

The History of Tuna Fishing in Tambler, General Santos City, Philippines

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Abstract

This study presents the historical evolution of tuna fishing in Tambler, General Santos City (*Gensan*) with emphasis on the fishing methods. The paper focuses only on the tuna offshore fishing. Postharvest activities such as fish marketing, canning, exporting and value-added processing would be discussed if deemed necessary but considered beyond the study. As a qualitative research, key informant interview, focus group discussion, site observation and documentary analysis were utilized to gather and triangulate data.

Study findings showed that the tuna fishing in Tambler was once done in indigenous manner but across time, due to various factors, become highly industrialized. In Sarangani Bay, where Tambler beds, the B'laan used to fish in the estuarine area using bamboo and abaca net-traps especially by moonlight; while the Maguindanaon paddled boats with no outriggers to fish nearshore using abaca line and a hook made from a sharpened fishbone. However, with the arrival of the migrant fishers from Visayas and Luzon in late 1940s, better fishing techniques, e.g., beach seine, drift gillnet, and ring net, and the use of outriggered-motorized boats and bamboo payao (fish aggregating device) had been introduced hence depleting the tuna resources in the bay. This depletion and the 1960s demand for sashimi-grade tuna by the Japanese buyers pushed the local fishers and investors to fish in the Moro Gulf and Sulu Sea using bigger fishing vessels (*unay*) with onboard-refrigeration. Today, helicopters, sonar, powerblocks, modified payao made of metals, and modern fishing boats have been utilized for purse-seining in the high seas.

Keywords: tuna fishing, Tambler, handline, *unay*, *Gensan*, payao, purse-seine, *Gensanon*

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Introduction

A Jesuit account in 17th century A.D. described the innate skills of the Visayan people in way of traditional fishing. They widely inhabited Visayas Islands and became descendants of the Cebuano, Bol-anon, Waray, Ilonggo, among others. Per Spanish account of Alcina (1668) as translated by Kobak and Gutierrez (2004), Visayan people “like to eat fish more than other flesh of animals and birds.” Their forefathers who were but “islanders and sons and daughters of the sea” were innate, skilled and seasoned fishers. Their unique and efficient methods of fishing were transmitted from one generation to another. Across generations, their ingenious fishing skills survived since “even boys twelve to fifteen years [old] do it.”

In his account, “*Historia de las Islas e indios de Bisayas*” (History of the Bisayan People in the Philippine Islands) published in 1668, Alcina reckoned through firsthand experiences and narrates that: “The manner in catching all these large fish is: first with nets, which they call *panamaw* and which they place in the sea, as they are accustomed to set them on land for wild hogs and other animals.” “They also catch them with three-pronged fish spear or *buntal[s]*; there are many natives very skilled in this procedure.” They could catch *duyung* (sea cow) and *lumud* (dolphin); and larger fishes such as *tagdangan* or *pakangan* (swordfish), *ihu* (shark), *pagi* (ray fish), ‘*toninas*’ (Spanish for tunas) and *bankules* (tuna-like species) only through their swift *balutu* (canoe/boat) and the use of *panamaw* (nets) and *buntal* (fishing spear with cord) (Alcina, 1668).

However, not all their fishing ventures were impeccable. In one of the fishing trips he went with them, Alcina (1668) described that their set *panamaw* clogged several *duyung* traveling together carrying away the nets off with them without being able to do anything. They also experienced sailing like “rockrose” by their *balutu* when the *buntal* or harpoon’s barbed points wounded and got stuck on the body of a moving larger fish. At times, they need to cut the cord or else they be pulled out to the sea and be injured. And when they satisfyingly hooked a large fish, they got tired quickly since heavier fishes were hard to pull (Alcina 1668 translated by Kobak and Gutierrez 2004).

