Shared Space, Conflicting Perceptions, and the Degradation of an Indonesian Fishery

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Abstract This article takes as its subject the degradation, through blast and cyanide fishing, of one of the world's largest and most species diverse coral reefs. Drawing attention to the role of culturally founded spatial models in orienting local perceptions and practices, it provides a case study of how such degradation can proceed unchecked when the social meanings inscribed upon a seascape by those who rely upon it as an economic resource find themselves at the intersection of conflicting cultural models of natural spaces. It is based upon ethnographic fieldwork carried out for over two decades on the small Indonesian island of Balobaloang. Relying upon indigenous cognitive models of both the fishery itself and apposite features of the social structure, including reciprocity and hierarchy, this article demonstrates how, even as they engage with the forces of global capital and universalist models of development, individual actors may continue to privilege social relationships over economic considerations and reciprocity over individual interests. [Shared Space, Conflicting Perceptions, and the Degradation of an Indonesian Fishery]

Introduction

As Raymond Firth (1975) learned over 60 years ago in a Malaysian fishing village, economic relationships are often deeply embedded in social networks. While much has changed in the lives of small-scale fishing communities in Island Southeast Asia and elsewhere, this article demonstrates that individual actors may continue to privilege social relationships over economic considerations and reciprocity over individual interest. Taking as its subject the degradation, through blast and cyanide fishing, of one of the world's largest and most species-diverse coral reefs, it provides a case study of how a seascape becomes inscribed with social meanings when those who rely upon it as an economic resource find themselves at the intersection of colliding cultural models.

This article is based upon over two decades of fieldwork on Greater Balobaloang, Indonesia (hereafter referred to simply as Balobaloang).[1] During that time, the reef surrounding Balobaloang experienced rapid growth in the number of outside fishers who were using explosives and cyanide to capture far larger quantities of fish more quickly than was possible using traditional fishing methods. As a result, local fishers had to travel increasing distances at greater expense to catch fewer fish, and villagers complained that they were not getting enough fish—their protein staple—to eat.

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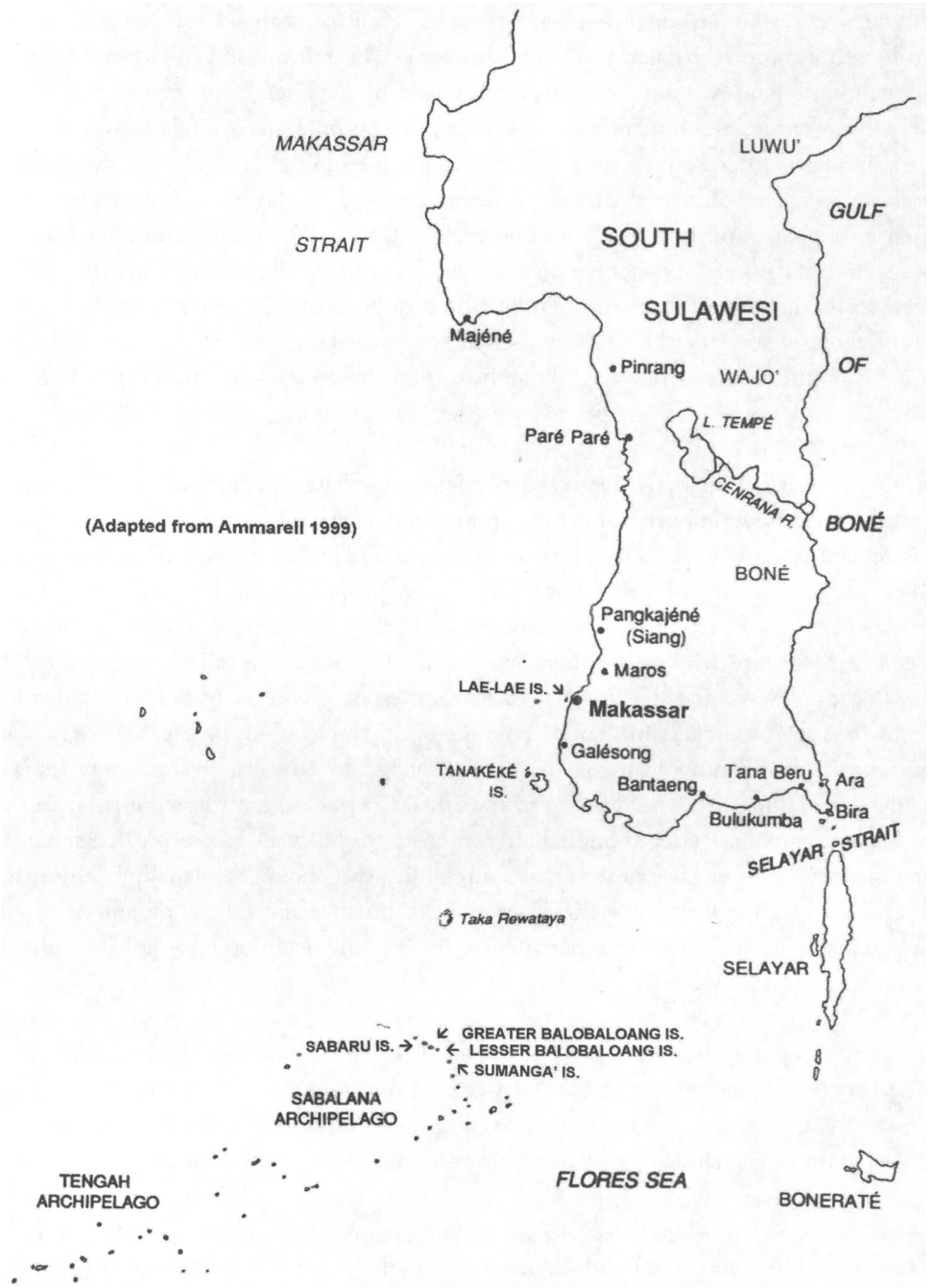
This article describes artisanal reef fishing—carried out for both subsistence and to sell to neighbors and commercial markets. Reef fish are taken both from land and from small boats, using hand lines and two types of nets: circular casting nets (*jala*) and drag/encircling nets (*puka'*). In recent years, blast and poison fishing have become increasingly common. While the traditional methods are considered by local marine biologists to be less intensive, less stressful on the fish population, and sustainable over time, the latter methods are extremely intensive, stressful, and, ultimately nonsustainable. Since 1990, blast fishing has become a major source of income for fisher families on nearby islands, with captured fish dried and sold in markets in Makassar. These same families also host fleets of cyanide fishers from Makassar who are, themselves, enmeshed in patron-client (*pongawa-sawi*) systems that illegally provide live fish for international markets. Together, these practices have caused major habitat destruction and loss of breeding populations, seriously crippling the entire fishery.

