

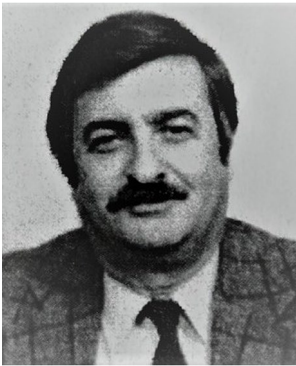


Kenneth Richard Ruddle (1942 – 2023)

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On April 5th 2023, we lost a friend, and the world lost one of its best maritime social researchers—Kenneth Richard Ruddle, ‘Ken,’ to his friends.

Ken was born on June 1, 1942, in Barnet, Middlesex, England, to a family with a strong military tradition. Ken learned early in his life to pilot airplanes, a skill which was to shape and—as it turned out—to distort his life.

He earned his Bachelor of Arts with honours (1964) from the University of Manchester, and a PhD (1970) in human geography and environmental studies from the University of California at Los Angeles. It was in California that Ken met and married (1977) his wife and life partner, Reiko Kameo (Ruddle).

We interacted with Ken at different times: Daniel Pauly from the 1980s through the mid-1990s and Anthony Davis over the following two decades or so. The personal pronouns we use throughout this celebration of Ken’s life refer first to Daniel Pauly’s recollections, followed by those of Anthony Davis.

I (*Daniel Pauly*) met Ken in 1980 or about while working at the Manila-based International Centre for Living Aquatic

Resources Management (ICLARM, now WorldFish, based in Penang, Malaysia) through a friend, the fisheries economist Ian Smith whom Ken knew from supervising his PhD thesis work in Hawai’i. ICLARM was founded in 1977, and it was still working at establishing its identity as a research institution. Ken, with his vast knowledge of Southeast Asian and Pacific fisheries, was helpful to ICLARM finding its way, notably through Ian Smith, who shaped its fisheries economic research, while I contributed to its research in fisheries biology. Thus, while based at the Museum of Ethnography in Osaka, Ken visited ICLARM frequently. While in Manila, he was initially a guest of Ian Smith and his wife, Becky, but eventually, he stayed with the Pauly family because the Smiths could not handle his mood swings.

The point was that Ken was tortured by his participation in the Vietnam War through multiple sorties mainly over North Vietnam as a pilot of an F-4 Phantom fighter-bomber. Young Ken told me that he volunteered as a pilot for two years in order to fast-track access to US citizenship, but the moral cost of this decision was to haunt his life thereafter. So, after each visit to ICLARM, in our home, after entertaining my two kids with hilarious stories and jokes and funny noises, he would tell my wife, Sandra, and me one more Vietnam War story after the other, mentioning dykes that were broken by his bombs and huts that were set aflame, and his eyes would well up with tears of regret.

Ken’s UCLA Ph.D. was based on anthropological fieldwork in the Orinoco Delta, in Venezuela. He described it to me as focused on the intergenerational transmission of knowledge in a fishing community. It is clear, however, that from the outset, Ken’s research focused on documenting peoples’, and specifically fishers’, understanding and knowledge of the natural environment—currently referred to variously as ‘traditional ecological knowledge’ (TEK) or ‘local ecological knowledge’ (LEK). Ken’s contribution here was to draw attention to the linkages between TEK/LEK and the ways in which local communities managed their use of natural resources, and adjudicated conflicts arising from competing claims.

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As his research experiences broadened to the Asian and South Pacific regions, Ken became convinced that TEK/LEK and local management practices needed to inform and direct countries' resource management policies, to enable appropriate responses to changes such as sea-level rise. Years before climate change became a widely shared concern, Ken was arguing that unless dealt with, the impacts of climate change would destroy the ecosystems upon which coastal peoples relied. For instance, in a 1996 paper on the Maldives, Ken argued that "[w]ith a very fragile and delicate ecosystem, vulnerable to the threat of global warming and sea level rise, the need for environmental management and planning is clearly demonstrated" (Ruddle 1996). Much of Ken's published research over these years can be accessed through his Research Gate site at: <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kenneth-Ruddle>.

This work could have led to a cushy academic career in the USA. Instead, Ken moved to Japan, attained fluency in Japanese, and found employment at the Museum of Ethnography in Osaka, where he was when he became a Guggenheim Fellow in 1980, followed by an appointment to the World Academy of Arts and Sciences. Ken was also among the first non-Japanese to be appointed to a full-time professorate within Kyoto National University. From this base, he undertook fieldwork in Vietnam, Cambodia, and other Southeast Asian countries focused, among a variety of themes, on an original method for combatting the spoilage of freshly caught fish in the tropics: fish sauce production. 'Nam pla' in Thailand, 'nuoc mam' and 'patis' in the Philippines are based on the fermentation of small fish such as anchovies and sardines. Ken became very knowledgeable about the economic and ecological conditions regulating the production of what is an essential element of food security among coastal commodities in Southeast Asia (Ruddle and Ishige 2005).

Among Ken's numerous essential publications from this phase of his research is a seminal volume that he edited with the late R.E. Johannes concerning the traditional knowledge and management of coastal resources among societies in Asia and the Pacific (Ruddle and Johannes 1985). His vast knowledge of their history, organization, and practices had a defining impact on me. However, when ICLARM decamped to Malaysia, and I moved to Canada, we lost contact.