Zayas (1994) studied the migratory life of Cebuano fishers, one of Visayan groups, who became *pangayaw* (sojourner) and *dayo* (settler) in Gigantes Islands *Sur* and *Norte*. The fish they produced were sold at Cebu markets, “a connection they inherited from their parents.” The Cebuano fishers who became *pangayaw* did not stay long in the island. They arrived to Gigantes only during ample fish seasons and returned home to their families in Cebu especially during Holy Week and fiestas. Cebuano who became *dayo* had settled permanently in the island with their families together with several financiers who also put up their permanent houses. The Cebuano *pangayaw* and *dayo* had minimal interaction with the original inhabitants except during meetings where to get or buy potable water (Zayas, 1994).

Like the Cebuano fishermen, there were also other temporary migrants in Gigantes who were from various islands in Visayas like the Bol-anon in Bohol, and Waray in Samar and Leyte. They go there depending on the fish supply, hence, making the island a mere transit place. It can be explained that these migratory traits of the Visayas fishermen is influenced by the inter-group linkages and social changes (Seki,

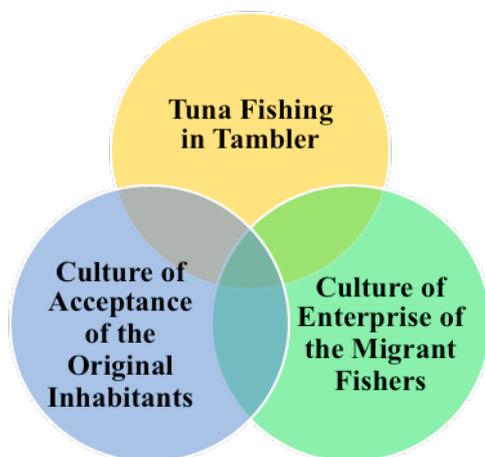
1997); and on the idea that migration from a place takes place due to fish depletion and migration to a place happens when there is abundance of fish supply (Zayas, 1994).

In the study of de la Peña (2000), the Bol-anon search-routes for *tungog* (dried tanbark for tanning and *bahalina* [coconut rum] fermentation ingredient) brought them to mangrove forests of Dumarán in Palawan, Zamboanga, Glan near *Gensan*, and Tungkil Island near Jolo, Mindoro, and Polilio Islands in Quezon, to as far south as Kudat in Borneo, via sailboats. By this time, fishing had become unsustainable for the Bol-anon especially of Panggangan Island since Cebuano fishers already monopolized Cebu markets. An account of one Bol-anon tells that they found *Dadiangas* (*Gensan*) in one of their trips for *tungog*. However, historical records tell that there were already Bol-anon in *Dadiangas* in the 1950s or just before World War II who were the first to realize opportunities of fishing in the area. Unlike the Bol-anon who followed them, they had their own boats and financed their own trips for small-scale non-motorized tuna fishing (de la Peña 2000).

The fishers of Visayas Islands, within their socio-economic context vis-à-vis methods of fishing, migratory traits, organizational structure, and psychological phenomenon uniquely molded their quality and skills as seasoned fishermen. The researcher viewed importance on the nature of Visayas Islands' fishers to this study since those who engaged in earlier tuna fishing in Sarangani Bay were fishermen that could have traced their origin or their parental ethnic backgrounds from Visayas Islands' coastal fishing communities.

This study aims to present the historical progress of tuna fishing in Barangay Tambler, General Santos City from its mere subsistence activities up to its sophisticated industrialization. Emphasis is given on the fishing methods. Specifically, this study traces back the early fishing practices in Tambler before the large-scale fishing. Likewise, it discusses how those indigenous fishing practices evolved in Sarangani Bay at the coming of migrant fishers especially those who were from Visayas islands. Lastly, this paper shows the recent industrial fishing methods adopted by the *Gensanon* (refers to both the original inhabitants and the migrants in local parlance) at the height of commercialization.