Early in my fieldwork in South Sulawesi, I asked my Bugis language teacher about an apparent contradiction in Bugis culture: while the importance of social location and deference to those of higher status was obvious both on ritual occasions and in day-to-day interactions, people crushed together into public transport vehicles and pushed ahead of one another in lines at banks, post offices, and movie theaters. How, I asked, could people on some occasions show such deference while, on others, pay them no courtesy at all? He explained that social "location" was, indeed, extremely important, especially in contexts where individuals were in or hoped to enter into social relationships, while purely physical space was less important. This did not mean that it was acceptable to attack a stranger physically or verbally—something that would be seen as an affront to one's dignity as a human being and would require a concerted and immediate response. It did mean, however, that in certain contexts, Bugis did not take close physical proximity or contact "personally." This article is an attempt to understand how Bugis actors conceptualize social location and how those conceptualizations inform actions that affect their lives and livelihoods in the physical space of the reef.

Having pondered this distinction between "place" and "space" and the importance of "place" in Bugis society, I turn to Bradd Shore's work on multiple cultural/cognitive models—in this case models of space—in an attempt to comprehend the problem of destructive fishing practices in the Sabalanas. In particular, I am responding to Shore's question:

> How do we understand the coexistence of multiple models for the same domain of experience? In some cases, multiple models define alternate perspectives on experience. In other cases, they set the stage for conflicted perception and profound ambivalence . . . [raising] the fundamental question of the limits of cultural models in accounting for human experience. (1996:12)

Through engagement with the encoding of space in language, questions of embodiment of cognition, and the political realization of spatiality, I attempt to address the following questions: How do local models of space inform day-to-day negotiations and decisions regarding the problem of destructive fishing practices? How do these models conflict with



Map 1. South Sulawesi and Sabalana Archipelago (Shared Space).

those of "modernization" and the "engaged" researchers who take modernization for granted but whose aim is to empower those negatively impacted by these practices? What might this teach us about such engagement, especially for anthropologists working in participatory projects devoted to sustainable livelihoods and environmental justice?

Here I will focus on two cognitive models of space, one "local" and the other "global," and the friction[2] that they generate as they interact with one another. The local "Bugis" model, I will show, takes space to be an unbounded and fluid field of physical and social relationships, while the global or "modernist" model sees space as abstract and bounded, often dissociating the physical from the social. In particular, I will describe a highly developed system of spatialized physical and social relationships in the contested domain of artisanal fishing. Among the Bugis of Balobaloang, there exists an elaborate culturally constructed system of mapping both the social and the marine environment,[3] wherein the fishery and even the island itself can best be described as "open access" with no history of "ownership" of land or sea. One consequence has been ambivalence about attempts to regulate destructive fishing practices. I will suggest that the fishery is transitioning from open access to a commonly managed resource and that this transition is locally emblematic of Indonesia's move toward democracy and increased integration into the global capitalist economy. Underlying all of this, I will show how multiple cognitive models, both local and global, impact concrete social action in this locally important domain of activity.

Historical Factors

Blast fishing in Southeast Asia seems to have been introduced by Europeans during the colonial period, primarily as an expedient way to harvest fish for their own consumption. While no one on Balobaloang can say when it was first practiced locally, individuals admit to having occasionally utilized explosives to harvest large quantities of fish for weddings and other rituals. Meanwhile, reliance on these destructive technologies for commercial fishing has been adopted by residents of other islands in the atoll, chief among them the nearby island of Sumanga', one of five islands that, along with Greater Balobaloang, comprise the Village or "Desa" of Balobaloang.

These islands were settled in the late 19th century from mainland South Sulawesi. The Bugis of Balobaloang and the Makassar of nearby Sumanga' have developed close social and economic ties. The people of Balobaloang have relied on interisland shipping and trade, while those of Sumanga' have thrived as commercial fishers, providing fresh fish to residents of nearby islands and selling fresh and dried fish to traders from the mainland. Therefore, while the most powerful families on Balobaloang have earned their fortunes as ship owners and traders, politics on Sumanga' has been dominated by those who have built fleets of fishing boats and harvested the atoll's formerly vast resources.

In the early 1990s, demands for fish in urban markets increased, providing incentives for commercial fishermen to turn to technologies that would allow them to capture larger quantities of fish with less time and effort. Meanwhile, fishers from the island of Lae Lae, close to the mouth of the main shipping harbor near Makassar, began to use potassium cyanide to drug and capture particularly valuable fish, like grouper, for the live fish trade, supplying an increasing global demand for such fish in upscale urban restaurants. Although their import is prohibited by law in many countries, authorities are frustrated by the fact that the chemical clears the system of a live fish and becomes undetectable in just a few days.

Fishers from Lae Lae have regularly travelled to the Sabalanas in small fleets accompanied by "mother ships" which carry their catch back to the mainland for export, primarily to the large cities of East and Southeast Asia. Although these practices are outlawed, the fleet owners make large cash payments to local government officials and police officers for protection, and the boats from Lae Lae find safe harbor tied along the beaches of Sumanga' Island.

Ties between the villagers and, especially, the more powerful families of Sumanga' and Balobaloang have discouraged major confrontations over blast fishing. Nonetheless, fishermen of Balobaloang and a third nearby island, Sabaru, did, several years ago, capture and burn a fishing boat from Lae Lae after warning the fishermen to discontinue their use of cyanide. In response, the ship burners were arrested, and the *pongawa* (boss) from Lae Lae blockaded trading ships from Balobaloang, many already loaded with consigned cargos, some perishable. Local ship owners were alarmed by this threat and worked to resolve the issue. According to local fishermen, the "boss" of the Lae Lae fleet paid a large sum to government officials, resulting in all charges being dropped, release of those who burned the boat, and unimpeded return of the fleet from Lae Lae to the Sabalanas.

Among those government officials from Balobaloang and Sumanga' who received payments from the bosses was the then-sitting *kepala desa* (village head) who was a direct descendent of the first village head who settled in the late 19th century. Appointed under the Suharto government in the late 1980s, this village head served for about 20 years and was replaced in 2009. This village head was in power during the period of my research and was the subject of numerous conversations among villagers concerning the role that corruption played in preventing any resolution of the problem of destructive fishing. One fisherman contended in a filmed interview that as long as the village officials had "open pockets," the problem would never be resolved; that change could only come if the village head stopped accepting payments from the bosses. For his part, the village head reportedly suggested that even if he had refused the payments, the destructive fishing practices would not cease, as he could not enforce the law by himself. Moreover, he would then have to raise taxes in order to maintain and improve village services and infrastructure.

