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EDUCATION

Ph.D. Student, Economics, Boston University, Boston MA, 2020 (expected)

Dissertation Title: *Essays on Development Economics*

Main Advisor: Samuel Bazzi

Dissertation Committee: Samuel Bazzi, Dilip Mookherjee and Robert A. Margo

B.Soc.Sci. Economics, *First Class Honors*, National University of Singapore, Singapore 2014

FIELDS OF INTEREST

Development Economics, Political Economy, Economic History

WORKING PAPERS

"Why Pay the Chief? Land Rents and Political Selection in Indonesia (Job Market Paper)"

WORK IN PROGRESS

"The Effects of Long-Run Ethnic Segregation in Southeast Asia"

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

Northeast Universities Development Conference. Evanston, IL 2019

Economic History Association Meeting, Poster Session. Atlanta, GA 2019

Southeast Asia Research Group N.A. Meeting. Vancouver, Canada 2019

17th Nordic Conference on Development Economics. Helsinki, Finland 2018

Summer School in Development Economics. Prato, Italy 2017

GRANTS

Manuel Abdala Gift Grant Spring 2019

Boston University Initiative on Cities, Seed Funding Fall 2018

Graduate Research Abroad Fellowship (Short-Term) Fall 2018

Economics Department Summer Research Grant Summer 2018

Global Development Policy Center, Summer in the Field Summer 2018

WORK EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant for S. Bazzi, Boston University, 2015-Present

Visiting Researcher, AKATIGA, Indonesia, 2018

Visiting Junior Researcher, SMERU Research Institute, Indonesia Summer 2015, 2016

Research Assistant for R. Arunachalam & A. Shenoy, University of Michigan, MI Summer 2013

Communications & Research Intern, Centre for Microfinance, India Summer 2012

Non-Commissioned Officer, Singapore Armed Forces, Singapore 2009-2011

LANGUAGES:

English (native), Mandarin Chinese (native), Bahasa Indonesia (intermediate)

COMPUTER SKILLS: ArcGIS, Stata

CITIZENSHIP: Singapore/F1

REFERENCES

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Why Pay the Chief? Land Rents & Political Selection in Indonesia (Job Market Paper)

Much of modern development efforts are channeled through traditional local governance. Yet, despite their importance as politician-bureaucrats, local leaders are rarely paid a living wage. This paper studies the effect of awarding chiefs cultivation rights over village rice land, a stable revenue generating asset, during their term of office. I use a fuzzy spatial regression discontinuity design to exploit a historical natural experiment in Java where in the nineteenth century a homogeneous region was split, and in one part chiefs were awarded cultivation rights but not in the other. To measure political outcomes, I collect original data from the field tracing the modern electoral history of 931 chiefs in 193 villages. Higher land rents cause positive chief performance and economic development. Chiefs raise more funds and construct more public goods such that areas under their control are richer and more developed even today. I find evidence consistent with historically positive political selection as a key mechanism. Higher rents attracted better quality chiefs in the past. These chiefs were so effective at educational provision that the entire village today remains more educated. As a result, despite higher land rents attracting a higher quality pool of candidates today, neither candidates nor chiefs today are more selected compared to the average villager. Instead, positive development outcomes today are shaped by the selection of chiefs whose interests are aligned away from supra-village elite interests. Overall, my findings provide evidence that paying local leaders from a stable source of local revenue can be good for economic development.