

# Human Sciences Encounters in Phnom-Penh: Documents-Publications:Historical Ecology in Wallacea and Sunda:A Comparison of Maluku (east Indonesia) and Cambodia

Wednesday September 9

Latinis Kyle

## Historical Ecology in Wallacea and Sunda: A Comparison of Maluku (east Indonesia) and Cambodia

Historical ecology (Balée 1998; Crumley 1994) is a popular and emerging sub-discipline of anthropology, particularly ecological anthropology and archaeology. Although somewhat practiced for some time in many other fields due to the multi-disciplinary subject matter, historical ecology has virtually exploded on the anthropology scene in the last 15-20 years due to its relation to current global issues; e.g., environmental and resource degradation/depletion; sustainable resource production and extraction; global warming; deforestation; 'green' focused projects; past mismanagement and effective long-term management of 'total resource environments' (phrase from Ellen 1978); use of traditional knowledge in planning and development; etc. As for the world's tropical belt, the Neo-tropics in the Americas receive considerable attention while the Southeast Asian tropics have received virtually none.

Comparative assessments of Maluku (east Indonesia) and Cambodia are introduced in the following paper to represent island Southeast Asia and Mainland Southeast Asia respectively (Wallacea and the Holocene Sunda landmass more specifically) during a human occupation minimally spanning the last thirty to forty thousand years. Although distinctly different bio-geographic zones separated by a long distance, they were to varying degrees entangled in the same larger webs of interaction for at least 2500 years as evidenced from Austronesian expansion models (linguistic and archaeological); material cultural remains such as Dongson bronze drums; Indo-Pacific beads; Chinese, Thai and Vietnamese stoneware and glazed pottery from around the 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> centuries; early Chinese references to people and/or area specific goods (Han references to spices indigenous to Maluku and 3<sup>rd</sup> century direct accounts of Cambodia for example); and certainly later colonial power presence in both areas beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century (Groslier 2006 (trans. Smithies); Pires 1944 (trans. Cortesão)). This alone is interesting. However, the comparative approach importantly highlights significant differences and a few unexpected commonalities (e.g., importance of sugar palms) regarding their historical ecologies; essentially illuminating a better understanding of both.

Kyle Latinis received a PhD in Ecological Anthropology, University of Hawaii in 1999, before obtaining another one in Southeast Asian Studies (National University of Singapore) in 2005. His experience doesn't only rely on an expertise of Cambodia where he is currently based, but also extends to Indonesia, Philippines, Singapore, Vietnam, and the Pacific Islands for almost 20 years in the field.

Cambodia and Maluku).	Near Oceania (blue represents Pleistocene landmass).
-----------------------	--

Arenga: Widespread and particularly popular in Maluku.	Borassus: Widespread and particularly popular in Cambodia (national tree) and parts of central and eastern Indonesia.

[Kyle Latinis' Profile.](#)