I will now present an anecdote that led to an exploration of the "awkward engagement" (Tsing 2005) of conflicting cultural models through which villagers (and researchers!) attempted to make sense of this seemingly intractable problem. It will also illustrate how social relationships are simultaneously spatial relationships and how, as Firth (1975) found, individual economic and political considerations often trump the idealized social structure.

A "Participatory" Video Project and the Matter of Harmony

In late 2003, I began to carry out interviews on the island and joined local fishers on their boats to study their indigenous knowledge of the reef and its resources as well as the technologies they have traditionally used to harvest fish and other marine products. In early 2004, I was joined by Amelia Hapsari, a master's candidate at Ohio University and native

of Indonesia, to make a participatory video of island life (Hapsari and Ammarell 2008). Conversations turned to the blast and cyanide fishing that was threatening the villagers' lives and livelihoods.

Social harmony was highly valued in the community, and many people were initially reluctant to speak out in ways that might disrupt that harmony by criticizing other villagers. By the time Hapsari arrived, however, a number of people were ready to speak out on camera.

Hapsari elicited villagers' opinions and involvement in choosing the subject matter of the video. Although she was the filmmaker, they were to be its producers. Soon it became evident that villagers' ideas of documentary film had been shaped by the many they had viewed on their satellite televisions and that they expected to be the subjects of the film, leaving the production process to Hapsari. A number of times during its production, however, Hapsari called meetings to discuss the film and view the footage she had shot. Although she filmed many aspects of island life, from coconut picking and gathering shellfish along the reef to ship building and weddings, a consensus emerged that the video should focus on the problem of destructive fishing practiced by outsiders and the struggle by locals to stop it.

When we called the initial public meeting to decide on the subject of the film, a large cross-section of the population joined the conversation; the village head, however, did not attend. While most agreed that traditional fishing practices would be a good subject for a documentary, some ship owners brought up the problem of destructive fishing and the apparent unwillingness of local authorities to try to stop it. This appears to be the first public meeting in which people openly suggested that bribery and corruption might be part of the problem. This could have been part of a still nascent call for governmental transparency that had spread across Indonesia after the fall of the Suharto government in 1999, ending over three centuries of colonial and postcolonial authoritarianism. Not everyone at the meeting was comfortable with this challenge; some defended the village head, while others called for intervention from higher levels of government.

One of those who felt that the problem could not and, indeed, should not be solved locally came to discuss it with Hapsari and me the day after the meeting. The young man, speaking with marked politeness and calm assertiveness, suggested that we risked disrupting the village's social harmony (*sippada* BUG). He explained that in other such conflicts, local people were able to unite to challenge outside authorities. Here the authorities and even the perpetrators themselves were "insiders," sharing family ties and social networks. Most at risk, he pointed out, were *not* the wealthy, powerful ship owners who spoke out, but the fishers who depended upon them for patronage. He concluded that a "top-down" approach was needed, one authorized by more powerful people from outside the village. In the young man's words:

> Last night the [meeting's] discussion changed direction from traditional fishing practices [the assumed point of the meeting] to illegal practices and corruption. If the conversation isn't guided properly, there can be bad fallout for those who criticize. If the meeting is

> to be about traditional fishing, then only fishermen should attend, and that would be enough for one meeting. Don't use traditional fishing as an excuse to discuss politics with opinion leaders.

The young man was well respected and probably represented the views of many others. He originally thought the video was to be a nonpolitical account of traditional fishing techniques, like the "nature" documentaries villagers enjoyed watching on television. He was uncomfortable at opening the meeting to all ideas that anyone wished to put forth.

At first Hapsari attributed this attitude to a deference to authority that had preceded democratic governance in Indonesia. Later, she came to believe that Bugis villagers were most concerned about upsetting local harmony. They expected her to act as a reporter and take responsibility so locals would not have to speak out and make themselves vulnerable: "Go ahead and make a video, but not with my voice and picture." However, several fishermen did speak about blast and cyanide fishing at that and subsequent meetings. At the first meeting with just fishermen, and after Hapsari had succeeded in securing evidence of blast fishing on film, they seemed more confident. When one of them expressed concern that by speaking out they might lose, another countered that they were "already wet," implying that they could not now turn back. By the end of the meeting, they all agreed to continue the project and to capture their testimony on film.

Thus, although some saw the project as dangerous, village fishers increasingly came on board. While we saw it as a catalyst to get people to speak out, we initially missed what that first young man was trying to say. He thought the video was meant to bring people together. He felt that village life depended on sharing and community, something that became increasingly clear to Hapsari after filming the launch of a large trading ship with only human power, an event that simply could not take place without widespread community participation. Likewise, the patrons/ship owners understood that they needed clients as much as clients needed them. So, many of them did not want to attack others and disrupt social harmony, even though everyone was keenly aware of injustices—like blast and cyanide fishing—occurring in their midst.

In addition to the value Bugis place on social harmony, other factors contributed to this problem. Based upon my own field observations as well as the observations of other scholars who have studied Bugis culture and society, I will now present what I have come to see as a cultural/cognitive model that informs the beliefs, words, and actions of Bugis villagers in this domain of activity

Conceptualizing Space in a Spatialized Society

Residents of Greater Balobaloang appear to have conventionalized multiple systems of spatial orientation and way-finding for life on and off the island (Ammarell 1999). Here I will focus on a concentric model that to a great extent informs the geographical and social lives of the

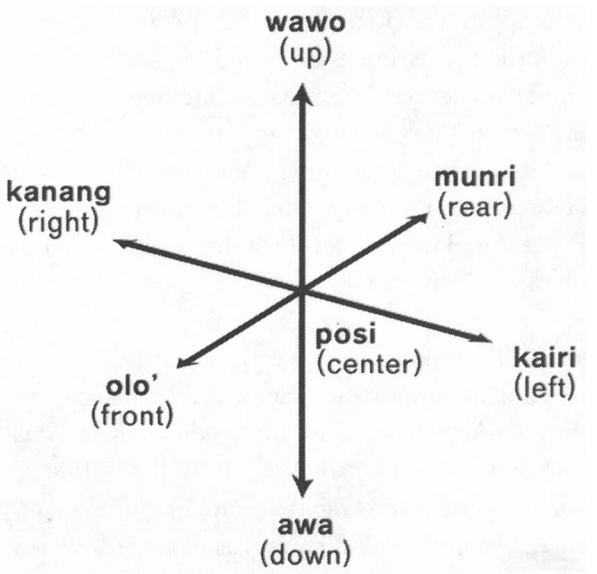


Figure 1. (Directions-3) Seven Dimensions Described by Bugis of Balobaloang.

villagers (cf. Bennardo on radiality and Feinberg on concentric space, both this issue). This model is not unique to the Bugis of Balobaloang, many of its features having been ascribed to other Bugis populations and to historical and contemporary societies across Southeast Asia (see, e.g., Anderson 1972; Heine-Geldern 1942; Moertono 1968; Scott 2009; Tambiah 1976; Thongchai 1984; Tsing 1993; Wolters 1999[1982). Its elucidation, however, helps explain the apparent intractability of the problem of the destruction of the local fishery.

