



Who is to blame? Logics of responsibility in the live reef food fish trade in Sulawesi, Indonesia

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Cultures of culpability

The fishers of the Togean Islands of Sulawesi, Indonesia are in a bind. On the one hand, the live reef food fish (LRFF) trade is an attractive source of employment. On the other, wild reef fish, which provide fishers with an income through longstanding markets for salt fish, and which are also an important local food resource, are becoming rare. Due to cyanide use, the LRFF trade has quickly proven harmful for the majority of fishers, and to coral reef environments. Fishing communities along the shores of Indonesia's more remote islands are experiencing the surveillance, enforcement and sharp criticism associated with cyanide. Both Indonesian bureaucrats and national and international conservationists, through similar logic, focus on intervention at the community level. While the state threatens Togeans with fines, incarceration, physical violence and extortion, conservationists are wondering why fishers destroy their own reefs, and, in some cases, they too support militarised interventions against Indonesia's most vulnerable citizens.

This approach, however, leaves the political, social and economic factors that promote cyanide use unexplored. It fails to examine important questions of culpability, corruption and causality among bureaucrats and traders, and it holds at arm's-length distance questions of the cultural and ideological norms that determine who will be blamed for environmental degradation and who will profit the most from natural resource trades in Indonesia. Using examples from my two years of fieldwork in central and north Sulawesi in the mid-1990s, this paper examines the extended contexts of cyanide use in the LRFF trade and why these questions are important for thinking about marine conservation.

As I will argue, the outcomes of the live fish trade are not logically explained either by the 'three Ps' of conventional wisdom (poverty, population and proximity) or by fisher ignorance. We need an explanation that encompasses the social, political, economic and legal contexts of cyanide use. To bet-

ter understand the issues involved, we need to ask the following questions: 'What is the role that elite Indonesians and non-local people play in cyanide use?', 'How do trade practices and individual traders and trading companies influence the methods of fish catch?', 'How do legal frameworks intersect with the LRFF trade?', and 'What is the relationship between enforcement of live fish regulations, empowerment of local fishers and possible conservation outcomes?'

Of all these questions, the issue of corruption helps us most to contextualise culpability in cyanide use. Practices of corruption that underwrite the trade start at the top of the Indonesian bureaucracy and filter down to the community level. These practices affect Togeans' own control over reef resources while allowing a few local bureaucrats and outside entrepreneurs to become wealthy from the trade. Legal frameworks in Indonesia also support elite business interests at the expense of local people and their environments. Indonesia's fishers are caught within the matted fibres of market, law, bureaucracy and identity that determine who will fish with cyanide, who will profit most by it, and who will suffer its legal and ecological consequences. These factors reveal the complexities of cyanide fishing in Indonesia and help us to think through the sometimes misdirected logic of contemporary conservation practices.

Live reef food fishing in the Togean Islands

The Togean Islands are a small archipelago in the eastward-facing Gulf of Tomini and have been a site for international marine resource trades for hundreds of years. For example, Sama and Bugis peoples in Eastern Indonesia trade marine products in networks that have connected them with mainland Southeast Asia and China for at least a millennium (Warren 1981). Sama and Bugis trade in sea cucumbers and turtle shell were first noted for the Togean Islands in mid-19th century colonial records (Von Hoewel 1893). In the 1850s, New England whalers hunted whales off Togeans' shores (Hussey 1855). In the 1980s, Togeans' people col-

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lected giant clams for export to Japan. In the 1990s, Australians, Japanese and Bugis opened up pearl farms in Togeian waters. And dried fish have always been a Togeian export to parts of mainland Sulawesi. The islands have also been a site for natural history or biodiversity conservation since the 19th century beginning with Viscount Walden's survey of birds in the 1870s (Walden 1871, 1872) and J.H.F. Umbgrove's study of corals in the 1920s (Umbgrove 1930, 1939). The archipelago is inhabited by people from at least a half a dozen ethnic groups represented on the surrounding mainland (e.g. Sama, Saluan, Ta'a, Bugis, Gorontalo, Kaili), by others from distant parts of Indonesia (Chinese, Javanese, Minahassan), and by people of one ethnicity (Bobonko) whose population is not found outside the Togeian Islands.

