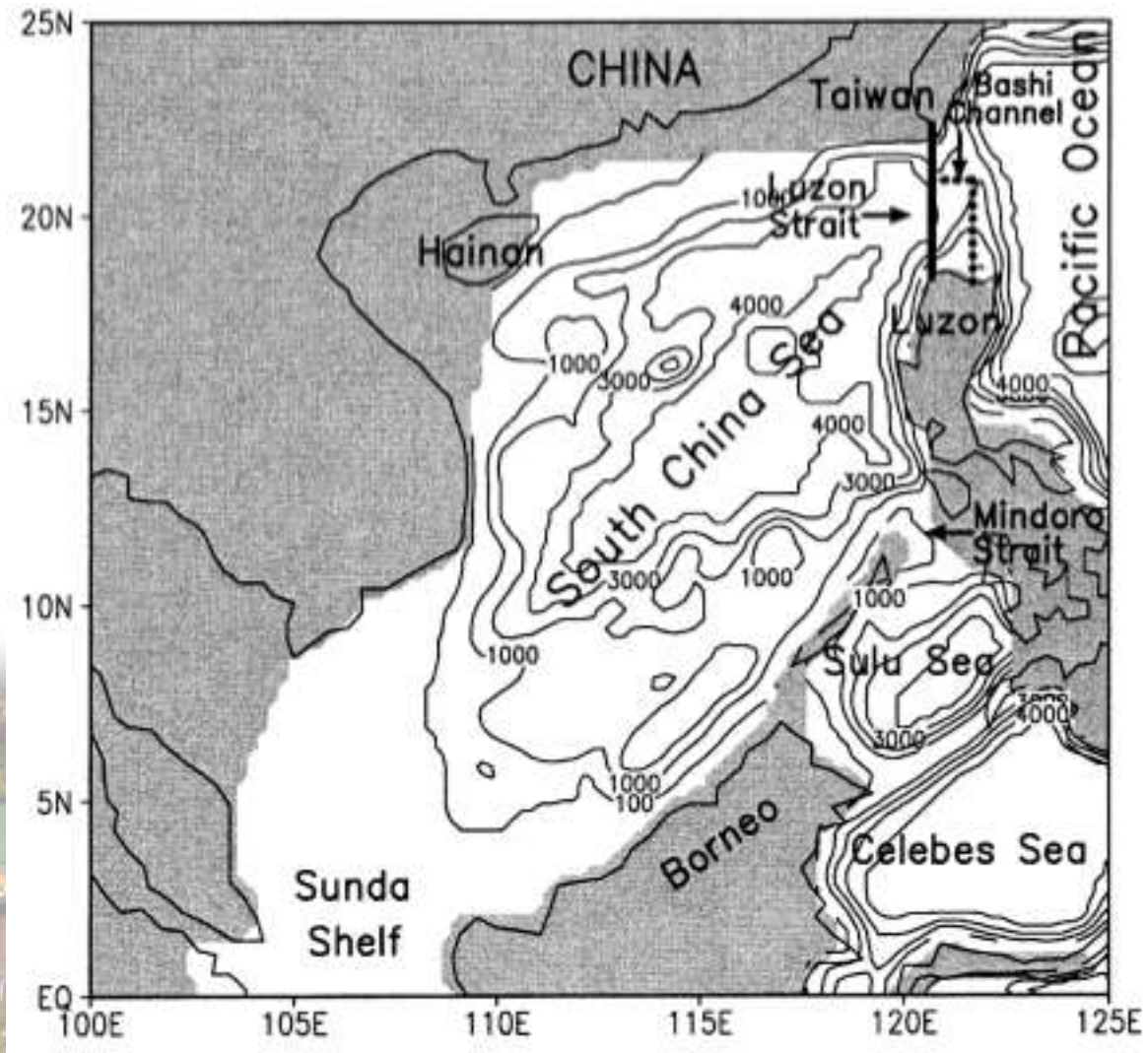


Setting a Socio-cultural Research Agenda for Philippine Marginal Seas

Michael L. Tan
University of the Philippines
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To this. . .



Introduction

Focus will be on the Sulu Sea, West Philippine Sea (South China Sea) and the Luzon Strait. The Philippine Sea, to the east of the Philippines and including Marianas and Carolina islands, will not be discussed. Note though the importance of Benham Rise, 13 million hectares of maritime territory off the coasts of Aurora and Isabela with rich mineral and gas deposits.

Shaped by our marginal seas. . .

“A powerful catalyst was the dynamism of sea routes, those opened by the Austronesians in about 2000 BC. . . In the 10th century or thereabouts, routes acquired through ocean-going voyages mapped out a trading economy in the China Sea, the Sulu Sea and Celebes Sea, which put the Philippines at the heart of a commercial network where Arab, Indian, Indonesian and Chinese merchants traded raw materials and manufactured products.” (Monbrison and Alvina 2013:14)

Sulu Sea

- Separated from the South China Sea in the northwest by Palawan and from the Celebes Sea in the southeast by the Sulu Archipelago (Sulu and Tawi-tawi provinces). Includes Cuyo Islands and Cagayan Sulu (Palawan), Mapun and Turtle Islands (Tawi-tawi). Tubbataha Reef National Marine Park (a World Heritage Site).