In *Meaning and Power in a Southeast Asian Realm*, Errington explains how, among the Bugis subjects with whom she conducted interviews, "... much of what is socially important in Luwu (her field site) is cast in spatial terms—literal, metaphorical, and linguistic" (1989:65). Just as I found on Balobaloang (Ammarell 1999), space for Errington's respondents was understood as having seven dimensions: up, down, left, right, front, back and center (see Figure 1).

Errington cautions us to not assume that these dimensions can be reduced, as they might be in Western societies, to an abstract three-dimensional "homogenous and empty box"; rather, space is locally understood as "a full center with its visible periphery" (1989:65).[4] This, she explains, is based upon the emphasis on centers and hierarchies in Southeast Asian societies, where rank, and the social order itself, has been defined by "distinctions between people who were 'higher' and 'lower,' and 'near the center' and 'far from the center'" (1989:65).

Center-Periphery

Centers, according to Errington, have been of particular importance among Bugis, as it is at the center or *posi* (more literally 'navel') where *sumange'* (an intangible potency or cosmic life

force) is gathered and concentrated (Errington 1983, 1989). Likewise, it is from the center that *sumange'* radiates outward, its intensity diminishing with distance from the center. Because *sumange'* accumulates at these locations, among Bugis, all "'place' or location, both physically and socially, derive[s] its meaning with respect to an implicit center" (Errington 1989:66). I contend that Bugis have long organized their polities around patrons and rulers whose accumulated inner power or *sumange'* (and, thus, their legitimacy) becomes outwardly evident through their deeds and the sizes of their entourages or numbers of clients (Pelras 1996, 2000).[5]

Residents of Balobaloang, like residents of other Bugis villages I have visited, actively organize their social and cultural lives around such centers. The most commonly cited centers are located in people, ships, houses, villages, and former kingdoms, as well as the cosmos itself (Ammarell 1999; Errington 1979, 1989; Pelly 1977; Pelras 1975, 1996, 2000; Southon 1995). On Balobaloang, it is understood and recognized through the enactment of rituals that this cosmic life force or energy enters the object and attaches to it at its navel at the moment of its "birth" (e.g., the birth of a child, the launch of a ship, the occupation of a new house), accumulates and/or diminishes over time, and remains attached to the navel until its "death."

As in much of Southeast Asia, Bugis reckon descent bilaterally. Thus ego and ego's ambilocal nuclear family constitutes a "center," signified by the center post as *posi* with the children's dried umbilical cords suspended from it. From this vantage point, a child comes to learn an important contrast, that of *tau sama* (same people) and *tau laing* (other people).[6] *Tau sama* are family or kin in that they most often share common ancestry, but they frequently include fictive kin who are recognized as allies and/or clients within patron-client relationships. One feels physically and emotionally close to, as well as safe and secure among, *tau sama*. Contrastively, *tau laing* are alien others who are physically and emotionally distant and who are considered problematic and potentially dangerous (see also Errington 1989:250 ff.). For example, during the 1999 Presidential election campaign, military officers were stationed in every Indonesian village, and young village men were recruited to carry out nightly patrols, supposedly to watch for "outsiders" who might try to disrupt the electoral process. In decrying this, village elder Haji Tallé pointed out how ridiculous this was as "there were no *tau laing* on Balobaloang; everyone there (ostensibly including the anthropologist) was family."

While the two mosques were clearly the centers of religious activity on the island, the political center was the village head and, by association, his house (map 2). Facing the lagoon about midway between the tips of the island, his house was located not far from what was once a small harbor, now silted in. Built by the original settlers, it was on the point of this harbor that the first village head built his house. The first mosque and school were built close by. Over time, this area became the center of social and political activity for the village and the area of greatest population density.

Having inherited much wealth in the form of coconut trees from his ancestors, four of whom were, themselves, village heads, and having himself served for 20 years, the village head who was in power during this time had accumulated significant personal material wealth and

Map 2. Greater Balobaloang Island (Spared Space 2).

attracted government funding for important infrastructures. One prominent example was a pier that extended from the shore across the path from his house to the edge of the reef flat, making it easier to reach boats that were anchored just beyond the rampart. Additional government funding supported the construction of a number of modest buildings, including his office and that of the village secretary (rarely used, as most official business was conducted in their homes). His house attracted villagers for official business and all manner of social and cultural activity, and active clients of the village head, including captains and crewmembers that sailed aboard his ships, built houses close to his.

One expression of this center's salience was villagers' description of it as *maroa'*, a term used to designate a place of great social activity and, by implication, high status (see below). Accordingly, when my wife and I decided to build a house and research station near the tip of the island, we were constantly chided for picking a *masino* (quiet) location, far from the center of social life.

While the home of the village head is most immediately familiar to islander and visitor alike, another, less obvious center is a simple, seemingly abandoned stone marker. Balobaloang is a flat island with the geographic center unmarked. Most houses and the two mosques are situated along and landward of the footpath that circles the island, with the central part of the island occupied by coconut palm groves, wells, and home gardens. When I asked, in 1991, if the village had a center (*posi*), several children were told by their elders to take me to *batu belanda* ("Dutch stone"; map 1), a small engraved and weathered stone that appeared to be a surveying marker placed there by the Dutch and the first village head over a century ago. From there, the other islands of Desa Balobaloang could be viewed. I was also told that when the marker was placed there, it was at the high water mark; now, due to sedimentation, it is located more than 30 meters inland. While clearly not the geographic center of the village, its designation as *posi* implies a sacred center, if not in the present, at least historically. According to Bugis scholar Nurhady Sirimorok (personal communication), while historically such sacred centers were objects of respect where one might pay homage, in recent years they have become objects of fear and, thus, are avoided. That may explain this center's apparent neglect.

