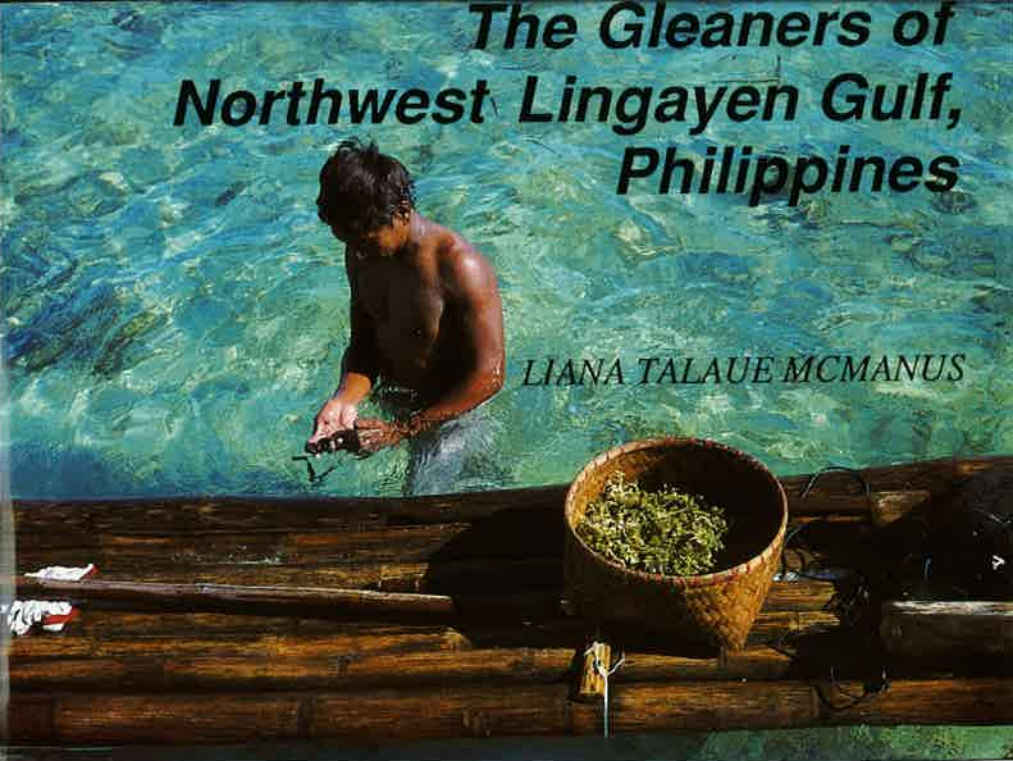


The Gleaners of Northwest Lingayen Gulf, Philippines

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Gathering edible seaweeds to augment the family income.

The reef flats of Bolinao and Anda northwest of Lingayen Gulf, Philippines, have been fished and gleaned for as long as their inhabitants can remember. Women, until recently, dominated the gathering of food from accessible areas of the reefs. They foraged close to home, handpicking organisms for the day's meals, while the catch from fishing was mostly sold. Thus, the biomass harvested mainly by women comprised the major diet of fishing households (as is also the case throughout Oceania. See the review by Margaret D. Chapman, 1987. *Women's fishing in Oceania*. Human Ecology 15(3):267-288.)

Today, dwindling returns from fishing by the menfolk have altered patterns of gleaning and the role women play in it. At least 2,000 households of Bolinao and Anda directly depend on the coralline resources. With an average family size of six, and assuming two of four children are able to glean, there are about 6,000 women and children collecting in the reef flats of this area alone. As well, about 2,000 fishermen there switch opportunistically between fishing and gleaning to supplement their diminishing catch. Altogether, a fishing household derives a monthly income of about US\$20 from fishing, or barely a third of what it needs for subsistence. Other occupational activities earn a family on the average another \$6.50.



Lambert A. Menez

Above: Sorting gleaned catch. Below: A woman and child forage a reef flat for seaweeds, conch shells, bivalves, sea urchins and other edible organisms.



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Indeed, the role of women in providing for their families has become crucial with the declining returns from artisanal fisheries. Gleaning as one of their activities will probably outlive other forms of mechanized fishing. Deteriorating habitats will constrain how much they can harvest but perhaps these women will manage to earn enough for food while the men find viable alternatives to the dying occupation that is small-scale fishing.

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