In biodiversity conservation in Indonesia certain local peoples and ethnic groups are commonly imagined to be more implicated in coral reef destruction than others (see, for example, Petsoede and Erdmann 1998). In the Togeian Islands, all ethnicities practice live fishing but Sama people are presumed to be the most engaged with cyanide use. This perception is related to the politics of ethnic representation in Indonesia. In the first place, Sama peoples are inaccurately thought of as 'sea peoples' (*orang laut*) or 'sea nomads' and, thus, both traders and conservationists have concentrated their energies on Sama communities. While traders have sought out Sama people for their fishing knowledge, conservationists presume just the opposite, that fishers are ignorant of coral reef biology and the damage they are doing to reefs. Togeian Islanders, in general, are also thought of as '*suku terasing*,' a term meaning ethnic groups alien to, or left behind in, the process of national modernisation. These simplifications of Togeian identities and practices have made local Togeian fishers, especially Sama fishers, easy to blame for cyanide use.

The LRFF trade in the Togeian Islands is a multi-ethnic and economically stratified enterprise, however. At the local level, the trade is managed through a series of fish camps run by bosses from Java and Kalimantan. Togeian fishers work as harvesters in the trade and are also occasionally hired to do physical labour at the camps. Live fish businesses are owned by wealthy Indonesians of Chinese and Javanese descent who live in Jakarta. These elites operate through established connections with foreign buyers. They also have the protection of local and national level bureaucratic elites of many ethnicities who are linked to resource extraction and responsible for 'law and

order'. These elites are thought of as contributing to 'national development'. They are well-respected businessmen and generally not considered responsible for coral reef destruction in a tiny archipelago in a remote part of Sulawesi. They do not experience surveillance or police action for their role in the LRFF trade.

Ethnic and class-based hierarchies in the live fish business place Javanese, Chinese and other urban elites at the centre of lucrative extractive economies, and Indonesia's diverse farmers and fishers at the periphery. This pattern has a historical basis in Dutch colonial rule and mirrors the way most natural resource production continues to be organised in Indonesia today (see Peluso 1992; Robeson 1986). At the same time, ethnic economies link up with bureaucratic ones when, as often happens, government workers (in the Togeian case, Fisheries Department officials, police, army, village heads and other civil servants) also become entrepreneurs.² The patterns of the live fish trade differ from earlier marine resource trades (such as sea cucumber) in that the contemporary bureaucracy works to suppress political resistance among the populace, domesticating it through ideas of who is central and who is marginal within the nation, and demanding compliance as a means to facilitate bureaucratic and entrepreneurial control.

Live fish businesses, however, supply cyanide directly to Togeian fishers. Fishers report cyanide was not used in the Togeian Islands before the arrival of the LRFF trade when fish traders came and taught fishers how to use it. Live fish operators have then proceeded to supply cyanide to fishers for free. Cyanide is most commonly found in Indonesia in the mining industry, which is a commercial enterprise closely linked to the army. It has been reported that the Indonesian army is responsible for the circulation of cyanide between the mining industry and the live fish trade.³ And cyanide isn't the only thing fish camps supply to fishers. Fish camps supply compressor equipment used to catch live fish in deeper waters and in more difficult locations. Conservationists have observed that using compressed air allows some live fishers to target literally every single sizeable grouper and wrasse on a given reef. Compressors and hookah rigs go hand in hand with cyanide use since there is no other way for a diver using a hookah to catch live fish.

While most *fish* caught for the LRFF trade in the Togeian Islands are caught with cyanide, the *majority* (roughly 85%) of Togeian Sama *fishers* actually

2. See Stoler (1985) for a discussion of the articulation between political and commercial economies in Indonesia.

3. I have discovered this through personal conversations, but see also Adhuri (1998).



Map of Indonesia

*Map of Sulawesi,
showing the Togeian Islands*



use conventional handline techniques.⁴ Most fishers use methods that don't poison reefs and extract fish at lower, arguably more sustainable, rates of harvest. Paradoxically, the live fish trade is generally thought by biologists to potentially yield widespread sustainable benefits for fishers (Johannes and Riepen 1995). For this reason, it is incumbent upon us to examine why fishers become involved with cyanide when they actually do. Fish camps are a place to begin this inquiry.