High-Low

"Up" and "down" are also socially important and further evidence of a spatialized model of society. Social rank is conceptualized along a vertical axis, and those of higher rank are physically positioned in high and central locations during social gatherings, especially ceremonies.[7]

On Balobaloang, to be polite, one keeps one's head lower than that of anyone of higher rank when approaching; when passing closely in front of another who is sitting, one bends one's knees and back, left hand on the back of one's head (symbolically positioning it lower than the head of the person seated) and with right arm extended straight out in front; simultaneously,

one utters "*Tabé, tabé, tabé...*" "Excuse me, excuse me, excuse me..." Also, in a closed space and when seated on the floor in a circle or rectangle, those of highest rank are seated at the far end of the room so that they pass by others but so that no one passes by in front of them.

The head marks the high point of the body while feet mark the lowest. It is considered offensive to point with one's foot or to sit so that the bottoms of one's feet are exposed to others or to objects that ordinarily are located above the feet; e.g., one never steps over the furled sail and boom of a ship when moving from one side to the other so as not to offend the ship.[8]

Likewise, Bugis embodiment of the high-low hierarchy is expressed in language in describing vertical movement relative to the sea (Ammarell 1999). Briefly, *no'i* (go down) is used to describe movement from house to ground, from shore to sea, and from ship to tender or pier, while *menré* (go up) is used to speak of movement from sea to shore, ground to house, and tender or pier to ship. Additionally, when people from Balobaloang describe travel to and from Paotéré Harbor near the capital city of Makassar, the latter's relatively higher status as a place of greater social activity and importance is signified by describing travel to Makassar using the term *menré* or *matama* (enter) and Makassar, itself, as *maroa'* (see above). When traveling from port to home, on the contrary, people use the terms *no'i* or *massu'* (go out). Thus, the status of the island relative to the capital city is encoded in language using spatial metaphors.

Blending Center-Periphery and High-Low

In *Bugis Weddings*, Susan Millar (1989) argues that at this single most important life ritual, the proximity of each individual wedding guest to the dais upon which the bride and groom are seated is of utmost significance. As "royalty for a day," their elevated and central location is a reflection of their temporary social location. Likewise in seating the guests, their relative proximity to the couple is a snapshot in time that both reflects and determines their current social ranking. Ideally, no one will be surprised, and all will feel comfortable in the seats assigned to them, while obvious errors will bring shame (*masiri'*; see below) to both the host and guest.

A number of Southeast Asian societies place special importance on the dimensions of center/periphery and high/low. Geographically, much of Southeast Asia is dominated by mountainous terrain with myriad river systems and lush alluvial and coastal plains, these plains early becoming the sites of extensive inundated rice agriculture. With travel over land often extremely difficult, most precolonial polities were organized along these river systems, with the political center located so as to control agriculture, travel, and trade; i.e., they were located at the mouths of rivers or, less commonly, where the main tributaries joined together. Trade goods traveled thusly between the more remote hill societies and the metropole, which was also visited by trading ships from other political and economic centers.

The formal structure of these polities has been characterized as a pyramid or cone with the ruler at the apex. District chiefs and village heads were located further down and further from the center. Polities had no defined boundaries, but the closer one was to the center, the more one potentially shared in the ruler's spiritual energy and material power. Likewise, those further from the center, for example isolated hill tribes or sea nomads, neither benefited from nor were greatly influenced by the power of the nearest rulers. Rulers of adjacent polities were competing for human and natural resources and were, therefore, likely to be enemies.[9] Simply put, the ruler's strength was evidenced primarily by the size of his or her entourage: the number of people who, by birth or by choice, aligned themselves with the ruler in patron-client relationships.

Open Access to Resources and Accumulation at the Center

With generally low-population pressures relative to available land and marine resources, Southeast Asian polities appear to have evolved without borders; rather, the prosperity of the realm was proportional to the number of people engaged in exploiting the apparently infinite resources of the land, rivers, and sea, and consequently, the amount of surplus the rulers could extract. At the same time, the more labor rulers had at their disposal, the more infrastructures they could build and the larger the armies they could mobilize. Under such circumstances, effective leaders were able to attract and retain followers less through coercion than by providing a safe, secure environment. It was, on the other hand, the role of the client to exploit the surrounding resources and to support the patron when called upon to do so (see, e.g., Hanks 1962, 1975; Kerkvliet 2008; Nash 1965; Pelras 1996; Scott 1972, 1977; Wolters 1999[1982).

When Balobaloang and the other islands of the Sabalana Archipelago were settled in the late 19th century under the patronage of the Dutch authorities and their local allies, close to half of the Sabalana Islands, including Greater Balobaloang, Lesser Balobaloang, and nearby Sumanga', were placed under the authority of H. La Hamada' Daeng Pasori. He was a sympathizer from Maros, a Bugis polity located just north of Makassar, who hoped to pacify what had been, until then, a safe harbor for those Bugis who were resisting Dutch control of interisland trade. La Hamada' was, I was told, a very powerful leader with an unusually high concentration of the spiritual/physical energy, and he was thus able to attract an entourage of kin and other allies to settle the islands. Nearly all the residents of Balobaloang trace their ancestry back to these first settlers, and the island of Greater Balobaloang remains the political center of the village (Ammarell 1999).

While early settlers of Balobaloang were encouraged to exploit the resources of the land and sea, those resources were not to fall to individual ownership. To this day, individuals may only acquire the usufruct of land by planting and maintaining coconut groves and home gardens and by the construction and habitation of houses and outbuildings. Across the region, Bugis have often relied on coconut trees as a major source of bridewealth, potentially diminishing a family's holdings. On Balobaloang, probably due to its relative isolation and

a general Bugis preference for cousin marriage (Ammarell 1999), several families, especially the direct descendants of La Hamada', still own the vast majority of trees; thus, they control the land. By contrast, senior navigator Syaripudding once remarked that while he owned his home in a coconut grove belonging to his patron, the village head whose ship he captained, he hoped to retire to the main island of Sumbawa, where he could own the land he lived on—something he could never do on Balobaloang.

As for marine resources, it appears that until very recently, and consistent with national maritime law, there has been complete open access for both villagers and outsiders: fishers could fish and ships could anchor anywhere on or near the atoll, although ships needed to register with local officials. On Balobaloang and nearby islands, there was in the early 1990s a time when some families gained usufruct by clearing corals from the reef flat to plant agar as a cash crop. The effort was short-lived, however, as the agar could not survive the warm water temperatures of the west monsoon.

Harmony, Dignity, and Patron-Client Relationships

As I have thus far shown, the Bugis of Balobaloang continue to organize themselves sociopolitically according to a traditional hierarchical system of patron-client relationships that has a deep history across Southeast Asia. Each individual is at the center of a fluid web of relationships in which status is determined by the number of one's "clients." Likewise, one consciously attaches and subordinates oneself to a "patron" whose efficacy is greater than one's own as evidenced by the size of the patron's entourage as well as his or her wealth and generosity.