Conceptual Framework



The growth of tuna fishing in Tambler from indigenous to industrialized manner was the result of fusion of the culture of acceptance of the Maguindanaon and the B'laan and the culture of enterprise of the migrants. In 1939, when the influx of migrants arrived at the rich Sarangani Bay in search of better fishing grounds to sustain a decent life, the Maguindanaon and the B'laan opened the paradise to them. They lived and fished peacefully. This moment of peace gave the migrants the chance to hone their innate fishing skills from different variations of

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

hook-and-line to various ring-net types and other net-use methods on the new fishing grounds. At the next three decades, they had been given enough space and time to innovate their fishing systems to fully materialize and welcome the industrialization age of tuna fishing in Sarangani Bay in 1970s. If the migrants met menace with the original inhabitants in the new land since the start, the sophisticated tuna fishing industry in Tumbler today would have never even been conceived.

Methodology

This study employed qualitative research methods using a historical-descriptive approach. Researcher first conducted documentary analysis of national and local government records. I also gathered data from the offices of private fishing organizations like SOCSKSARGEN Federation of Fishing Allied Industries, Inc. (SFFAI), South Cotabato Purse-seiners Association (SOCOPA) and Umbrella Fish Landing Association (UFLA). Primary and secondary sources from several libraries were also utilized to gather and corroborate data.

They initially came to the research locale for communication protocols. Then they conducted ocular investigations and found contact persons during subsequent visits. Using the snowball sampling, they conducted interviews with the key informants who were the pioneering fishers and the oldest residents in the area. They also initiated focus group discussions participated by 10 fishermen at the house of Mrs. Julieta Ababon, a barangay health worker and a wife of, Felix Ababon, Sr., a captain/operator of a ‘pumpboat,’ a motorized fishing boat, at Purok Diamond Valley, Barangay Tumbler.

Discussion of Findings

Barangay Tumbler is exactly 10.7 kilometers from *Gensan*’s center of governance. It is bounded in the north by Barangay Calumpang; in the east and southeast by Sarangani Bay; in the south, partly by Barangay Seguil; and in the West by Barangay Fatima and partly by Barangay San Jose (Tumbler



Figure 2. Map of General Santos City and Tumbler (encircled) was retrieved from <https://mgakayamanan.sabaulngmagandanggensan.wordpress.com> on September 15, 2016.

Profile, 2015) (see Figure 2).

Tambler: A Paradise by the Bay

Tambler was once a forestland – from canopies of wild trees in the mountain slopes to thick *bakawan* (mangroves) bushes in the shore; from *amgah ngo* or *dadiangas* (scrub) covered hills and rocky terrains to coastal cliffs and beaches. Food here was abundant. Thus, a paradise among its earliest inhabitants. The B’laan settled in hillsides and upland areas, while the Maguindanaon occupied the shoreline and near plains. Few T’boli also stayed in the mountains but only during planting and harvesting seasons; they mostly lived in the enclaves at the frontier (Tambler Profile, 2015).

“Tambler” was derived from the B’laan words, “*tamble el*”, meaning “continuous fresh flowing water”; “*el*” means “water” in B’laan language (Tambler Profile, 2015). Water is life! And B’laan people deeply knew it. They were mainly upland farmers. They plant rootcrops and rice. Hence, they greatly relied on spring water to sustain their crops (*Ibid.*; Bruhad Gawan, personal interview, April 21, 2016).

On the other hand, the Maguindanaon, who were Islamized, were coastal and riverine people. They lived in plains and nearshore areas of Tambler. Though they plant coconuts and other crops, they majorly relied on barter with the B’laan especially for rice. They were those who engaged in fishing in Sarangani Bay and Baluan River. Hence, most of their products were sourced from the water. They abundantly offer fish of different kinds (Edris Diamad, personal interview, March 15, 2016).