Togeian fishers and cyanide use

Many fishers work independently from fish camps choosing when and how to fish for live fish or when to pursue other livelihoods. Fish camps, however, want to have a monopoly over fishers' catch and to encourage fishers to catch as many fish as possible. To do this they provide fishers with outboard motors on credit. In a small archipelago where sail and paddle are the most prevalent means of moving about, outboards are highly desired, though difficult for most to afford. Through the live fish trade, outboard motors have become available to ten per cent of Togeian Sama fishing households, largely through loans from LRFF camps. Fishers pay for their motors with irregular payments taken out of their live fish sales. The camps maintain the outboard, changing oil and spark plugs, as long as the fisher continues to deliver live fish to them. Fishers are required to put down some cash each time they sell a fish, but they can decide for themselves how much to deposit. A look at fishers' accounting books shows that they make random payments of between one and six dollars up to four times a month. Fishers pay off one quarter to one third of their debt in a year and

frequently believe they have paid off more than they actually have. By the time the motor is free and clear it will typically have little life left in it.

While fishers want to own outboards, they often regret their ties to fish camps. A camp's profits are not in the loan but rather in guaranteeing its supply of fish. They want to force fishers to keep looking for live fish and they forbid them to sell fish to any other buyer. So if a fisher wants to keep his outboard, he must continue to supply live fish at a rapid pace. One Togeian fisher, who grows cacao and coconuts as well as trading in live fish, explained to me the regrets he had over his ties to a fish camp. Every morning he fished, and in the afternoon he would come home to work in his garden. He was tired of fishing and would like to spend more time farming, but he had to keep going or the camp would take his outboard away. The

4. Conservationists often find this hard to believe. I was once approached by a "Big Ten" conservation organisation that planned to 're-introduce' handline techniques to Togeian fishers. It was assumed that a programme already developed for the Philippines would be equally appropriate for the Togeian Islands even though there had not been any specific research done by this organisation on the Togeian fishery. I do not believe the handline fishers in the Togeian Islands follow the pattern of 'evolutionary' process from cyanide to apocalypse described by Pet-Soede and Erdman (1998). Togeian handline fishers used this method from the moment the trade was introduced to the islands.

camp boss always noticed if he did not bring fish around. Another Togeian fisher used his outboard to fish for pelagic tuna. He needed his outboard to get to the offshore fish aggregating devices where the deepwater fish school. Yet, he was told his outboard would be confiscated if he did not start catching live fish again for the camp.

Although this analysis suggests that fishers themselves are not the primary instigators of cyanide use, I have said that fifteen per cent of Togeian fishers *do* use cyanide. Conservation interventions would be more effective, however, if we had a more nuanced idea of who those fifteen per cent are, since we have often defined blame for cyanide use along community lines. In other words, whole communities, villages and even ethnicities are considered to be responsible for harming reefs. This suggests that fishers are not thought of as individuals, but as *types* of individuals. If, however, we look at the fractures within communities over cyanide use, we can see that the 'community' is the wrong scale for culpability. One salient division within communities is gender.

While not all men who fish for the LRFFT use cyanide, all the cyanide users I encountered during two years of research were young men. This is for several reasons. High live fish profits through cyanide use are a way for young men to build houses and establish new, independent families. Cyanide also has a status that is most appealing to young people. Cyanide fishers demonstrate their wealth and status by controlling outboard motors and they also have the money to smoke expensive cigarettes and wear fashionable new clothes. Since the activity is illegal, it further demands their daring and indicates their closeness with officials who will protect them from prosecution.⁵ Young men are more capable of diving than older men are; diving is physically strenuous and older men complain of the cold. When older men participate in cyanide use they tend to do so as distributors or as middlemen in live fish purchasing.

Women, on the other hand, participate in the live fish trade but they never use poison to catch fish. The comments of women fishers reveal the level of disagreement in the community over cyanide use. When fishing off a reef at night, I once asked why everyone was trying to catch small sardines rather than larger fish. A woman answered, '*we are looking for sardines because all the big fish have been poisoned.*' Women fishers are doubly affected by cyanide use: they lack fish to catch when poison is used, and they lack food to feed themselves and their chil-

dren at home. While women will sometimes cover up for a spouse or son using cyanide to protect their families, it is also women — and women fishers in particular — who most openly criticise destructive fishing practices.