Arguably the highest moral value in Bugis society, and certainly a characteristic of an effective and sought-after patron, is that which separates human beings from animals: the capacity to know and understand the meaning of shame and indignity in oneself and others (Abdullah 1985; Abidin 1983, 2007; Marzuki 1995). Good patrons are those who will defend their own dignity or honor and that of their clients. Any *public* violation of another's basic dignity, understood as "shaming," must be responded to by the individual and his or her patron. It is also understood as a disruption of social harmony.

The Bugis, like other Indonesians, value social harmony, concord, and conformity (*selaras* IND; *sippada* BUG) and the importance of the collective (Ammarell 2011; Mulder 1996; Tobing 1961). In stark contrast to the American values of competition and individualism, the ideal of harmony privileges the importance of long-term viability and status of the group. However, while villagers with whom I have discussed it see reciprocity between rich and poor, patron and client, as a fact of social life, they also recognize that these relationships can be severed when circumstances justify it.

On Balobaloang, ship owners and captain/navigators serve as patrons to crew members and their families, sharing in the profits from the cargos carried aboard their ships, providing

"loans" and other material aid when needs arise, and sponsoring clients' weddings and other rituals. In turn, crew members and their families serve ship owners and captains not only by crewing but also by helping to build and maintain their ships and contributing labor in preparation for ritual events. Women command entourages of their own. Wives and older daughters of client families contribute significantly to preparing the huge quantities of food commonly served at ritual events.

When interviewed, crew members consistently emphasized that their allegiance to a captain was based upon two things: first, his ability to attract lucrative cargos and fairness in sharing the profits; and second, the extent to which the captain respected them, defended their dignity (*siri'*) against those who would shame them, and maintained harmony aboard ship. In one case I observed, the entire crew abandoned the captain and his ship as a result of his persistent verbal abuse. Informants explained that the captain "didn't know shame" and caused disharmony, so in order to protect their own dignity and sense of self-worth, the crew members were compelled to leave.

A similar picture emerges with respect to full-time fishermen of Balobaloang, who stressed the high value they placed on their autonomy, while still relying on ship owners and the village head as patrons. Fishermen provide ship owners the services of their fishing boats to transport people and cargo to and from trading ships anchored beyond the reef flat, while ship owners provide fuel for the fishing boats, sponsorship of weddings, and loans in times of need. Fishermen and their families occasionally leave the island. Recently, one family abandoned its home and moved to a distant island where fishing was better due to strong government regulation, and another left after insulting the village head in public.

Likewise, the blast and cyanide fishers relied on their patron/bosses for loans to buy and repair boats, engines, and fishing gear as well as bond money and payoffs to the court when they were arrested for illegal fishing practices. Here reciprocity has a dark side, however, as fishermen often become permanently indebted to their bosses, turning the relationship into a form of debt bondage and resulting in loss of personal autonomy. When this happens, it becomes impossible for the fisherman to sever his ties with the boss.

Finally, Hapsari and I saw this ethic of reciprocity or "sharing" manifesting itself in many ways among fishermen, themselves (Ammarell 2011). Aboard local fishing boats, if the captain caught many fish while someone else caught few or none, he always shared part of his catch with the other fisherman. Conversely, if the accompanying fisherman had a particularly good day, he would share his catch with the captain to help defray the cost of fuel. Less benign, when blast fishers came close to Balobaloang, they always shared some of their catch with village fishermen, thus obliging them to put up with the destruction they were causing. And, on a larger scale, the village head could claim that if it were not for the bribes that he and other officials accepted from the bosses, he would have to raise revenue to build and maintain infrastructure—or to simply float a fisherman a needed loan—by taxing the catches of village fishermen.

Conflicting Cultural Models: The Reef as a Cultural and Economic Space

Heretofore, I have described some of the features on Balobaloang of what Errington calls a "spatialized" model of society. I now suggest some of the ambiguities and contradictions that have emerged from this model in the face of changing conditions, both environmental and political, in the lives of local fishers.

On one level, the model of open access to an unbounded physical and social space emerged as a significant contradiction. When asked by Hapsari what would happen to his ability to gain a livelihood from fishing when all the fish were gone, a young blast fisherman candidly replied that this would never happen, not, at least, "until the oceans all dry up." As it has been only during his lifetime that the inexhaustibility of this resource has been called into question, it is not surprising that someone who earns his living through destructive fishing practices still embraces that understanding. Nor was it surprising when there was resistance to the creation of "no-take zones,"[10] even among those fishers who saw the destruction of the habitat and continued to fish in a sustainable manner. Open access to a shared resource had brought their ancestors to these islands and allowed them to prosper.

On another level and as alluded to by the young man who initially questioned the purpose of the video project, there existed a contradiction that was most problematic for those fishermen who had placed their hope in the project, fully expecting it to put an end to destructive fishing practices once the higher authorities, especially at the regency level (something like a county in the United States),[11] saw the evidence on film (Hapsari and Ammarell 2008). Caught between their dependency as clients of wealthy ship owners and the promise of participatory democracy, when things failed to change they quietly retreated so as to not be seen as trying to "stand on both sides of the fence," asking for patronage from those whom they criticized. Not only would they be cut off from the benefits of patronage, they would also be seen more broadly as embarrassing (*masiri*') the village in the personage of the village head and contributing to local disharmony.

The alternative, consistent with traditional forms of patron-client relationships, would have been either to find a new means of livelihood on the island or leave the island and find a new village where the village officials were less corrupt and where there was still hope of securing a livelihood by fishing in a sustainable manner. Both of these, in fact, did occur during my stay on the island: in one failed attempt, a fisher turned to petty trade in marine products; two others took their families to another island to the south. For the rest, family ties along with a sense of the possibility of a good catch each time they went out fishing kept them on the island. In addition, limited resources and modern political boundaries make it hard for those caught between personalized patron-client relations and modern individualism to "vote with their feet."

Other Models, Other Contradictions

At least two additional cultural models of social space were operative in Balobaloang in early 2004: Amelia Hapsari's and my own. Recall that Hapsari is Indonesian and experienced as

a young person the transition to democracy after the overthrow of the Suharto government in May 1998. Having taught many Indonesian graduate students at Ohio University, I have witnessed a slow but sure change as they struggle with learning to be critical of authority. As one of my students recently put it, after having lived under the authority of monarchs for centuries, followed by over three hundred years of Dutch colonialism and over 30 years of dictatorship, Indonesians are only beginning to learn to function in a liberal democratic society: to be critical thinkers and take responsibility for their destinies as well as that of the nation.