Indigenous Fishing Practices in Sarangani Bay

The term “*Sarangani*” was derived from the Maguindanaon words, “*sarang ini*” which means “*this is the boundary*” or “*this is ours.*” The Maguindanaon used to fish in Sarangani Bay. They fished for family sustenance and bartered fish surplus to the B’laan for rice and yams. They only fished nearshore. They paddled their *baroto* (traditional boat with *layag* [sail]) in shallow areas but could easily see fish inch below the water reflected by the moonlight then. The bay was very rich in demersals and pelagics (Edris Diamad, personal interview, March 15, 2016.)

A Maguindanaon fisherman used traditional hook-and-line materials. The line was made of an unbraided and refined abaca fiber. The hook, on the other hand, was made from a sharpened bigger fishbone. Earthworm or young squid were entangled on the hook to serve as bait. Using this method, three hours was enough for a day’s harvest. Thanks to the clean and healthy Sarangani Bay (*Ibid.*; Ali Alimudin, personal interview, March 16, 2016)

In some special occasions, some B’laan stayed in a Maguindanaon community for certain period and fish together. Since the B’laan never used the boat, they fished in a different way. Commonly, they fished, with their Maguindanaon guide, along the estuarine area, at the mouth of the Baluan River, where water level is waist below especially during at dawn. They used the bamboo spear and the cage aided with small abaca net trap. After targeting moonlight-reflected fishes, they then slowly walked towards them and abruptly triggered the spear or scooped the bamboo-abaca trap

underwater up thenceforth catching the fish. Right after fishing, they cooked the fish together and equally distributed the remaining catch for salting or drying. (Bruhad Gawan, personal interview, April 21, 2016; Edris Diamad, personal interview, March 15, 2016).

The B'laan and Maguindanaon people co-exist peacefully. In fact, intermarriages strengthened their affinity ties. They were good brothers and friends (Edris Diamad, personal interview, March 15, 2016). According to Arcenas (1993) as cited in Campado (2001): "No single piece of historical account, either written or oral, ever called attention to the fact that the Maguindanaon [sic.] attempted to invade the B'laan or vice versa."

The Coming of Migrant Fishers

The 1935 Commonwealth Act No. 441 mandated the NLSA (National Land Settlement Administration) to create resettlement zones in Mindanao. In February 27, 1939, sixty-nine settlers led by General Paulino Santos arrived at Lagao (a *Gensan* barangay today), about 10 kilometers north of Tambler (Ramirez, 1993). They were from congested local-elite controlled lands in Visayas and Luzon. The basis of granting farmlands to qualified farmers relied mainly on their good harvests in a shorter period. They were provided with food supplies by the NLSA in a loan basis to be paid by the sales of their harvests (Campado, 2001).

The settlers focused on farming, of course. However, along the way, since overlooking Sarangani Bay was naturally enticing, some of them had the pastime of fishing for family sustenance (*Ibid.*). Given their better way of fishing, they never expected the kind of beauty and bounty the bay had to offer them. They enjoyed fishing. However, the World War II halted the resettlement period. Sarangani Bay was saved for a while.

After the war, the coastal areas had the fastest urbanization. With its port as the gateway of commodities and migrants, coastal Dadiangas emerged as a new business district competing with Lagao. Coastal residents outnumbered Lagao's population. Fishing villages in Buayan (a barangay today), Baluan, Silway-Dadiangas, and Bula sprouted up like mushrooms along the bay. Bula became the first center of fishing activities. The in-migration was too fast until the Maguindanaon found themselves selling lands to the migrants. They benefited from real estate income. They never saw the migrant fishers as a competition in Sarangani Bay but instead an opportunity for progress as they could learn a lot from them, economically, along the way (Ramirez, 1993; Campado, 2001).