Contrary to many informal village and family power arrangements, the Indonesian State, religious institutions and conservation organisations teach that men are the heads of families. Government representatives in the Togeians, for example, order people to paint their fences in gender coded colours: against a white background of vertical pickets, two low blue stripes symbolise the number of children allowed in the government's family planning program, a bar near the top signifies mother, and a blue fence cap represents the paternal rule that unifies the family and binds it together. When government officials and conservationists discuss cyanide use (or most any issue besides cooking and family health) they direct their comments to men. By officially promoting male authority these efforts bypass women's interests and structures of political authority which could be effective in opposing cyanide use. They overlook women's habits as fishers and as community members invested in environmental outcomes.

Togeian peoples are in the ironic position of being ridiculed for their cultural and economic impoverishment, and at the same time encouraged to come up with means for their own financial advancement. Although some of them, have found the means to 'develop' — build new houses, wear new clothes, own motorised transport through the live fish trade — they are then chastised for being environmentally destructive. This double bind, or double standard, that fishers face seems to be one important context for understanding cyanide use. It also helps us to recognise the multiple, shifting, and complex positions fishers do have on cyanide use.

Fishers' biological knowledge and opposition to cyanide use

It turns out, perhaps surprisingly, that most Togeian people, men and women, are against the way the live reef fish trade is conducted. They *do* believe that cyanide is harmful but feel helpless to oppose it. In better times, Togeian people told me, the walls of their fishing houses, and all the space on the decks of their fishing boats, would be layered with fish drying, and the air around them would reek of fish. People blame cyanide for their declining fish catch. Although under current conditions in the

5. Jos Pet and Lida Pet-Soede (1999) observe that 'Even if fishermen have other options to make a living at sea, in many cases they deliberately choose this lucrative practice'.

Togean poison produces a higher yield, most people choose to avoid it. Though Togeian communities appear unified to outsiders on the issue of cyanide, individuals do complain to each other. For example, I heard one fisher say to another passing by, '*don't bother fishing here, they won't eat your hook. Someone from my village was using cyanide here this morning. You should get your village head to report him.*' Another woman, spotting someone using cyanide, said, "*Tie him to a rock and dump him in a deep spot*", and cyanide fishers are frequently insulted as 'rock heads'. Fishers who use traditional hook-and-line techniques to catch live fish are one constituency who oppose the use of poison; many report that their fish take has dropped to nothing. Ordinary fishers are angry at the ones using what they call '*teknik*'. Cyanide fishers, they say, make lots of money while everyone else's take of reef fish, for both trade and food, disappears.

We can hear a certain fatalism in the words of one fisher who I will call 'Puah'. '*If people were using poison and my take dropped to only a little, I would accept it*', Puah said. '*But I feel heartsick; people have used cyanide here and then I catch nothing at all. I have not caught a big fish in a month so there's no point in going fishing this afternoon. There won't be any results.*' Puah has only taken up live fishing himself in the past few years. At first he would go out to the reef, paddling his canoe two hours in the morning as the stars faded around him, count out twenty arm spans of nylon line and drop it over the side, then look deep into the water, waiting, forearm resting on the canoe's edge, the heavy line wrapped three times across his palm. But he has had competition; younger men who motor along the reef's edge also on the lookout for live fish species and don't use handlines — only chalky clouds of poison from their plastic squirt bottles to stupefy otherwise wary fish. Puah is torn; he also wants to be able to catch live fish to sell to the fish camps that pay him very well for his effort. He manoeuvres, in our conversations, to protect and perpetuate the industry, defending this camp, or that, as 'clean', not supporting poison. Yet, he also recognises that live fishing has brought his community to a difficult place — because of cyanide use, there are fewer fish for people to catch.

