

## “Research project for further exploration of the world view of Maritime Asia, and pursuit of its expression”

### Report on activity results and future initiatives

#### 1. Activity Overview: Introduction to destinations (travel info) and report on the research project

In the four communities I visited for this research, I stayed with families living on small-scale fisheries in order to experience and participate in daily life centered on the sea, as well as accompany them to the sea on a daily basis, and carry out photo and video shootings and field work.

#### Ayoke Island (Province of Surigao del Sur)



(Left: Going from Butuan to Cantilan by tricycle. Center: The pier in Cantilan. Right: Ayoke Island from the boat en route)

I flew from Manila to Butuan, a city in Mindanao. At the airport in Butuan, I met up with Angely Chi from The Unifiedfield, who would accompany me throughout my stay. From Butuan, I rode a tricycle to the port town of Cantilan in eastern Mindanao. At the pier in Cantilan, I boarded an outrigger canoe fitted with an engine which belonged to the host family who had come to meet me from Ayoke Island. After an hour on the Lanuza Bay sailing towards Pacific Ocean, we arrived at Ayoke Island.



(Left: Meal with the family. Right: Entrance to the room and workspace which I borrowed on the second floor)

There are approximately one hundred households residing on this small island right next to the Philippine Trench. Nearly all of them are second or third generation members of families who moved here after WWII, and the whole island seemed to form a single community. Their electricity is provided entirely by solar power, and both drinking and household water are supplied by springs from the mountains. It is a rare environment where people still live in a style like the one before our life was mechanized and industrialized. I stayed with the family of a woman who is sort of a caretaker of the community, a veteran fisherman, and their sons, borrowing some space on the second floor.



(Left: Shooting and researching at early morning fishing Center: Shooting and researching at evening fishing Right: Checking video and photo shots together )

I accompanied the father and son of my host family to go fishing using fishing nets only for this season, twice in the morning and twice in the evening, and conducted recordings and fieldwork. They went out for fishing every day as long as the sea conditions allowed them to do so, but the seascape with the people never repeats itself, showing me a different side every time. Through my experience on this sea, I felt for the first time that my job was not to “capture” the world, but to “receive” what the world reveals to me. The time I spent periodically sharing video and photo shoots I had taken with fishermen and other islanders was a precious opportunity to see their genuine reactions to how I had received and depicted the world including the people themselves. It was also a precious time to hear their stories of life and the sea, which arise often starts naturally from no one in particular. Such stories can rarely be heard in formal interview settings.

### Badjao Community of in Matina Aplaya



(Left: The community seen from the landside. Center: The community seen from the seaside. Right: Coastal road and pier leading to Davao Gulf)

After leaving Ayoke Island I traveled to Butuan by land, via Cantilan. With a transfer from van to night bus, I reached Davao nearly half a day later. I stayed around 10 days with a pioneer family in one of the Badjao communities in the center of the city, facing Davao Gulf. The Bajau people originally lived on houseboats as they drift on the sea. Yet due to conflicts, and pirate attacks, as well as government policies and environmental changes, it became increasingly difficult for many of them to continue their original lifestyle on the sea, and they had no choice but to flee their home to settlements in urban areas . The number of households varies, but continues to increase.



(Left: Lunch on board during a break from fishing. Center: Shooting on the sea. Right: A scene of free-diving fishing underwater.)

## Badjao Community of in Santa Cruise

The father of my host family was one of the last generation of people to experience life on houseboats on the sea. I accompanied the father, who is a skilled fisherman himself, who went out for net fishing and spearfishing with other members of the family of all ages and sexes. Their living space is gradually shifting from sea to land, but I was able to grasp through their living practices and life culture, the wisdom they pass down in their daily living although its shape and form changes.



(Left: The community seen from the seaside at low tide. Center: A pier. Right: Stilt house on the mangrove beach where I stayed)

I traveled by a van or bus nearly 1 hour from Davao to the bus terminal in Santa Cruise. After another 20 minutes on tricycle, I arrived in the Badjao community in Santa Cruise. This community has a kin relationship with the Badjao community in Matina Aplaya, which is on the opposite side of Davao Gulf. Despite last minute arrangements made due to cancellation of travel to the island province of Tawi-Tawi, the community kindly hosted me. With the cooperation of a woman who leads the community, I stayed with a family who live in a house built on stilts on the water edge for 10 days while carrying out research, and shooting video and still photos images.



(Left: Shooting on the boat. Center: Coordinator and fisherman preparing lunch with freshly caught seafood. Right: Checking together what I had shot.)

With the cooperation of the village leader, I was able to go on several fishing journeys with fishermen from the community who are skilled in various fishing methods including spearfishing, a type of longline fishing, and net fishing. Despite it being my first time staying with them, sharing fundamental human experiences such as free diving under the same condition and sharing catch of the day allowed me to carry out research and shooting while feeling a sense of trust being organically built between us beyond language. In the time spent on a boat waiting for fish to be caught, with the help of Angely's interpretation, I was able to hear more of their personal stories about daily life, the sea, the fishery, and life at large.