The Migrants' Early Fishing Methods

In mid-1940s, the migrants resumed fishing in Sarangani Bay using various fishing methods. They employed *pokot* (use of fishing nets), *bunsod* or *baklad* (use of different fish traps), *sudsud* (push net), and the hook and line variations like *undak* (series of hooks in single line), *palangre* (single hooks in multiple lines), *saragat* (hooks arranged in a circular manner). They introduced the use of payao - a float of bundled bamboos with *habong* (lines of palm fronds) beneath generating algae and barnacles attracting fish to feed. It was anchored on the seafloor by a rattan line

attached onto oil drums filled with boulders (Francisco Villaflor, personal interview, March 4, 2016; Aprieto, 1995; Panis, 2004). The payaos were deployed within Sarangani Bay. Most fishers used hook and line to fish around the payao. (Edilberto Lopez, personal interview, January 25, 2017).

The Ilonggo and Cebuano employed *pamunit* and *pamasol* (hook and line). The Ilocano tried *baling* (beach seine), *patuloy* (drift gillnet), *sigay* (set gill net), and *tabucol* (trap net). The Bol-anon, Cebuano and Waray tried *basnig* (bag net) and the “*guyod-guyod*” or “sampana” (ring net). In this method, fishermen paddled the non-motorized banca pulling the sampana (a raft-like platform shaped like a smaller boat with outrigger) where the fishing net was placed. The one end of the net on the sampana was tied onto a stationary banca. As fishermen paddled the banca to encircle fish schools in the payao, the arranged nets on the sampana orderly fell onto the water. As the paddled banca met the stationary one, fishermen then formed a “ring net” underwater entrapping fishes. Thereafter, the fishermen manually pulled the fishing net to secure a day’s harvest. The small non-motorized boat could load 10-20 kilograms fish yield (Edilberto Lopez, personal interview, January 25, 2017).

Pioneering Fishing Innovations in Bula

In late 1950s, few families who had saved enough money improved their fishing operations. Distinguishable of those was the Congson family. Luciano “Lucio” Congson, their patriarch, was a Cebuano who came from a family of fishers. In search of a viable fishing grounds, they arrived at Bula in 1956 and fell in love with Sarangani Bay (BRC, 1994). Lucio pioneered the motorization of banca (fishing boat) in Bula. He used “Johnson” and “Evenrude” engine brands with 5-10 horsepower (hp) fixed at the outboard of the enlarged boat measuring 16 feet in length and 14 inches in width. It became known as “pumpboat” locally (*Ibid.*).

The vulnerability of the *sampana* from capsizing anytime could limit the pumpboat's speed and maneuvering- slowing down, or worse repeating its operation. To carry the net itself, Lucio and other fishing operators enlarged the banca up to 20 meter-length with outboard “Briggs and Stratton,” “Kooler,” “Daiya,” and “Yanmar” brands of 25 hp engines. Even without the sampana, this boat could carry and enclose 100-120 meters-net-circumference (BRC, 1994). Fishers manually pulled the fishing nets. This method was later called as the *sensoro*. It could achieve 150-300 kilograms catch per fishing trip. Torches, kerosene lamps or petromax lighted the boat (*Ibid.*; Edilberto Lopez, personal interview, January 25, 2017; Francisco Villaflor, personal interview, March 4, 2016).

In late 1960s, using the saved *sensoro* money, Lucio’s son, Doming, invented the *unay* system. In an *unay* operation, four highly motorized boats maneuvered to catch fish: the lightboat, the skiff/ranger boat, the service boat, and the *unay/lantsa*. The lightboat moved the payao to still waters while attracting schools of fish with its artificial light. The *unay* deployed the fish nets which one end attached to either the light boat or skiff boat while encircling the payao. When the *unay* met the stationary skiff boat, fishers enclose the net thereby creating a ring. The skiff boat, thereafter, maneuvered to prevent fish from escaping the enclosed nets. Seeing that schools of fish were totally trapped, the fishers aboard the three boats pulled the net together and store fish catch onto the *unay*’s built-in containers. The service boat, finally,

transports the fish yield from the *unay* ashore. The *unay* remained in the open sea (BRC, 1994; Edilberto Lopez, personal interview, January 25, 2017; Francisco Villafior, personal interview, March 4, 2016).