Puah is a Sama fisher and Sama people are thought of as the 'usual suspects' in cyanide fishing. My ethnographic research indicates that Sama fishers may actually be *less* likely to use cyanide than fishers from other places. While bureaucrats and conservationists blame Sama people for degrading their environment, Rili Djohani of The Nature

Conservancy has been one of the few people to propose that Sama (Bajau) peoples' experience with the sea could make them important marine conservators in Togeian and other Indonesian settings (Djohani 1993, 1996). While cyanide use on coral reefs is attributed to fisher ignorance, the biological knowledge of Togeian fishers concerning the marine world is quite extensive. They demonstrate intricate knowledge of species, currents, and the location, movements, and behaviour of fish. This constitutes a reservoir of knowledge about fish and reefs that is largely unexplored by conservationists.

When I interviewed a Javanese migrant fisher about the presence of cyanide-caught live fish in fish camp holding pens, he responded '*All Napoleon wrasses are caught using cyanide*'. Yet, whenever I fished with Sama handline fishers and observed them fishing selectively for Napoleon wrasse (*Cheilinus undulatus*), their ecological knowledge of habitat and bait narrowed the territory of catch locations and enabled them to catch fish without poison. The fisher first would catch squirrelfish in the shallows with a spear gun before paddling out to a reef precipice to wait for Napoleon wrasses. Experienced Sama live-fishers can name eleven separate species of squirrelfish that work well as Napoleon wrasse bait. While cyanide fishers swept the seas catching any possible reef fish they wanted, Napoleon wrasse fishers were sedentary, waiting for the mobile fish to swim along a favoured path. Non-Sama fishers, on the other hand, who have less marine ecological knowledge, were more inclined to use cyanide because they couldn't recognise the appropriate bait to use, or the appropriate spatial tactics for Napoleon wrasse fishing. As new entrants into the market, they were less inclined to take up these practices and more likely to go directly to easier and more destructive ways of fishing.⁶

While many fishers share with conservationists a concern that groupers and wrasses remain abundant and that coral reefs remain healthy, a productive collaboration between the two groups has not yet emerged. We tend to imagine that conservation science is the only relevant form of environmental knowledge and that a degree in biology is the best means to understand the habits of fish. Urban Indonesians and multi-national conservationists hold the view that Togeian people are 'pirates' plundering reefs and coastal seas, or maritime 'primitives'. Fishers can not be 'knowers' from this perspective, and thus it is very difficult for them to represent their position to bureaucrats and conservationists who are imagined as 'modern' and

6. This presents a different theory of the balance between cyanide fishing and handline fishing than that proposed by R.E. Johannes (1998) in its 'Editor's mutterings'.

'rational' and whose knowledge and ideas are widely received as credible and valuable. Since we don't invest as much time in understanding people as we do in making biological surveys, it can be hard for us to realise that so many fishers might actually oppose cyanide.

Corruption I

Culpability in cyanide use cannot be understood apart from the larger structures of corruption that permeates resource extraction throughout Indonesia. The Indonesian State bureaucracy extends from Jakarta down to the village level, and radiates out into villages through kinship connections. It is the factor most tightly correlated with illegal trade in natural resources throughout Indonesia. While some young men catch fish with cyanide, some older men participate by using the attachments to bureaucracy and bureaucrats they develop as village leaders. In fact, it is often difficult to become a village head unless one is willing to help higher-ups facilitate lucrative resource trades. The story of one village level enforcement event in the Togeian Islands reveals these aspects of cyanide activity.

One Togeian village official, under pressure to appear to be enforcing cyanide laws, ordered 'sea operations', also called 'sweeping', and his subordinates were instructed to go out and 'clean up the ocean'. I went along with a party of five 'sweepers', all wearing khaki uniforms, who set off with their boat drivers in three directions. Only our boat had any 'success'; we caught five skinny boys, none of them older than ten, using cyanide to catch anemone fish. Children like to play with these fish which symbiotically inhabit sea anemones by making them fight each other in a small container of seawater. The boys all yelled at once, begging us not to report them. They feared the police would be angry, and it was common knowledge that angry police are physically violent.⁷ A solution emerged: the boys would deliver edible anemones to the village official's house. Conspicuously, their poison was not confiscated and they were left to resume their activity.