By 2004, Hapsari had studied for a number of years in the United States and had also lived in Europe, where she was immersed in Western democratic values and critical intellectual discourse. So, it was not surprising that Hapsari's first thought when confronted by the young fisherman concerning the potentially disruptive impact of her video project was to see it as a survival of the authoritarian past. After having returned to the United States where she began to edit her film, she came to believe that it was more, perhaps, about a commitment to harmony within this relatively remote island village bound together by strong kin ties and a keen sense of mutual dependence.

As an American who has been sensitive to social and environmental injustice, my first and enduring reaction to the situation on Balobaloang was one of incredulity and anger. Initially, I believed that such illegal activities, when brought to the attention of the authorities, would be halted. Once I saw that those authorities would not act, I discovered how difficult it was for me as an anthropologist to suspend judgment when dealing with those complicit in the ongoing destruction of the reef and fishery. Together, then, Hapsari and I relied on a cultural model of modernity that initially blinded us to our project's potential for social disruption. As outsiders, our respective cultural models were inevitably going to collide with those of our hosts. We believed that open discussion would empower villagers to resolve a problem from the bottom up. The cultural model relied upon by the young fisherman who alerted us to the importance of village harmony and the client's vulnerability recalled Indonesians' long history of relying on authority to resolve social conflicts from the top down. But if a top-down solution was mired in corruption and a bottom-up solution made impossible by commitments to harmony and patronage, would this story end only when the last of the corals were nothing more than bleached rubble, sloshed by the tides?

I reveal this about our study both as a way to make transparent the limitations of our own perspectives as we carried out our work and also as an example of the type of collision of cultural models that was and continues to be taking place as Indonesia pursues its transition to democracy. One critical manifestation of this for the people of Balobaloang is the emerging transition of their surrounding seascape from an open access resource to one commonly managed by the stakeholders of each island in the archipelago.

Enclosure as a Solution?

When I visited Balobaloang in June 2009, there were signs that things were turning around. First, the village head had been replaced in an open and highly contested election. The new

village head was a young stonemason who had served as vice-village head but who had also assisted Hapsari by arranging interviews with blast fishermen and their bosses. Seen as a defender of the "little person," he has cautiously asserted his newly acquired authority to keep the blast and cyanide fishers from coming close to the island. In addition, COREMAP, an NGO funded by the World Bank, has established posts on several of the islands, including Balobaloang, hiring, training, and equipping young people to establish and patrol limited no-take zones around the islands and to work with other villagers to find solutions to the problem of destructive fishing.

As a first attempt at a commonly held and regulated marine resource, these no-take zones extend only to just beyond the reef flats of the islands. Upon seeing them for the first time, I was struck by how small they were relative to the size of the reef, and I wondered why the project was not working faster to save larger areas. I was surprised to learn that even this small effort had paid off, and fish were returning to the area in significant numbers. More people were fishing and catching more fish than had been the case for several years, and they uniformly expressed a new optimism about the future. In addition, the local project manager advised me that the strategy was to move slowly so as to avoid confrontation with the blast and cyanide operations. The long-range goal was still to drive them ever further from the islands. Finally, I was fortunate to be present when a COREMAP team visited the island and held a meeting with villagers, both fishers and others. Observing the meeting and speaking with villagers afterwards, I was struck by the respect shown by the team toward the villagers, their knowledge and experience, and the open dialogue that ensued. Although introduced and guided by outside authorities, villagers were learning to voice their concerns in a public arena and to participate in bringing about the change they desired. Scott (1998) argues that for development schemes to succeed, local conditions, including local knowledge, must be taken into account. It will be interesting to see if COREMAP's "participatory" approach will, in the minds of villagers, continue to improve their lives as it attempts to facilitate their increased participation in the global economy.

Discussion

As I have come to understand it, the Bugis of Balobaloang negotiate their physical and social worlds relying, at least in part, on a cognitive model that privileges centers over their peripheries and high over low. Anchored by a bilateral system of kinship and radiating outward from the nuclear family on one hand and from political centers on the other, an ethical system has emerged whose central and overlapping concerns are harmony (*sippada*), dignity (*siri'*), and reciprocity. Thus, in everyday interactions as well as in making critical decisions, individual Bugis are most aware of their personal "social place" and the reciprocity that it entails. Often, when Bugis encounter someone outside of their own village whom they suspect is also Bugis, the initial topic of discussion is their respective kindreds, as they search for an intersection between the two. Likewise, when being introduced to another Bugis, the introduction almost always includes a description of that person's kin relationship(s) with the person doing the introduction. Combined with awareness of one's location in multiple

and ever-changing patron-client networks, such knowledge is important because it is on the basis of kinship that one then knows how and when to share labor and material goods and act to defend another's honor/dignity, always conscious of the importance of working to restore and maintain harmony within the family and community.

Recalling the question that I raised long ago with my language teacher regarding social location versus social space in Bugis culture, I have now described the importance and some of the more salient features of social location from an admittedly essentialized Bugis perspective. Far more acute than my own, this awareness of social location or "place" appears to pervade most social interaction among Bugis actors and is evidence of one's maturity as a moral being. My own enculturation, on the other hand, had fostered a heightened sense of "social space" and an awareness of what I perceived to be violations of "personal space."[12] For me and for many Americans, respect for spatial boundaries has significant moral value, such that most Americans would be uncomfortable being crushed together on public transportation or while attempting to purchase a ticket in a movie theater or bus station, while seeing those who ignore these boundaries as morally deviant. I suggest that among the Bugis, this relative lack of importance of spatial boundaries extends to geographic space such that there appear to be no conventional borders or boundaries either on Balobaloang or, until recently, in the surrounding sea. Settled for more than 130 years, no one owns land on the island, only the coconut trees that they planted and the houses and outbuildings they have built (in their own coconut groves or with permission of the owner of the trees). And while there are examples of fishing communities across the Austronesian and Melanesian world in which bounded fishing grounds are collectively owned by families, clans, and villages, no such boundaries exist across the Sabalana Archipelago. This fishery is understood to be not owned by anyone or any collectivity and is best described as "open access"; thus, anyone from anywhere has the right to fish in these waters.

Hardin (1968) set what many have come to believe was a misinformed agenda for international development. He argued from a Malthusian standpoint that resources held in "common" would inevitably become overexploited and ultimately degraded as each member of the community would, unless otherwise prohibited through regulation, take more than a sustainable share. Thus, the only way to avoid environmental collapse was either through enclosure and centralized government regulation or privatization of all of the earth's natural resources (Patel 2010). This, of course, became the frame by which the "struggle over the environment" has been waged ever since. One of Hardin's errors was his failure to distinguish a commonly held resource from one that is open access. In the process, he seems to have missed or ignored the fact that across the globe are found, contrary to Malthus' theory, communities that have a history of self-regulation of commonly held resources (Feeny et al. 1990).