Tambler: The New Tuna Hub

Bula, as *Gensan*'s oldest fishing center, became overcrowded and congested. Fishing companies leased shores and purchased lands for their inland offices and "fishing compounds." Fishermen's shanties were erected everywhere. Hence, garbage and noise pollution turned prevalent. Fish unloading areas became limited and market places disorganized (Releva, 1998). This situation pushed fishers to unload harvests at the *Fish Landing*, an area between Bula (Pearly Shells) and Dadiangas South (Purok Islam). Due to its close location to the city's public market, *Fish Landing* became the most popular fish market and unloading center in General Santos City in the next decades. Other fishers transferred to other coastal villages. This hindered further fishing growth in Bula. Calumpang, a coastal barangay, catered the expanding growth of the tuna fishing industry. But it faced the same situation later. With its limited space, it turned overcrowded and congested (see Figure 2).

In 1972, a fishing village in Calumpang known as Purok Lapok (muddy), named after its mud-covered labyrinths and murky beach, was demolished. Forty households headed mostly of migrant fishers were relocated to Tambler (Carlos Calinawan, personal interview, September 5, 2015; Julieta Ababon, personal interview, September 5, 2015). Rudy Rivera, an emerging fishing magnate, bought the area to construct his fishing compounds, private wharves, and own ice-plants later. He purchased lands at Tambler and tapped electricity lines and water connections for the relocatees (Rosalita Nunez, personal interview, March 15, 2016). The relocation area became known as Purok Diamond Valley, the home of most tuna fishers in Tambler today (Roy Mercado, personal interview, September 1, 2015).

During the same year, Marfen Tan was contacted by the Sikatuna Fishing Industry for a 300-ton tuna contract within a month. The price offer was such a lucrative amount: one peso per kilo for skipjack tuna compared to 50 centavos locally; and three pesos per kilo for yellowfin tuna compared to one peso per kilo usual market. Marfen and his crew met the demand for just 15 days. Thenceforth, creating a good impression, the company continued buying tuna from *Gensan* fishers for export market. Ricsan Development Corporation, based in Davao City, later moored its ship on Sarangani shore to source tuna especially for Japan export after hearing the fishers' good performance. Del Monte Philippines and Dole Philippines, Inc followed suit within a month (Marfenio Tan, personal account, 2013).

In mid-1970s, Japanese capitalists arrived in *Gensan* to enter buying contracts for sashimi-grade yellow fin tuna (BRC, 1994; Panis, 2004; Releva, 1998). The Japanese knew they were in the right place because 80% of both the municipal and commercial fish landing in the city comprised tuna and tuna-like species (BRC, 1994). Japanese *sushi* and *sashimi* markets were established from then on.

In 1979, Doming Congson, Marfen Tan, and Candelario "Larry" Damalerio, emerging local fishing magnates, had their business offices, private wharves, ice plants and cold-storage constructed in Tambler. Doming's *Southern Fishing Industries* (SFI) and

Larry's *Damalerio Fishing Enterprise* were transferred to Purok Talisay, Tambler. Marfen Tan, on the other hand, founded the *San Andres Fishing Industries* (SAFI) in Purok Banisil, Tambler. They still resided at Bula with their families though (*Ibid.*; Francisco Villaflor, personal interview, March 4, 2016).

Commercial Tuna Fishing in Tambler

Tambler had just housed several fishing operations to put its name a landmark in the bustling tuna economy later at the onset of 1980s. Land route to Tambler became accessible via bulldozed rough roads. Today, its concrete four-six lanes international highways contributed greatly on the smooth flow of tuna from fishport to airport.