From there, we proceeded to a less affluent part of the village, far from where any officials live, and the parents were informed that their children had been caught using cyanide. In the same breath, the khakied bureaucrat made a casual inquiry as to whether there were any ripe mangoes. We were

soon sitting on the porch, chins dripping with mango juice. He asked again for fried sago (don't forget the coconut!) which they procured with ingredients quickly borrowed from a neighbour. Coffee with tablespoons of expensive sugar was served after the mangoes; 'gifts' of limes and chillies were taken before leaving. Conversation between the high status village officials and their subordinate fellow villagers had been smooth, never strained, polite. The threat was always left implied, wound around, sweet and hot, in-and-out of discussions of mangoes and chillies.

Fishers involved in cyanide use, if not immediate family members of bureaucrats, are frequently closely related. Top officials provide protection against prosecution for their relatives and workers. *'He uses a code when he directs us not to use cyanide which indicates that in his heart he will not really be mad if we do'*, said one fisher about the village head. Ties to bureaucrats also help determine who pays bribes and who is prosecuted; the children collecting anemone fish were from families without strong ties to village leadership and were thus vulnerable to demands for payment. Local leaders of cyanide operations worked closely with fish camps and tended to channel financial opportunities and protection benefits to family members whom they could both trust and control.

Outside of this circle, fishers, even small boys, use poison at their own risk. Subsequent to the 'sea operation', a friend who was part of the village faction opposed to cyanide use pointed out that the manner of our operation was all wrong — not *really* designed to catch anybody. It was conducted at the wrong time of the day, and not where most people fish. More importantly, he said, the people involved in the operation were heavily implicated in cyanide fishing themselves. Village level bureaucrats, nested tightly in live fish procurement networks, worked closely with fish camps who supplied cyanide and bought the cyanide-caught fish. Our 'boat drivers' had steady work as cyanide fishers in the employ of these leaders.

It would be easy to be swept up by a theory that local officials who profit from cyanide are just greedy people but village officials surely do not invent these ways of organising economic life. Corrupt networks originate in, and are patterned on, an entrepreneurial culture that starts at the top. At one point, former President Suharto was rumoured to have a net worth of 15 billion US dollars through his own

7. I am aware of two examples of such violence in the Togeian Islands. On the first occasion, a tourist's walkman was stolen and the thief was beaten until blood ran from his ears. On another occasion, some teenage boys stole fish from a fish trap and the ones who couldn't pay a fine were beaten and brought to the police station and made to stay there for an entire month and cut the police station's grass on their knees using clippers.

entrepreneurial activities, many of them based on Indonesia's natural resources (Colmey and Liebold 1999). Moreover, powerful northern nations have acted as guarantors of an Indonesian bureaucracy that has facilitated international trade while suppressing political opposition. This officially choreographed subversion of opposition is effective in Indonesia right down to the village level. From this perspective, it can be seen that local fishers are not autonomous agents solely responsible for the use of cyanide in live fishing. As conservationists, we should pause to reflect on why we participate in blaming and intervening with only those at the bottom of the entrepreneurial ladder.

Legal contexts

An examination of Indonesian legal frameworks adds another dimension to our understanding of why cyanide fishing is illegal yet widespread. In official discourse, Indonesia calls itself a 'legal state' (*Negara Hukum*), and at one level it does have laws generous in their protection of both ordinary people and the resources they depend on. Environmental laws, for example, prohibit the use of destructive technologies, the harvest and export of endangered species, and the penetration of foreign fishing vessels into Indonesian waters. But laws can also have unstated agendas: the design and implementation of law reflects cultural norms and dominant ideologies as well as political capacity and will. Indonesian resource law, which I will explore in relation to Napoleon wrasse regulation, apportions blame, expertise and profit differently among fishers, businesses, and government agencies.

In a country, indeed a world, where 'development' is a privileged ideology, environmental legislation in Indonesia creates, in effect, a protected environment for business, while focusing conservation responsibility, enforcement and blame onto communities. For example, we can see how official structures claim to protect people and ecosystems while actually protecting the interests of bureaucrats and traders by looking at the legislation for the Napoleon wrasse. The decrees titled '*Ban on the Napoleon Wrasse Fish Haul*' (Government of Indonesia 1995a) and '*Ban on Export of Napoleon Wrasse Fish*' (Government of Indonesia 1995b) appear by their titles to insulate this species from catch and sale, since markets are almost wholly foreign and export is 'banned'. Both laws, however, contain kernels of exception that actually *facilitate*, not hinder, the catch and export of fish.