Hardin was more accurately describing the situation with "open access" as described here. With the spread of global capital and increased demands for resources, artisanal fisheries have become threatened worldwide. Caught between the need to feed themselves and their families through participation in local markets and the "free" global markets of capitalism that

require ever increasing consumption of limited resources in order to survive, local fishing communities are faced with limited choices: harvest the fish in a nonsustainable manner or enclose the resource and regulate their own access, a move which may or may not succeed in creating a sustainable livelihood in the long term. Viewed from another perspective, the fishery adjacent to Balobaloang has emerged as a "zone of awkward engagement" (Tsing 2005) wherein local, highly personalized understandings of space and location are being challenged by a global or modernist model that naturalizes the enclosure and commodification of all space and the natural resources that lie within as well as—perhaps ironically—"free" or "open" access to those spaces and resources *to those who can pay the ever-increasing price in national and international markets.*

With the encouragement and support of the NGO COREMAP, on Balobaloang and several nearby islands that share the fishery, villagers are beginning to experiment with enclosed and self-regulated areas. While these "commons" are modest first attempts, extending only to the ramparts and denying access only to motorized fishing boats, fishers report that even this small effort has increased their yields. In his discussion of cultural models, Shore (1996:285) reminds us that when models collide, people struggle to make meaning out of the ethical dilemmas these collisions entail. On Balobaloang in the domain of artisanal fishing, conflicting cultural/cognitive models "set the stage for conflicted perception and profound ambivalence...." Local fishers were conflicted on one hand when it came to attacking the dignity of the corrupt village authorities and disrupting systems of reciprocity and harmony in order to resolve the problem of illegal and destructive fishing practices. On the other hand, one of the dominant models through which they have perceived their worlds has, at once, looked to the center for protection and safety and seen the periphery as unbounded and dangerous. In a world turned upside down, they are now being asked to look to one another to impose order on the periphery by enclosing and regulating the source of their livelihoods.

I suggest that the villagers of Balobaloang are, indeed, struggling, in the face of colliding cultural models, to make meaning out of their ethical dilemmas. So too, it behooves "outsiders," including development teams, government authorities, and the anthropologist who bears witness to their struggle, to be vigilant in attending to competing cultural/cognitive models and the ethical and political dilemmas that they pose among those whose interests we aim to promote.

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Notes

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1. Balobaloang is one of 28 small islands located in the Flores Sea on the Northeast Atoll of Indonesia's Sabalana Archipelago. It is situated on the northern rim of the atoll, along with several other islands that make up the Desa "village" of Balobaloang. Located 112 nautical miles south-southwest of Makassar, the capital of South Sulawesi, it is populated by ethnic Bugis whose ancestors first migrated from Maros, about 25 miles north of Makassar, in the late 19th century. The communities that occupy these islands rely on combinations of fishing, interisland shipping and trade, and coconut silvaculture for their livelihoods. Balobaloang is unique in its population's Bugis ethnicity—the remainder of the islands are primarily ethnically Makassar—and in their success as petty traders, owning and operating a fleet of over 20 cargo ships that they use to transport agricultural commodities and other trade goods across eastern Indonesia.

2. I borrow the term "friction" from Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing. Like Tsing, I understand what I describe below not as a "cultural clash" but rather as "zones of awkward engagement" that "arise out of encounters and interactions" among and between local actors, development experts, environmentalists, and government officials (2005:xi).

3. Local fishers and navigators have a highly nuanced and sophisticated knowledge of the larger marine ecosystem. This includes the broad physical and biological features of the island, itself, the tidal zone surrounding the island, the shallow seas of the lagoon, and the outer border of the atoll where it drops off into the ocean depths (cf. Feinberg, Genz, Mawyer, all this issue).

4. This model corresponds to what Lehman and Herdrich (2002) call "container" and "point field" conceptualizations of space, respectively. They suggest that while no culture relies completely on one or the other, point-field models are more commonly found among both Tai and Austronesian language speakers. On the other hand, in the West, container models tend to dominate.

5. Errington provocatively compares these understandings with Anderson's discussion of power in Javanese society (1972). Anderson argues that, in contrast to Western ideas of power as finite and created by human actors, for Javanese, it is "an existential reality . . . an intangible, mysterious, and divine energy which animates the universe . . . a creative energy" that fills the cosmos (1972:7). The concentration of this energy by a Javanese ruler, and, I suggest traditional rulers across much of Southeast Asia, was and, to some extent, still is evidenced by the prosperity and well-being of the polity. That energy was both potentially infinite in its extent and weakened over distance from the source. There are interesting parallels between South and Southeast Asian understandings of power and the concept of *mana* in Polynesian societies (see Feinberg 1996; Shore 1989; cf. Errington 1989).

6. Errington's subjects in Luwu expressed the contrast as *tau kolopo* (kin) and *tau laing*. Both at Luwu and on Balobaloang, *tau pamili* (family) is used, while the Bugis of Balobaloang use the terms *sajing* and *assiragragang* when referring to family or kin.

7. The symbolic representation and embodiment of social hierarchy along a vertical axis has been likewise noted in Oceania (Feinberg 1980, 1988; Howard and Kirkpatrick 1989; Sahlins 1958).

8. As Errington points out, "in Luwu, as in Java and Bali, balance or centeredness is taken literally. To slouch is not exactly immoral, but it is a failing that reveals a lack of inner composure. The body's gestures, the location in space of its part, and its placement in space have meaning..." (1989:76–77).

9. This has also been described as a "vertical" rather than "horizontal" form of social organization in which individuals identify more with their patrons than their status equals, with whom they are in competition.

10. "No-take zones" are marine-protected areas where no one is allowed to fish or anchor boats. They provide a place where fish can safely live and spawn with the intended result that these fish will repopulate the sea surrounding the zone where fishing is allowed. When this was first raised as a possibility even among the most outspoken critics of destructive fishing, it was met with skepticism: why should they not be allowed to fish anywhere that they pleased, as had always been the case? After all, they were not the cause of the problem.

11. In Indonesia, each province is divided into several regencies, each governed by a single "regent." Formerly appointed by the provincial governor, regents are now subject to free elections. Far more powerful than a village head, it was the regent whom the fishers participating in the project saw as the ultimate patron. They asked us to show him the video, believing that he would then intervene. Unfortunately, the regent equivocated, and nothing obvious came of the initiative.

12. This, of course, is the subject of proxemics, the study of measurable distances between people as they interact, introduced by anthropologist Edward T. Hall (1966).

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