Figure 3. Purse-seiners in Tambler with power blocks and large fishing nets onboard (DOTC-PMO, 2003)

In 1980s, the heavy entry of ‘purse-seiners’ and proliferation of “*unay*” fleets and payao signaled the formal onset of fishing commercialization in General Santos City and in Tambler. Fishing was not merely for subsistence in this period. There were three types of tuna fishers: the handliners, the ringnetters, and the purse-seiners. The ringnetters used the pumpboat or “*unay*” and utilized the common “*sensoro*” net methods catching different types of fish. The handliners also used the pumpboat but only employed hook and line methods catching

only *bariles* (yellow fin tuna for exports). The head of both handline and ring-net operations is called *kapitan* (captain) and the rest are crews (BRC, 1994; Edilberto Lopez, personal interview, January 25, 2017; Felix Ababon Sr., personal interview, January 25, 2017).

Pursing the Net: A Unique Technique of Tambler Fishers

In the purse-seining operation in *Gensan*, four highly mechanized boats maneuvered to pay out and haul the net: the mother boat/catcher vessel, the light boat, the skiff/ranger boat, and the service boat/fish carrier. In this industrial fishing technique, the catcher vessel used power blocks to pay out the seine (large nets), with surface floats (*bouy*) on one edge and weights (usually stones or chain) on the other suspending the net vertically under the seawater, through hydraulic process. The *light boat* searches and lightens up payao at dawn/night to entice and amass schools of fish. The net is then stationed and maneuvered by a *ranger boat* on one end while the *mother boat* is paying out the rest of the net to encircle and enclose schools of fish. The bottom of the net is then pursed, or closed, and the net is tightened mechanically by power blocks in the mother boat/ main vessel. The fish catch is then bailed aboard the *service boat* with built-in cold-storage and freezers.

What is unique in the purse-seining operations among the *Gensanon* fishers was the use of the payao (fish aggregating device or floating fish shelter). Today, the payao has been improved for deep sea fishing. The payao's design has been modified for efficiency and durability. Its float or buoy is designed into a cylindrical form made of metal sheets thickly painted with enamel



Figure 4. A cylindrical payao's buoy made of metal sheets painted and labelled at Purok Stella Maris, Tambler. Photo taken on February 19, 2017

epoxy paints. Every float is painted with numbers and initial letters of the name of the fishing company or operator. There is a protruding small cone shape on one side which faced the origin of the sea current.

(Aprieto, 1995; Edilberto Lopez, personal interview, January 25, 2017; Marfenio Tan, personal account, 2013). The cost of each payao is at least 100,000 pesos today.

Recent Technological Advancement in Tambler Fishing

During the 1990s, there was the widespread use of “power blocks” in purse-seining operations which resulted to the bulk increase of tuna landing. Power blocks were used to mechanically close the bottom of the net, and to haul voluminous catch with hydraulic process. Power blocks were purchased from Manila but some were already fabricated locally particularly in shipyards. This method's bigger catch brought large-seiners with capacities between 150-400 gross tonnage (GT) deep sea. This breakthrough promptly increased also the carrying capacity loads of fish carriers up to 80 MT (Marfenio Tan, personal account, 2013).

This period also witnessed the birth of the “super seiners.” Super-seiners are the largest, highly sophisticated commercial fishing vessels with communication equipment, built-in cold storage, brining facilities, and advanced power blocks. It used sonar system to track locations of schools of fish. Super-seiners have capacities ranging between 489 GT and 1382 GT. This operation's bigger catch required bigger service boats' with carrying capacities up to 300 MT or more (*Ibid.*; BRC, 1994)

Tuna Landing in Tambler at the 21st Century

In 2008, the General Santos City Fishport Complex in Tambler passed the Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), Good Handling Practices (GHP) and the Standard Sanitation Operating Procedures (SSOP) requirements of the European Union. What ensued was a significant increase of *Gensan*'s tuna exports to European countries until now (PFDA, 2012; SFFAII, 2013). Thanks to the efforts of the Philippine Fisheries Development Authority and PhilExport, an NGO, with laboratory facility inside the complex for testing the quality of export tuna.