As I listened, I meditated on sea and human practice while noticing changes in the tones of their voice and their face

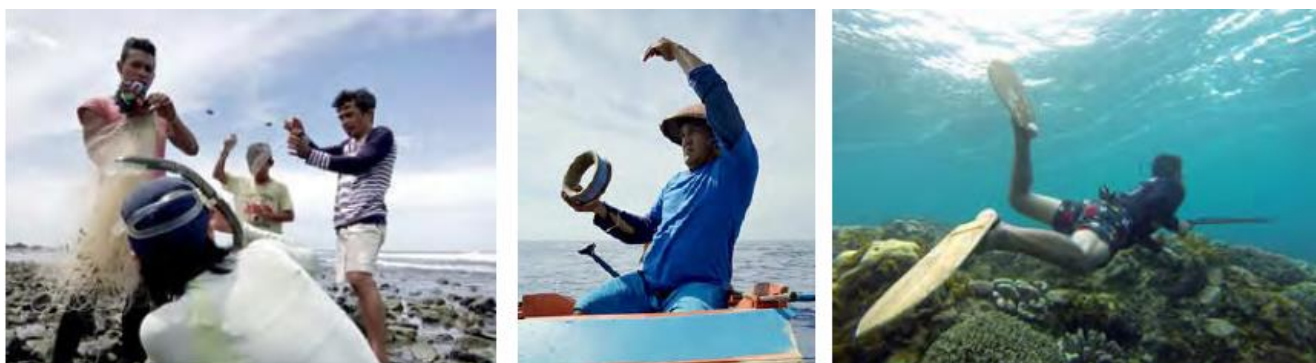
expressions as if human mind being liberated by the vastness of ocean.

### Barangay Cabuaya



(Left: Jeepney, the only means of transportation from the village to the city. Center: Villagers' houses by the mountains. Right: Going fishing in the Pacific Ocean.

I traveled from Davao city for almost a day by night bus and jeepney, and arrived at a small village in southeast Mindanao. The community consists of four tribes and located between sea and mountain: Pacific Ocean in front, and mountains inhabited by the endangered Philippine Eagle inhabits.



(Left: Shooting net fishing in shallow water. Center: Line fishing with artificial bait targeting large fish. Right: Spearfishing)



(Left: A fisherman drawing to describe his handmade tools.)

During my 10 day homestay with a Mandaya tribe family living right in front of Pacific Ocean, I accompanied their fishing trips using nets and handmade bait, and carried out some shooting and research on board. After fishing trips, I would join in a gathering of people that takes place naturally by the shore, and eat fresh seafood caught that day while listening to all sorts of stories about the sea, the community gossips, their experience of natural events including earthquakes and tsunamis, and life on the sea and in the mountains.

## 2. Activities with host institutions and works with collaborators

### Solo exhibition “Human Seascape” at Bulwagan ng Dangal University Heritage Museum



(Left: In front of the exhibition banner at the museum entrance, from left to right, Director Uesugi of the Japan Foundation, Manila, the exhibition curator Professor Cecilia De la Paz, and Dr. Zayas. Center: The installation view. Right: Artist Talk)

With an invitation from Dr. Cynthia Neri Zayas, Maritime Anthropologist and Director of the Center for International Studies at University of the Philippines who recommended me for this fellowship, and with sponsorship from the center, I held a solo exhibition titled “Human Seascape” from April 26<sup>th</sup> to May 5<sup>th</sup> at the Bulwagan ng Dangal University Heritage Museum on the university campus. I held an artist talk at the opening reception, and talked about how the works on display, which were based on several years of ongoing project with sea and human, would connect to the research project to be started from the following day.

### “Plastic Human Seascape” workshop: Ayoke Island



(Left: Showing reference materials about global plastic pollution at the workshop for adults. Center-left: Collecting garbage and recyclables to learn the current environmental condition of the island. Center-right: Thinking of ideas to improve the situation. Right: Presenting each ideas.)

In collaboration with The Unifiedfield Nomadic Artist-in-Residence Program in The Philippines, my host organization for this research project, I planned workshops for people of Ayoke Island, concerning maritime environmental pollution, which is growing more serious worldwide. One of the workshops I conducted focused on plastic pollution, which is visible everywhere, and directly and immediately related to the daily life of anyone in general including the islanders. The daily rhythm of the islanders and their availability depend on their age and job, or what they do, such as people going for fishing or making copra, women babysitting, and children. To get as many and wide range of people to participate as possible, I held my workshops on the spot as soon as I noticed a sign of people naturally gathering.



(Left: Showing reference materials at the workshop for children. Center-left: Garbage segregation game with children and what they collected. Center-right: A workshop to make rope out of recycled plastic bags. Right: A recyclables collection corner set up based on the workshop.)

**Making the experimental Animation “Ocean Karma”**



(Left: Segregating collected garbage. Others: Making stop motion animation)

Making use of time when we could not go fishing due to the weather conditions or other factors, I created stop-motion animation using natural materials such as shells, coral, and stones, as well as pieces of plastic and garbage. I used the animation to show children at workshops how plastics polluting the sea return to the bodies of human beings who discarded the waste in the first place.