Fish camp operators, exporters and government officials are the direct beneficiaries of these laws. For example, Article 8 of the ban on haul states '*fish shall weigh not less than one kilogram and not more*

than three', while Article 9 says fish '*weighing more than three kilograms or those weighing less than one kilogram will be allowed to be sold locally to a marketing entrepreneur*'. Although the law formally 'disallows' their export, fish that weigh too little or too much may legally enter the hands of traders whose only intent is to sell fish abroad. Further, Napoleon wrasse laws also allow catch for research purposes, but collecting companies (fish camps) are not set up as research stations. For instance, no research is facilitated through any Togeian Island fish camp. Local markets for live fish are minimal and there aren't any good reasons other than export to purchase Napoleon wrasse from fishers. It is unrealistic, therefore, to believe that the fish bought by camps will not be exported (or that large fish will shrink to permissible export sizes!).

Laws that enable trade in live fish, simultaneously empower bureaucracies and enrich individual government workers. This is organised through the government's reporting, evaluating, and permit-granting roles outlined in live fishing laws. Government agencies grant permits for the haul of fish and require other permits to export live fish. For legal export, each Napoleon wrasse also needs an official 'letter of origin'. The provincial fisheries department is further obliged to oversee the biological sustainability of the fishery: it '*shall determine the fishing ground by evaluating the resource and its environment*'. Despite these regulations, the Napoleon wrasse is on the endangered species list, indicating a deficit in the will, funding, expertise and even intent of bureaucrats to carry out their role as resource guarantor. Fees are collected for permits and 'services' ensuring that the government's oversight practices create conditions for maximum exploitation and minimal protection of live fish and other natural resources.

In Indonesia, most bureaucracies need to secure their own funding for all but the most rudimentary operations, and the personal incomes of government workers are rarely dissociated from office income. Granting permits and facilitating trade are routine profit-making activities of many branches of government. Permits for fish camps in the Togeian Islands reportedly cost USD 1000 in 'official money', and fishers claim that unmeasurable hidden fees surpass this figure. It is in the self interest of bureaucrats to *grant* permits, not to restrict access to natural resources. Johannes and Riepen report that exporters without proper permits call Napoleon wrasse 'grouper' on customs forms and pay officials not to inspect their shipments (Johannes and Riepen 1995:40). In the case of the live fish industry in Sulawesi, permit requirements that provide personal income for officials are the rule, not the exception. Evidence from the Togeian

case doesn't support the idea that enforcement limits, or is even intended to limit, cyanide use.

In another regulation, the '*Decree of the Director General of Fisheries Regarding Size, Location, and Manners of Hauling Napoleon Wrasse Fish*' (Government of Indonesia 1995c) we see the role fishers are supposed to play in the interstices between traders and bureaucrats. Rules pertaining to fishers focus on techniques and equipment. This law allows catch and trade by 'traditional fishers' defined as persons or groups whose means of livelihood is catching fish using non-motorised craft or small outboards and '*which utilise fish catching devices and substances that shall not harm the fish resource or its environment*' such as '*lines, traps, and nets*'. The law's positioning of fishers as responsible for cyanide use is transparent in the text since its emphasis on catch method proposes fishers as the party responsible for how fish are caught.

Corruption II

In the Togeian Island fishery, a story of how a law prohibiting the use of air compressors to catch fish reveals the manner in which the Indonesian 'Legal State' functions on the ground. Representatives from the police, navy and fisheries departments descended on the Togeian Islands one day in 1997 to perform what they called a 'secret operation'. They were looking for air compressors that normally require permits to possess. A local village leader was first told to notify the owners of the compressors of their permit violations. Since he was involved himself with cyanide fishing, he claimed that he had 'influenza' and couldn't leave his house. Unlike the 'sea operation' I described previously, which was run by a village level official, these outsiders were successful in finding 'culprits' and three compressors were temporarily confiscated.⁸ A rumour floated briefly around the village that the equipment owners would be taken to Poso, the regency capital, to face charges. Clearly, the way out of the difficulty involved cash, and the sooner the problem was dealt with, the less expensive it would be. If money was fast flowing (*ken-cang*) then the problem would be put to rest and this is, in fact, what happened.

