structural discrimination made it hard for Sama Badjao to demand or access whatever means of resources so they can bounce back from climate-related disaster.
- Policymakers and development practitioners should acknowledge Sama Badjao's right to self-determination by giving them a platform for social articulation.

References

- Burns, T. R. (2008). Towards a Theory of Structural Discrimination: Cultural, Institutional and Interactional Mechanisms of the 'European Dilemma.' In G. Delanty, R. Wodak, & P. Jones (Eds.), *Identity, Belonging and Migration* (pp. 152–172). Liverpool University Press.
- Macalandag, R. (2021). *Recognition and the Mobile Indigene: Periphery and Possibility The Badjao of the Philippines* [Doctoral dissertation, The Australian National University]. <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/232611>
- Nurse-Bray, M., Palmer, R., Chischilly, A. M., Rist, P., & Yin, L. (2022). Old Ways for New Days: Indigenous Survival and Agency in Climate Changed Times. Springer International Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-97826-6>
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In P. Williams & L. Chrisman (Eds.), *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory: A reader*. Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Stacey, N., Steenbergen, D. J., Clifton, J., & Acciaiolli, G. (2018). Understanding Social Wellbeing and Values of Small-Scale Fisheries amongst the Sama-Bajau of Archipelagic Southeast Asia. Springer International Publishing.
- Staszak, J.-F. (2008). Other/Otherness. In *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*. Elsevier. <https://www.unige.ch/sciences-societe/geo/files/3214/4464/7634/OtherOtherness.pdf>

Contact details:

Gretchen Gonzaga
Genscherallee 3, 53113 Bonn
ggonzaga@uni-bonn.de