



## Going for Gold : Newsletter 8

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### Sifting the sand for gold on the beaches of Bayah

Bayah beach is located in Indonesia, in the Cibeber sub-district in the province of Banten, 145 kms from the capital city of Jakarta in Indonesia. One might expect this long and sun-drenched beach [KB: the sand is not white it is grey in the photos] to draw hordes of tourists. Instead, it has attracted hundreds of informal gold miners. These mobile miners, organised in small groups, mine for gold in the sand. Our national research partner from Indonesia, Dr Rini Soemarwoto from Padjadjaran University in Bandung, engaged with one such group that has been working in artisanal mining for the past five years. In the miners' search for gold, they had travelled through north Aceh, Sumatra, central Sulawesi, and west of Sumbawa.

In this newsletter we would like to share a number of insights from Dr Rini Soemarwoto's field-based research amongst the informal gold miners of Bayah beach.

The alluvial mining site is located over one and a half kilometres away from the regional city of Bayah, upon the beach face that can easily be seen and reached from the main road. The beach itself is long and narrow, with flat to gentle slope.



Findings from a geological study conducted by the Research and Development Centre for Marine Geology in Bayah waters reveal that Bayah beach has a high level of gold content. This is known by the local people who, in addition to their predominantly agricultural way of life, also engaged in gold mining. Rulers based in the city of Bayah also have a long history of supporting gold mining. The first state-owned gold mine was established in 1839. It is

located approximately 30 km north of the city of Bayah, and is named after the area, Cikotok. This gold mine was later controlled by a Dutch company in 1936 and then by a Japanese company during World War 2. In 1954 the Indonesian government took over the Cikotok site, which was then managed by NV Cikotok Gold Mine (Tambang EmasCikotok), a firm owned by PT. Aneka Tambang (Antam). Antam closed down their production at Cikotok in 2011, but continues to manage the site, and is in conversation with the local government to develop the location as a tourist destination. Two rivers, the Cimadur and Cidikit, bring down the gold along with their alluvium into the estuaries. Since the late 1960s, alluvial gold has been mined from the beds of these rivers and along their courses, from their estuaries, deltas and the beach.

An interesting feature of the more recent times is the conflict between different property claims and livelihoods based on the land. Since the beginning of the dry season in 2013, Dr. Soemarwoto found that none of the gold miners have been able to access the two rivers due to an ongoing conflict between the local miners and farmers. Farmers who own paddy fields along these river courses vehemently protested against mining. This is because alluvial gold mining has damaged the ridges of the rice fields making the water to gush uncontrolled into their fields. Moreover, farmers claim that river fish have died due to pollution and changing flow regimes of

the river. As these conflicts became more prominent, the artisanal miners left the rivers, shifting their work to Bayah beach.

Gold mining in Bayah beach involves working with a small pan (ngadeplang), with a bath towel or carpet (nganduk), and a large pan (ngadulang). All these processes are collectively known as 'working on bath towel' (nganduk) by miners. Here are a few pictures of the process:



**Step1 - Dousing sand with water using a *parudan***



**Step 2 - Washing the carpet - *Nganduk***



**Step 3 - Squeezing the gold-mercury amalgamation - *ngadulang***



**Step 4 - Finally the mercury and gold amalgam**

Is mining on the beach legally recognised? To answer this, Dr. Soemarwoto needed to look at who gives the mining permits and how. The allocation of permits for exploiting mineral resources in Indonesia is managed by the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, Directorate General of Mineral and Coal (Minerba), and is referred to as the 'permit for peoples mining' (*IzinPertambangan Rakyat*). However, the informal miners of Bayah beach are usually granted permission by agencies other than Minerba. These agencies can be the police, the military, the government officials, or powerful political leaders or patrons from the areas. Although these agencies do not have the legal authority for managing the exploitation of minerals, at the local level they are powerful actors. With their patronage, the miners at Bayah beach continue to seek gold. One can say that the miners consider the government's inaction as a tacit sign of approval.

There are many more angles to this interesting story. The entire case study undertaken by Dr Soemarwoto will be soon uploaded on: <http://www.asmasiapacific.org>. Keep watching that space!