Togeian people consistently revealed the opinion that it is only poor folks who end up in trouble with the law; those with the means can pay their way out of difficulties. One fisher said '*I want to help [those arrested], but to help with money — there isn't any money. To help with advice — I don't want to*

seem like I go along with the position of the police. What do I do? Poor people just aren't able to evade these things.' On average, a Togeian fisher might have access to fifty or a hundred dollars in savings; everyone seems to know (and fear) that getting out of jail would cost the impossible sum of USD 5000 should matters progress to an extreme. This forces local people who do become caught in enforcement webs to turn to village officials and entrepreneurs who trade immediate cash and protection for future illegal resource harvests.

Even when village people do not break the law, they find that laws are not meant to be employed by people like them. They usually find it impossible to protect their legal interests when confronted by men in uniforms. In another instance I witnessed in North Sulawesi, village people tried to arrest the captain of a boat belonging to a cartel that was in Indonesian waters illegally and using cyanide on local reefs. The captain of the fishing boat was from the Sangir Islands, a small Indonesian island group near the Philippine border and all of the crew were Filipino. Someone from the village told the boat captain, '*The problem is that the villagers here are small fishers. There is nothing for them if you take their fish.*' The captain, with great bravado, replied that he could do as he pleased since he had friends in the police all over the Province.

Two weeks later, the fishers involved in the arrest were summoned to speak with a policeman who, sidearm over his shirt, bullets lined up across his chest, chastised them for their action. To diminish its significance in the face of this intimidation, villagers protested by saying what they did wasn't really an 'arrest'. The policeman said, though, that the villagers had been wrong and the captain might have to be compensated with village funds for lost revenues. In the end, the villagers were warned, the policeman was paid, and the captain was free to use cyanide where and when he wished. '*The village has the right to regulate its own affairs, but the police want to mix their hands in it*', someone grumbled.

In conclusion

Poor fishers are the first to suffer penalties and to assume the greatest risks in live fishing, and they are also excluded from the highest live fish profits and from protection from prosecution. Rules as they are enforced within the entrepreneurial Indonesian bureaucracy tend to enrich bureaucrats

8. With the right permit, compressors are not illegal, even though they still would be most productively employed, from an owner's perspective, in catching live fish with cyanide.

and traders while failing to protect either species or citizens. The live fish trade could benefit many of Indonesia's fishers over the long term. Instead, it is organised around making a small number of officials and entrepreneurs wealthy at the expense of coral reef ecosystems and the local communities that depend on them. While conservationists *desire* to live in a world with healthy coral reefs, imagining this ideal world as aesthetically beautiful, scientifically captivating, and organically whole, Indonesia's fishers *must* live in such a world. They don't share with conservationists, bureaucrats, or traders the ability to search out other, better places.

Up to this point, conservationists have tended to explain environmental degradation as the result of poverty, population, proximity, ignorance or recalcitrance and we too easily blame those who are really the victims of cyanide fishing. We can explain this culture of blame, perhaps, by the political risk inherent in confronting powerful elites. We are, in other words, in the same position as fishers; to frame our environmental concerns in terms of a critique of elite practices makes *us* vulnerable too. This suggests a potential space for alliance and collaboration with fishers. Rather than condemn the industry and its fishers, I have argued we need to understand who participates in the destructive aspects of live fishing, what bureaucratic, social and legal structures facilitate participation, and how and why have they come to exist. By recognising that the most substantive ecosystem abuses are not organised locally, but rather underwritten by an interconnected bureaucracy and commercial community, we may find a basis for alliance with Togeian and other local peoples.

We might also find we have success helping Indonesia's fishers combat cyanide use by coming out fully in *support* of live fishing as the sustainable industry that it potentially is. Thus, the question would become not one of how to prevent local people from doing x or y — how to restrict their activities — but rather how to help Indonesia's fishers respond to the power dynamics that reward glutinous resource extractions in the name of economic development. This could lead us to a future that conservationists, Indonesia's fishers, and coral reef fish might all be able to live with.

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