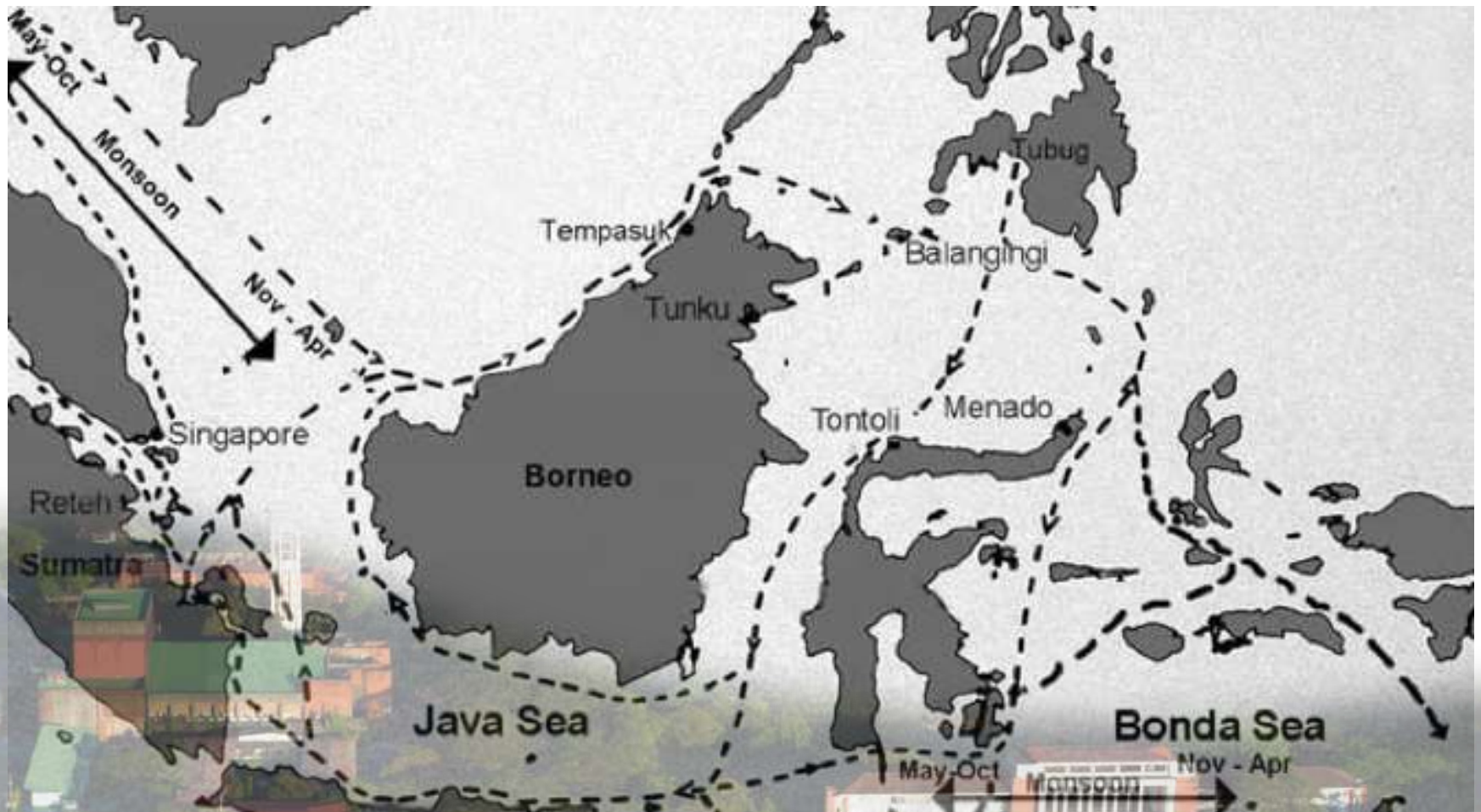


Sulu Sea

- By the end of the 18th century a “Sulu Zone” had become an important economic zone, with “an ethnically heterogeneous set of societies of diverse political backgrounds and alignments. . . These diverse ethnic groups could be set within a strategic hierarchy of kinship-orientated stateless societies: maritime, nomadic fishers and forest dwellers. (Warren 2010).



Balangingi Samal



Sulu Sea barter trade: from batik. .

- In 1973, PD 93 established a barter trade zone, allowing traders from the Sulu Archipelago, Balabac Islands, and Zamboanga del Sur to “barter” with neighboring islands and sell imported items within the region without tariff duties. This was phased out in 1990 under President Ramos.



