

Editorial Preface

The studies in this issue stimulate discussions on the ASEAN region development needs. Readers are invited to revisit and re-think their assumptions by examining the works of our contributors from Japan, Vietnam, Indonesia, India, Malaysia, United States of America, Oman, and the Philippines. Responsive to the Sustainable Development Goals, only 12 articles out of 216 submissions made it to this edition. The SPJRD, from earning a spot in Scopus database in September 2023 to earning an entry in ASEAN Citation Index database in July 2024, commits to publishing high-quality articles through rigid evaluation by our competent international advisers and reviewers.

The first four articles in this edition deal with agriculture. In *Milk Culture in Insular Southeast Asia Recognized as a Non-milk Cultural Sphere*, Masahiro Hirata of the University of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine and Takashi Tsuji of the International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region, both in Japan, examine the issues of milk processing techniques and milk use in places such as the Philippines and Indonesia. Their paper significantly contributes to analyzing how the transmission and transition of milk culture in areas considered outside the milk cultural sphere.

In the second article, *Valuation of Food Security and Cultural Landscape Services for Paddy Ecosystems in Developing Countries: A Case Study in Honghai, Vietnam*, Ngoc Trinh Phuong of the Tan Trao University in Vietnam proposes some policy implications for Vietnam and similar low-living provinces, helping them to promote poverty reduction methods and develop sustainable tourism based on paddy ecosystem services.

From the paddy ecosystems in Vietnam, this issue continues by featuring the paper, *Insights from Insect Diversity and Functional Roles in Sorghum Pest Management: A Case Study from Northern Sumatera, Indonesia*. Amelia Zulyanti Siregar, Tulus, and Yunilas of the University of Sumatera Utara, and Ravindra Joshi of the Malla Reddy University in India stress the importance of biodiversity conservation and effective management practices for sustainable sorghum cultivation in Northern Sumatera, Indonesia.

Staying on the scholarship in agriculture is a contribution from the Philippines titled, *Effects of Vermicast and Arbuscular Mycorrhizal Fungi (AMF) on the Establishment of Cacao (*Theobroma cacao* Linn.) Seedlings Grown in a Degraded Soil*. The findings of the study of Dernie Olguera of the University of Southeastern Philippines (USEP) and Jake Baga-an of Santo Tomas College of Agriculture, Sciences and Technology could help the farmers increase the productivity of cacao in a degraded soil environment.

The next two articles focus on the people and society in mainland Mindanao, Philippines. In *Challenges, Capabilities, and Proposed Initiatives for Capacity-Building among Shelter Beneficiaries in Davao City, Philippines: A Case Study*, Francis N. Reginio of USEP and Aurelio S. Agcaoili of the University of Hawaii at Manoa develop a model that emphasizes sustainable networks and community development initiatives to improve living conditions, prevent dependency, and ensure active involvement among the shelter beneficiaries in Davao City.

If the publication of Reginio and Agcaoili looks at the welfare of shelter beneficiaries, the article of Reymark P. Malinda of the University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines and Benjamin Paula G. Flor of the University of the Philippines Los Baños considers the health of the farmworkers. In *A Narrative Inquiry into the Meaning of Smoking among Farmworkers in Southern Philippines*, Malinda and Flor recommend to strengthen the anti-smoking campaign in the Philippines and revisit the enforcement of the relevant laws and ordinances in order to forestall the ballooning scourge of smoking.

This issue progresses by presenting works on the Tausug and Sama culture. In *Maligay: An Iconic Tausug Traditional Token for Pagtammam in the Sulu Archipelago*, Eddie M. Ladja and Cherry Mae L. Ladja of the Western Mindanao State University (WMSU) in Zamboanga City, Philippines highlight the cultural and

educational practices of Tausug families in rural Sulu, zeroing in on its continued relevance and resilience in the face of modernization.

Working on the same Tausug principle, the *hula-bangsa-agama* (homeland-identity-religion) is the paper titled *Tabiat Kariasali: The Affiliative Leadership of the Informal Taumaas of the Suluk Community on the East Coast of Sabah*, where Nurhasan Danial and Asmiaty Amat of the Universiti Malaysia Sabah and their colleagues from the Mindanao State University—Tawi-Tawi College of Technology and Oceanography (MSU-TCTO), and MSU Sulu proffer unique insights into the *tabiat kariasali* (instinctual role) and functions of the *taumaas* (leaders) which are valuable in understanding the indigenous leadership and *kahanungan* (peace) in the Suluk community.

Still on the people of Sulu Archipelago, Alshadat Sabal of MSU TCTO in *Sulat Pasa: Its Implications to Local Divorce Practice among the Sama of Tawi-Tawi, Philippines*, articulates that the Sama continue to present and bring their divorce cases to the *lumah sarah* (traditional authority) for enforcement. As a time-honored tradition among the Sama, Sabal ends his paper by proposing a measure to institutionalize the *sulat pasa* (traditional divorce paper) as also legal, and binding taking into account issues of accessibility, affordability, practicability, and feasibility.

Showcasing another aspect of Sama culture is the paper, *Ethno-Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (EthnoSTEM) Ideas in the Sama Mat-Weaving*. Based on ethnographic research in Tandubas, Tawi-Tawi, Aljemedin Jaudinez of MSU TCTO and Ma. Nympha Joaquin of UP Diliman conclude that the ideas in Sama *tepo* (mat) weaving are loaded with scientific affluence that should be preserved to preclude them fading to oblivion. They underscore the need for the Philippine Department of Education to include the EthnoSTEM ideas in Sama *tepo* in preparing culturally sensitive materials, thus advancing an inclusive education for all.

An additional publication on the indigenous cultural communities in Mindanao, Philippines is titled *The Development of Kalagan and Isamal Linguistics: An Archival Research*. Through synthesizing various legitimate sources, Jessa Jane Iglesia and her counterparts from USeP and the University of Nizwa in Oman report that while significant research has been conducted on Kalagan linguistics, the trend is the opposite for Isamal linguistics. The researchers prompt scholars, particularly those from the Philippines, to conduct research on the country's indigenous languages.

Readers will find equally fascinating this edition's last article, *A Social Network Analysis in Abu Sayyaf Kidnappings*. Laica Pearl Alcantara, Brenz Gwynne Hababag, Blessy Tale, and Jamal Kay Rogers of USeP comprehensively analyze Abu Sayyaf Group's kidnapping incidents to better understand their operational structures, patterns, and dynamics. The findings offer extremely valuable information about how the ASG has developed and changed over the years, serving as input to concerned agencies in dealing with national security.

It is with optimism that the articles in the edition will allow for more meaningful conversations on the ASEAN region development needs, leading to impactful Research, Development, and Extension (RDE) projects for the benefit of the present and future generations.

Sajed S. Ingilan
SPJRD Editor-in-Chief