I learned only indirectly that after years of running a scientific translation company in Japan that made him well-off, he spent considerable time in Hanoi, creating a foundation that funded scholarships for Vietnamese students as well as supporting the professional development of Vietnamese researchers. Ken was direct and honest in acknowledging that he felt personally responsible for the destruction he caused while piloting fighter-bombers, and, consequently, felt obligated and driven to do what he could to in some way make up for this. Ken continued supporting students

until near the end of life by providing counselling, research advice, and assisting them in the preparation of research papers, even while hospitalized. In this, Ken set a standard of practice that, if followed by others, would create meaningful opportunities, life chances, and research/teaching careers.

While well acquainted with his research publications, I (*Anthony Davis*) actually did not meet Ken until he accepted an invitation to participate in a Japanese and Atlantic Canadian Fisheries working seminar held in Antigonish, Nova Scotia in 1995 at Saint Francis Xavier University. His acerbic and insightful contributions impressed all while shaping the workshop's outcomes. Over preferred beverages, Ken spoke with me about his concerns respecting the shortcomings in much of the current coastal resource management research. In doing so, we learned that we shared these concerns.

Ken had a vast experience with the research initiatives promoted by the United Nations and non-governmental agencies. He told me that he had chosen to work in such settings in the hope that these agencies would incorporate TEK/LEK and existing community resource management practices in their approach to local development. However, he later became critical of these institutions' actual intentions with regards to coastal peoples. Largely in agreement, we resolved to stay in touch while exploring collaborative research prospects. Given our different life and career paths, the primary opportunity for doing some research and writing together arose in the late 2000s.

Through extensive e-mail conversations over a decade or so, Ken and I developed and published a variety of papers addressing what we considered to be major deficiencies with most current TEK/LEK and coastal resource management research, while providing analyses and illustrations of how we thought it should be done (Davis and Ruddle 2010; Ruddle and Davis 2011; Davis and Ruddle 2012, and Davis and Ruddle 2013). Our shared concern was that much of the current research was, in Ken's terms, careerist pablum, lacking entirely in methodological and intellectual rigor while dangerously romanticizing traditional knowledge in a manner that had the very real prospect of setting coastal peoples up for failure. He was also an ardent champion of Southeast Asian and South Pacific research. Ken argued that the North Atlantic and First World foci of most coastal management researchers largely ignored the substantial lessons derived from Southeast Asian and the South Pacific research, while expressing a demonstrably Eurocentric perspective and set of assumed priorities.

For instance, he argued that "[m]odernization provided the justification for foreign designers of fisheries management schemes to claim that pre-existing systems were either primitive or unsustainable or often 'non-existent.'" This was reinforced by a general ignorance of the tropics and prejudice on the part of scientists and educators, whose careers were based on work in temperate regions (Ruddle and Satria

2010). Ken shared with me the concern that the absence in the literature of an identifiable, rigorous, and replicable methodology, coupled with unsubstantiated claims about TEK/LEK, sometimes characterized as Indigenous Ecological Knowledge (IEK), undermined both the potentials for social research contributions to be taken seriously and the understanding of the strengths and limitations of coastal peoples actual resource management systems and capacities.

Our initial research collaboration substantiated these concerns, concluding that “[c]onsequently, there is no consensus on the content of IEK/LEK/TEK, the primary components of which await examination via focused research. These are fundamental issues, since IEK/LEK/TEK misrepresented by social research would probably deepen disempowerment of those it purports to champion” (Davis and Ruddle 2010). Two subsequent papers focused on exposing the neo-liberal presumptions, intentional or otherwise, embedded in the case being made by prominent social researchers for resource co-management and a human rights approach. Here we demonstrated that: “[c]ommon assertions about the benefits for small-scale fisheries under co-management and human rights approaches become untenable in the context of neo-liberalism, because they facilitate the penetration into communities of rationalities and operational methods that betray resource harvesters by undermining family life and cultural systems and destroying the local social organization of production” (Davis and Ruddle 2012). Ken was unwavering and ardent in his commitment to respecting and empowering local communities, convinced that their knowledge of local ecosystems was such that they were best positioned to understand and respond effectively when faced with challenges such as resource depletion and climate change.

Kenneth R. Ruddle’s contributions to the fields of TEK/LEK and coastal community management were sustained and voluminous—32 books, edited collections, and research reports as well as 145 research papers, while also editing 71 issues of the Information Bulletins of the South Pacific Commission.

Working with Ken was frequently a challenge, entirely a pleasure, and always a revelation. The breadth and depth of his knowledge about the history, background, and workings of international organizations were astounding, as was his real-world respect for the capacity of coastal communities to manage their own interests. He displayed little patience for the weak-minded and did not suffer fools gladly.

Once a friend, Ken was steadfast in his support, patience, and understanding. While frequently disparaging of the human capacity to do the right thing, he expressed an unwavering regard for animal welfare, particularly for all human companion animals and especially for domestic cats. Ken spoke and read at least four languages. In fact, his affection for Chinese script was such that when opportunity afforded he trolled Southeast Asian antiquarian bookstores searching

for old texts wherein, as a hobby, he would examine and deconstruct Chinese characters. For instance, in one e-mail he informed me, in his often risqué fashion, that “When thinking of “lower back [pain]”, a useful way to remember the Chinese character for it is “a month beside a western woman”. This tells you the three-component kanji from which it is composed. Those ancient sages certainly had a sense of humour!”

Ken’s was a productive, meaningful, complex, loyal, and confounded life. Many would benefit from a study of it. We (Daniel Pauly and Anthony Davis) certainly celebrate our good fortune in having known him, to having been befriended by him, and to having shared experiences and ideas with him. We are also confident that the substance of his research contributions and, more significantly, his transformative support of others will extend far beyond his lifespan.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors declare no competing interests.

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