Sulu Sea and the stateless

- In the early 1970s the civil strife in Sulu led to many Muslims fleeing to Sabah, with their population reaching more than 100,000. Many stayed on, stateless, with the Malaysian government cracking down sporadically. In 2013 armed skirmishes occurred over the Sulu Sultan claims, leading to an exodus out of Sabah. There are still an estimated 80,000 refugees.

Barter trade revival

- Mla Bulletin 12/10/16: SANDAKAN, Sabah, Malaysia - The business council of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) and its Chinese-dominated counterpart here forged Wednesday night a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to form a commercial partnership that encourages among others the revival of the decades-old barter trade between the two communities.



Barter trade: a postscript

- From batik to skin whiteners; from ports to the Internet, the barter trade in the Sulu Sea is an example of entrepreneurial networks facilitated by, and shaped by a marginal sea, even as the “traders” are now moving into the Internet.



West Philippine Sea (South China Sea)

- 3.5 million square kilometers stretching from Singapore and Malacca Straits to the Strait of Taiwan. West of Palawan. Area of territorial dispute with rich natural resources, including oil and gas deposits.



Major trading route(s)



Dangerous Ground



A Game of Shark and Minnow (New York Times)

- <http://www.nytimes.com/newsgraphics/2013/10/27/south-china-sea/>



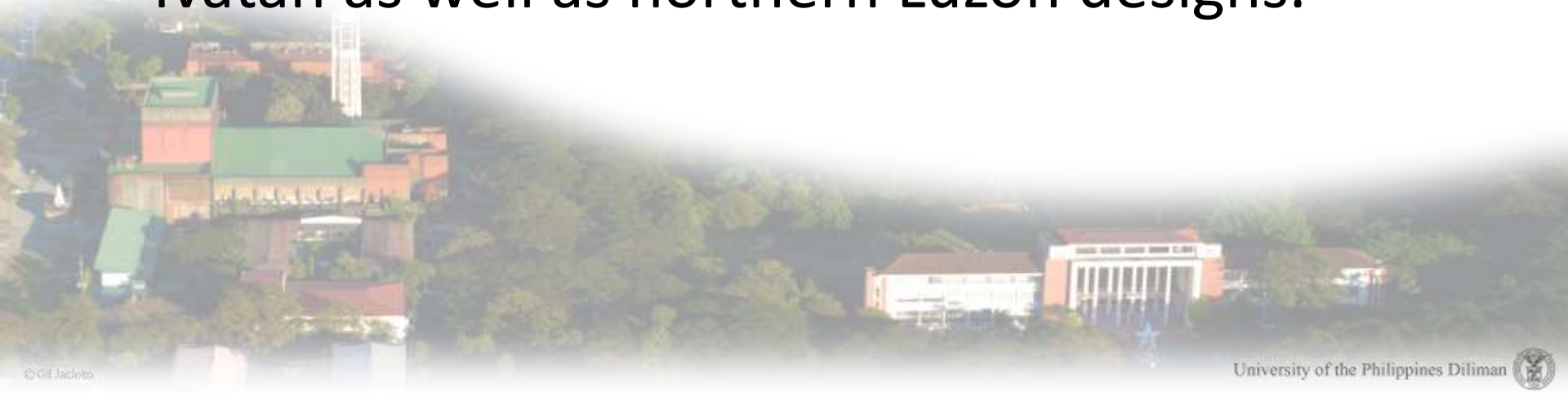
Luzon Strait

- Connects the Philippine Sea to the West Philippine Sea, about 250 km wide, includes the Babuyan Islands and Batanes. Separates the Philippines and Taiwan. Rich in marine resources, and Camiguin Island (Babuyan Islands) is a transient area for humpback whales.



Luzon Strait

- Important in human migration from Taiwan into the Philippines. Ivatan (Batanes) well developed maritime culture. Fuga Moro (Babuyan Islands) archaeology yielded numerous artifacts showing a mixture of Ivatan as well as northern Luzon designs.



Luzon Strait

- Babuyan Islands was part of the Japanese invasion route into the Philippines in December 1941.
- Today, the area is being developed for tourism, with unclear consequences for the communities. There is also black sand mining in Camiguin island, with questions about impact on the humpback whales.



Conclusions

- Marginal seas are important in terms of:
 - Natural resources
 - Migration (humans as well as non-humans)
 - Trade
 - Cultural exchange
 - Geopolitics



Conclusions

- Marginal seas research can be useful for our understanding of:
 - Natural phenomena, especially around the earth and life sciences, and disaster management;
 - Social phenomena, particularly adaptations to the environment;
 - Reconstruction of our history, especially for pre-colonial and early colonial eras.



Recommendations

- 1. Expand our understanding of the past in the marginal seas areas through archaeology and history;
- 2. Research into current state of human communities, particularly indigenous knowledge around natural resource management, climate, economic subsistence, maritime skills.



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