Gensanon fishers topped tuna production in the Philippines for years. In 2009, the city had recorded 143,316 MT, with 132,211 (92%) tuna and tuna-like species fish unloading at General Santos City Fishport Complex. It was the highest fish landing record in the country for the decade. In 2010, *Gensan* still topped fish landing records with 143,139MT accounting 131,127 MT (91.6%) for tuna and tuna-like species.

From 2011 to 2015, the PFDA recorded an aggregate of 635,594 MT fish landing. In 2013, the *Gensan* leveled off at 132,957 MT; in 2014, it ballooned-up to 145,278 MT; and, in 2015, it even spectacularly increased up to 160,238 MT fish landing record-the highest so far (PFDA, 2016).

Conclusion

The growth of tuna fishing in Tambler from indigenous to industrialized manner was the result of fusion of the culture of acceptance of the Maguindanaon and the B'laan and the culture of enterprise of the migrants. Fishing materials and systems innovations was borne out of this peaceful environment. However, Tambler's idle pastureland and unproductive slopes and mountain areas used for farming before turned as the opportunity cost for tuna specialization. The thriving tuna industry caused an imbalance of economic growth and progress between the coastal plains (eastern part) and mountain slopes (western part) of Tambler.

Nevertheless, Tambler productively catered the expanding growth of the tuna fishing industry. It is now the new tuna hub in *Gensan*: from where the most of fishers resided to where the fishing offices, ports, market halls, ice-plants, cold-storage and refrigeration facilities are located. Fishing's ancillary industries are also present. If you want to experience the surreal *Gensan* tuna experience, you should never forget to visit the General Santos City Fishport Complex which towers the highly-urbanized coastal landscape of Tambler. You can also feel the hiatus overlooking view of Sarangani Bay while relaxing at the high-end Mt. Sabrina Resort and the classy Sarangani Highland Resort. Thus, when one says "tuna"? It's Tambler!

Recommendation

This humble paper hopes to inspire researchers to conduct:

1. A historical study on the growth of Gensan tuna industry, in general, and its impact on the city's socio-economic and cultural landscape;
2. Researches on the historical development of other tuna fishing centers of Gensan;
3. Research on the history, mechanisms, and development of Japan's sashimi tuna sourcing in Gensan and its impact on the socio-economic and cultural landscape of the country across time.

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Interviewees

Ababon, Felix Sr. 60 years old. Fisherman 40 years. Captain, Pamarilesan. Diamond Valley, Tambler, General Santos City. September 5, 2015.

Ababon, Julieta. 56 years old. Fisherman's wife. Barangay Health Worker. Diamond Valley, Tambler, General Santos City. September 5, 2015.

Cagang, Warlito. 46 years old. Fisherman for 12 years. Purse-seiner. February 27, 2016

Calinawan, Carlos. 56 years old. Pamarilesan Seaborne Personnel 13 years. Purok Chairman, Diamond Valley, Tambler, General Santos City. September 5, 2015.

Diamad, Edris, 79 years old. Pioneering Maguindanaon Inhabitant in Tambler. March 15, 2016

Gawan, Bruhad. 84 years old. Pioneering B'laan Inhabitant in Tambler. September 4, 2016.

Gumera, Roselino. 60 years old. Fisherman for 40 years. Crew, Pamarilesan. Diamond Valley, Tambler, General Santos City. September 5, 2015.

Lopez, Edilberto Jr. 72 years old. Present Barangay Councilor and Pioneering Migrant Fisher in Bula. January 25, 2017.

Lu, Joaquin. 72 years old. Mommy Gina Tuna Resources Owner and Current SFFAI president. Pamarilesan financier and owner. April 19, 2016

Mercado, Roy. 55 years old. Barangay Tambler Secretary. September 1, 2015

Villaflor, Francisco. 75 years old. Pioneering Migrant Fisher in Bula. March 4, 2016

Villaver, Lando. 54 years old. Fisherman for 38 years. Busero, Mother Boat/Unay, Damalerio

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