**Craft workshop “AHAP! (good!)”**

**Badjao Community in Matina Aplaya**



(Left: A poster to call for participation to for the workshop. Others: Holding the actual workshop)

At the Badjao community of in Matina Aplaya as well, I organized a workshop on the sea and our living environment, in collaboration with The Unifiedfield. What caught my attention were handmade miniature boats which children of the community would make and come to show me every day. With scrap materials found on street surfaces, they skillfully crafted miniature versions of outrigger canoes used for fishing. I hoped to make the workshop into an opportunity to invite the children of Bajau to teach us how to make such boats together, and to learn incredible creativity and flexibility of such young masters of

bricolage. I also called for wider participation from outside of the community, with hope to create a site for individuals from within and outside to encounter and experience the incredible talent and the existing “organic intelligence” of these children, who tend to be viewed with prejudice in contemporary society. On the day of the workshop, artists, architects, and several parents with children from the outskirts of Davao participated, and had great fun creating boats in their own way. I felt that I was truly able to share the joy of making something with ones own hands. A significant discussion developed among workshop participants regarding the culture and traditions of indigenous people and the issues surrounding their preservation. That discussion gave me important hints on of thinking about the exhibition I later held in the community.

**The exhibition “MAGBAHA-O” at the Badjao Community in Matina Aplaya**



(All: Installing the exhibition at the venue inside the community with the help of many of the inhabitants.)

The gallery space which I had initially planned to use suddenly became unavailable, so I proposed the idea of holding the exhibition inside the Badjao community itself. With the help of people from the community and friends from neighborhoods in Davao, I set up the exhibition at a communal hall in the middle of the community, which as a whole, exists like one organism. It was the first attempt at holding an exhibition inside a community, both for myself and for the community. I felt as though I truly shared the joy of getting involved in something unknown and new taking place, from the preparation stage all the way through the period of exhibition. While setting up the show in the community, I produced drawings and a video work in a studio space provided in the Mintal district of the city.



(Left: Exhibition flyer. Left: The opening reception. Right: Community members watching the video work)

With Angely Chi of The Unifiedfield as a curator, the exhibition titled “MAGABAHA-O” (which means “transition” in Sinama, the language spoken by Bajau people.) The exhibition consisted of a series of photographs, a video work and drawings produced based on my experience of staying in the community in 2015 and 2016, as well as an installation of miniature boats made in collaboration with local children. On the opening day, many people attended from the community that served as the exhibition venue, as well as from the neighboring Bisaya communities and from Davao City. With a wide and varied range of visitors gathered and mixed together, the exhibition started full of energy and enthusiasm.



(Left: The exhibition venue seen from inside the community. Center-left: Women from the community chatting while they look at pictures of their family. Center-right: The installation of boats made with the children. Right: Children looking at pictures.)

From July 18<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>, the exhibition site became a place for community members to stop by, look objectively or rediscover themselves and their lives depicted in the works. The venue also became a place for children to play, and for visitors from outside the community to come and meet with members of the Badjao community to get in touch with their life energy.

### Artist Talk “When the Solid Begins Turning Fluid” at Los Otros



(Left: Promotional poster for the talk. Center-left: Shreen from Los Otros (left) and Angely introducing The Unifiedfield (right). Center-right: The artist (left) and Angely. Right: The audience of the talk)

On July 23<sup>rd</sup> I finished and dismantled the exhibition in Davao, then flew to Manila. On July 25<sup>th</sup>, my artist talk was organized in cooperation between “Green Papaya Art Project” and a film-maker duo “Los Otros,” all based in Manila. I gave a presentation about this research project and shared some thoughts and ideas for further development of my work. Angely Chi, who accompanied me to Manila, also made a presentation about the residence program run by The Unifiedfield.



### 3. Conclusion of the fellowship project / Future Prospects

#### Talk and presentation on this research project at “Asian Arts Air FUKUOKA” in Fukuoka City



(Left: Promotional images for the talk event. Right: Giving the talk)

Just after returning to Japan, I was invited to talk about this research project and future prospects at a talk event held by “Asian Arts Air Fukuoka” in Fukuoka City on August 6<sup>th</sup>.

#### The 19th DOMANI Exhibition at the National Art Center, Tokyo



(Works to be exhibited: A still from video work “Kabugwas”. Center-right: Kosud-kosud produced with women from Ayoke Island for an installation work.)



At the 19th DOMANI Exhibition planned to be held from December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2016 to February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017 at the National Art Center, Tokyo, I will present works which I am currently producing based on materials, new thoughts and ideas I developed through the fellowship activities and research.

#### Information on facilities, hosts and organizers mentioned in the report

○The Unifiedfield Nomadic Artist-in-Residence Program in The Philippines

<http://www.tufnomadicairph.org/>

○Green Papaya Art Projects

<http://www.greenpapayaartprojects.org/> or

<http://ja-jp.facebook.com/greenpapayaartprojects/>

○Los Otros

<https://www.facebook.com/losotrosfilms/>